

Events happening today in Egypt are only a part of a more global process affecting the life of Christians in a number of countries. If the authorities in the Middle East states do not take special measures to protect Christians, their exodus from these countries will continue.

Q. In what countries other than Egypt the situation of Christians causes concern?

A. Reports about persecution against Christians are coming from Sudan, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq and several countries in South-East Asia. The notorious law 'On Blasphemy' enforced in Pakistan is used not only to defend the sacred symbols and names of Islam but also to persecute Christians. I will remind you that about a million and a half Christians used to live in Iraq until 2003. Now they are no more than a half of that number, while those who stayed fear for their life every day.

Q. How can persecuted Christians be protected against Christianophobia?

A. The intensified persecution of Christians has already compelled international organizations to make a number of appropriate statements. The European Parliament adopted on January 20 a resolution 'On the Situation of Christians in the Context of Religious Freedom'. A similar resolution was adopted by the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly. However, we have to take concrete and effective actions as well. It is necessary to organize urgently a system for protecting Christians against persecution. In the first place, it is necessary to set up information structures to monitor crimes committed on the grounds of religious hatred. Each case of violence and persecution against Christians should become a case for trial by both national and international judicial bodies.

Very important today is interreligious solidarity, for extremism and radicalism present a threat to all the traditional religions which seek a peaceful coexistence among people. It is also important that the phenomenon of persecution against Christians should not be hushed up but discussed actively and that representatives of traditional religions make joint efforts to improve the situation of Christians in the world. It is necessary that governmental and international organizations should join these efforts.

I believe the mechanism for protecting Christians can be as follows: economic and other aid in exchange for guarantees of the rights of religious minorities. If this policy is carried out efficiently we may change the situation for the better and stop the wave of persecution against Christians that has engulfed various countries today.

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