



Archbishop Hilarion: Building up of a democratic Europe cannot be accompanied by persecution of believers who strive to live in harmony with their conscience and according to the commandments of God

A session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) is taking place on 25 through 29 January 2010. Themes under discussion include discrimination on ground of sexual orientation or gender identity. Archbishop Hilarion, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate Department for external church relations, sent a message to the participants in the PACE session, in which he noted "a serious ethical aspect" of the issue and said that "the overwhelming majority of European Christians, Muslims, and Jews have common vision of the problem."

"It is obvious that the draft Resolution and draft Recommendations cast doubt on the role of the family as a union between men and women that presupposes care for each other and birth and upbringing of children. Any other forms of sex relationship that are getting widely practiced cannot claim legal status like the status of social institute. To consider the family in any other way means to call the very existence of society in question," Archbishop Hilarion wrote.

The DECR chairman continued: "The Russian Orthodox Church, like many religious communities in Europe, considers homosexuality a sin. This proceeds from our teaching that has not been altered for centuries." Draft documents submitted to the deputies for approval call this position the "instigation of hatred," of which religious leaders are accused.

Building up of a democratic Europe cannot be accompanied by persecution of believers who strive to live in harmony with their conscience and according to the commandments of God, an Orthodox hierarch is confident.

"The Russian Church does not advocate the persecution of sexual minorities. However, views towards homosexuality that run counter to the convictions of believers should not be imposed on them by mass media and systems of education," Archbishop Hilarion of Volokolamsk underscored. "Likewise, we do not force anyone to share our position, yet we consider it inadmissible to forbid believers to express their opinion of this matter openly."

Archbishop Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate department for external

church relations, called upon the participants in the PACE session to refrain from taking any decision on discrimination of sexual minorities and to come back to the subject only after it is openly discussed by all interested parties. Thus, the archpastor believes, the Council of Europe would be able to follow the path of building up Europe without drawing new dividing lines.

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