



Archbishop Hilarion's letter to Vatican Secretary of State concerning the European Court's decision to ban Christian symbols in Italian schools

The decision made by the European Court on 3 November 2009 to the effect that the presence of crucifixes violates human rights in Italian schools has prompted Archbishop Hilarion of Volokolamsk to send the following message to the Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone:

Your Eminence,

The decision made on 3 November 2009 by the European Court of Human Rights in the case of *Lautsi versus Italy* to the effect that the presence of crucifixes in state-run schools in Italy violates human rights has raised our great concern.

We consider this practice of the European Court to be an attempt to impose radical secularism everywhere despite the national experience of church-state relations. The above-mentioned decision is not the only one in the practice of the Court, which has increasingly shown an anti-Christian trend.

Taking into account the fact that the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights have clearly lost touch with legal and historical reality in which most of the European live, while the Court itself has turned into an instrument of promoting an ultra-liberal ideology, we believe it very important that religious communities in Europe should be involved in a discussion concerning its work.

In this connection, we propose that through common efforts a seminar be organized on the platform of the Council of Europe with the participation of religious communities and experts for discussing those aspects of the work of the European Court of Human Rights which matter for religious communities.

Respectfully,

+ Hilarion

Archbishop of Volokolamsk

Chairman

Department for External Church Relations

Moscow Patriarchate

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