



## Metropolitan Hilarion: Europe is increasingly turning into an anti-Christian region

The Chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk has commented on the statistical data showing that the level of oppression and persecution of Christians in the world and the recently recorded number of anti-Christian hate crimes in Europe have been increasing.

Speaking about the persecution of Christians in different parts of the world on *The Church and The World* TV programme, Vladyka especially mentioned the regions of the Middle East and North Africa, where the number of Christians is rapidly decreasing due to oppression. In particular, he recalled that in Iraq, fifteen years after the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, the Christian population has decreased at least ten times - from one and a half million to 150 thousand people at best. In Syria, at the time when a significant part of the country's territory was captured by the militants, a real genocide of Christians took place. What is now taking place in Nigeria must also be qualified as a genocide directed against the believers in Christ. The situation in Ethiopia, where massacres of Christians are becoming a familiar reality, has also been causing great concern.

"As for Europe, it is, unfortunately, increasingly turning into an anti-Christian region" - stated Metropolitan Hilarion.

In his opinion, the ever-increasing number of crimes motivated by religious hatred against Christians is associated with the policy pursued by European countries, which emphasizes tolerance – not at the expense of respecting the rights of various religious communities and confessions, but rather at the expense of distancing from them. "This leads to the growing social tension: more and more Christians do not feel at home in Europe"- stressed the DECR Chairman.

Metropolitan Hilarion reminded that the problem of de-Christianization of Europe is a matter of common concern for both the Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church. This topic, in particular, was raised at the meeting of the Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' with Pope Francis in 2016.