



THE HOLY SEE
2011 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Working Session 13: Tolerance and non-discrimination II:
Review of the implementation of commitments on promotion of
mutual respect and understanding
Rev. Ferenc Janka, National Point of Contact for Hate Crimes
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Mister Chairman,

1. The commitment of the Catholic Church to combating religious intolerance and discrimination is well known.

2. There is no place in the modern world for anti-Semitism. In his recent meeting with members of the Jewish community (Reichstag Building, Berlin Thursday, 22 September 2011), Pope Benedict XVI said: “Today I find myself in a central place of remembrance, the appalling remembrance that it was from here that the *Shoah*, the annihilation of our Jewish fellow citizens in Europe, was planned and organized...In this place, remembrance must also be made of the *Kristallnacht* that took place from 9 to 10 November 1938. Only a few could see the full extent of this act of contempt for humanity, like the Berlin Cathedral Provost, Bernhard Lichtenberg, who cried out from the pulpit of Saint Hedwig’s Cathedral: “Outside, the Temple is burning – that too is the house of God”. The Nazi reign of terror was based on a racist myth, part of which was the rejection of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of Jesus Christ and of all who believe in him. The supposedly “almighty” Adolf Hitler was a pagan idol, who wanted to take the place of the biblical God, the Creator and Father of all men. Refusal to heed this one God always makes people heedless of human dignity as well. What man is capable of when he rejects God, and what the face of a people can look like when it denies this God, the terrible images from the concentration camps at the end of the war showed.”

The Catholic Church has irrevocably committed itself to pursue the path of dialogue, fraternity and friendship between the Catholic community and our Jewish brothers and sisters, a journey which has been deepened and developed in the last forty years, through important steps and significant gestures. The progress made in this important relationship is in no small part due to the work of the International Committee for Catholic-Jewish Relations and, in more recent years, by the Mixed Commission of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and of the Holy See, which have worked together in discovering anew a common spiritual patrimony, to keep open the space

for dialogue, for reciprocal respect, for growth in friendship, and for a common witness in the face of the challenges of our time, which invite us to cooperate for the good of humanity.

3. The Holy See continues to be concerned about incidents of violence, intolerance and discrimination perpetrated against Muslim communities within the OSCE region. On the occasion of recent Apostolic Journey to Germany, Pope Benedict XVI had a meeting with Muslim communities (Reception Room. Apostolic Nunciature, Berlin, Friday, September 23). He acknowledged how “many Muslims attribute great importance to the religious dimension of life. At times this is thought provocative in a society that tends to marginalize religion or at most to assign it a place among the individual’s private choices. The Catholic Church firmly advocates that due recognition be given to the public dimension of religious adherence. In an overwhelmingly pluralist society, this demand is not unimportant. In the process, care must be taken to guarantee that the other is always treated with respect. This mutual respect grows only on the basis of agreement on certain inalienable values that are proper to human nature, in particular the inviolable dignity of every single person as created by God. Such agreement does not limit the expression of individual religions; on the contrary, it allows each person to bear witness explicitly to what he believes, not avoiding comparison with others.”

The Holy See recognizes the need for Christians and Muslims to learn how to work together, as indeed they already do in many common undertakings, in order to guard against intolerance and to oppose manifestations of violence and calls upon religious authorities and political leaders alike to guide and encourage these religious groups in this direction.

4. With the increase of religious intolerance in the world, it is well documented that Christians are the religious group most discriminated against as there may well be more than 200 million of them, of different confessions, who are in situations of difficulty because of legal and cultural structures that lead to their discrimination. Recent trends have seen a marginalization of religion, particularly of Christianity, even in nations which place a great emphasis on tolerance. In analyzing the effects of relativism and positivism, Pope Benedict XVI observed that according to these outlooks “ethics and religion must be assigned to the subjective field, and they remain extraneous to the realm of reason in the strict sense of the word. Where positivist reason dominates the field to the exclusion of all else – and that is broadly the case in our public mindset – then the classical sources of knowledge for ethics and law are excluded. This is a dramatic situation which affects everyone, and on which a public debate is necessary. Indeed, an essential goal of this address is to issue an urgent invitation to launch one. The positivist approach to nature and reason, the positivist world view in general, is a most important dimension of human knowledge and capacity that we may in no way dispense with. But in and of itself it is not a sufficient culture corresponding to the full breadth of the human condition....In its self-proclaimed exclusivity, the positivist reason which recognizes nothing beyond

mere functionality resembles a concrete bunker with no windows, in which we ourselves provide lighting and atmospheric conditions, being no longer willing to obtain either from God's wide world....The windows must be flung open again, we must see the wide world, the sky and the earth once more and learn to make proper use of all this." (Address to the Bundestag, Reichstag Building, Berlin Thursday, 22 September 2011).

In the spirit of "flinging open the windows" the Holy See is convinced that the international community must fight intolerance and discrimination against Christians with the same determination as it would fight hatred against members of other religious communities. The right to religious freedom includes the right to practice one's religion in the public sphere; and the right to practice one's religion in the public sphere ensures a place for the Christian voice and perspectives on current political, social and moral issues. Anything to the contrary is simply contrary to the democratic spirit. Participating States of the OSCE have committed themselves fight against discrimination and intolerance against Christians. What came out clearly from the Round Table discussion in March 2009 in Vienna and from the recent Rome Meeting on Preventing and Responding to Hate Crimes against Christians is that intolerance and discrimination against Christians is manifested in various forms across the OSCE area.

5. Participating States of the OSCE have committed themselves fight against discrimination and intolerance against Christians. Reported examples of hate crimes against Christians can be found in the recent Hate Crimes reports of the ODIHR, including the one for 2010. The Holy See would like to encourage all OSCE participating States to dedicate more attention to hate crimes against Christians, as well as to collect statistics on these crimes and to send them to the ODIHR.

6. In spite of the commitments undertaken by member States of the OSCE in the area of religious freedom, in some countries intolerant and even discriminatory laws, decisions and behaviour, either by action or omission, which deny this freedom, still exist against the Church and Christian communities, and against other religious communities, as well as their respective members. There are recurring episodes of violence and even killings against Christian believers. Undue restrictions remain against the registration of Churches and religious communities, as well as against the importation and distribution of their religious materials. There are also illegitimate interferences in the area of their organizational autonomy, preventing them from acting consistently with their own moral convictions. At times undue pressure is brought to bear upon people working in public administration in contrast with their freedom to behave in accordance with the dictates of their own conscience. At times civic education is deficient in duly respecting the identity and principles of Christians and of members of other religions and, as mentioned above, there are clear signs of resistance against the recognition of religion's public role.

Nor are the media and public discourse always free from attitudes of intolerance and, sometimes, of actual denigration of Christians and members of other religions.

7. In the light of the above-mentioned abuses, the Holy See would like to repeat its recommendation that an International Day against Discrimination of Christians be instituted and that the ODIHR become the chief promoter of such an initiative.

8. In conclusion, Mister Chairman, the Holy See would like to reiterate its conviction of the importance that the institution of the three Personal Representatives brings to the promotion of tolerance and non-discrimination in the priority areas where the participating States have reached consensus - combating anti-Semitism; intolerance and discrimination against Muslims; Christians and members of other religions, and racism, xenophobia and related intolerance. In encouraging all OSCE institutions to remain within the boundaries of these consensual commitments – an important attitude in this time of reduced financial resources – the Holy See expresses its appreciation for the balanced work of the three Representatives who have dedicated attention to the core aspects of their mandates in the spirit of the negotiations that brought about their institution.

Thank you, Mister Chairman.

