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Working session 4: Fundamental freedoms I, including:

- Freedom of expression, free media and information, including best practices for protection of journalists;
- Address by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media.

As CitizenGo we work for the service of the society so that the dignity of the human person and the rights inherent to it are respected in all areas. We are a grassroots group dedicated to activism and citizen's mobilization with a very specific values; we defend the values of the life, the family and liberty.

Media has a great responsibility in fostering tolerance in our societies. But regrettably, we have been witnessing lately a row of attacks against christian confessions from the side of large audience media groups, both publicly and privately owned. These attacks can take the form of false accusations, mocking and despising in variety shows and advertisements, or just skewed news coverage that transmit a distorted image of Christians to the whole society.

While Christians don't need to be freed from criticism (just as any other person or institution under a democratic rule), there is a clear line between what is a legitimate critique and an offending act. By no means are we advocating limiting freedom of expression or more regulation of media enterprises - we're simply advocating that the law applies the same way in case of offences against christian beliefs as when the offended is any other social group.

This issue should not be downplayed, as mainstream media groups play a deciding role in the way society perceives a given community. When this perception is manipulated in such a way that people begin to think that there is no problem in deriding or insulting a religious faith, the seeds for more open aggressions are being sown.

Recommendations:

- For OSCE to call upon media groups to show respect for religious beliefs (Christians in particular, as they are the preferred target of offensive contents) and take responsibility in maintaining an open, tolerant and free society.
- Hate Crimes begin with mocking: Raise awareness that the mocking of Christians and Christianity, the negative stereotyping by the media as well as the ridiculisation of Christians and Christian positions could possibly lead to hate crimes.
- To use all available OSCE means to work against intolerance against Christians, inter alia by encouraging the media not to spread prejudices against Christians, and by working more closely with representatives of Christian churches.