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## Release of Report 2011

March 19th, 2012: The Observatory on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians in Europe is releasing a comprehensive report on the year 2011. This report portrays the most important developments with regard to freedom of religion, the most striking cases of intolerance and discrimination throughout Europe – and what individuals and institutions say about it. The report includes several statistics as well as analysis of the meaning of freedom of religion in the European context.

Download the [Report 2011 \(pdf\)](#) or [order a hardcopy](#).

Dr. Gudrun Kugler, director of the Observatory, explains: „Studies suggest that 85% of hate crimes in Europe with an anti-religious background are directed against Christians. It is high time for the public debate to respond to this reality! We also notice professional restrictions for Christians: a restrictive application of freedom of conscience leads to professions such as magistrates, doctors, nurses and midwives as well as pharmacists slowly closing for Christians. Teachers and parents get into trouble when they disagree with state-defined sexual ethics. Our research shows that only with a more accommodating approach to religion and specifically to Christianity, Europe will live up to its foundational value of freedom.“

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## Freedom of Religion Developments in 2011

2011 was marked by public discussions about religion – such as the one on the [Norwegian killer Andres Breivik](#) who was instantaneously and wrongly labelled as a ‚Christian fundamentalist‘. Anti-Christian prejudices needed a Christian equivalent to Muslim terrorism to prove true. A thoughtlessly and too hastily attributed label was gratefully received by the world’s media.

A positive development was [the famous ‘Lautsi’ case at the European Court of Human Rights](#). The Grand Chamber of the Court overturned the decision of the Court’s first instance by clarifying that crucifixes in State-school classrooms in Italy – which conferred on the country’s majority religion predominant visibility in the school environment - was not in itself sufficient to denote a process of indoctrination, and therefore did not violate the secularist parents Mr and Mrs Lautsi’s right to freedom of religion.

Another positive highlight of the year 2011 was [a resolution of the Parliamentary Assembly of OSCE](#), encouraging public debate on intolerance and discrimination against Christians in

Europe. The resolution called for a reassessment of legislation which has potential to present negative ramifications for Christians.

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## **Executive Summary of the Report 2011**

1. Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians, describing the denial of equal rights and the social marginalization of Christians, is the most explanatory term for this phenomenon in the Western world. Even though this is technically a form of persecution, it must not be called so in Europe, in order to avoid confusion with the crimes committed against Christians in other places of the world.

2. Statistics show the breadth of the problem: 74% of UK respondents said that „there is more negative discrimination against Christians than people of other faiths”. 84% of the strongly increasing vandalism in France is directed against Christian places of worship. In Scotland, 95% of religiously motivated violence targets Christians.

3. The Parliamentary Assembly of OSCE sees the problem, encourages public debate on intolerance and discrimination against Christians in Europe, and calls for a reassessment of legislation with possible negative ramifications for Christians.

4. Countless individuals and institutions have raised their voice in 2011 to draw attention to the growing intolerance against Christians, and to warn that a change is necessary.

5. 180 incidents of intolerance and discrimination against Christians were documented by the Observatory in 2011, several of which are presented in this report in the following categories: Freedom of Religion, Freedom of Expression, Freedom of Conscience, Discriminatory Equality Policies, Exclusion of Christians from Social and Public Life, Repression of Religious Symbols, Insult, Defamation and Negative Stereotyping, Hate Incidents, Vandalism and Desecrations, and Hate Crimes against Individuals.

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## **Interesting Quotations on Intolerance Against Christians in Europe**

“Sadly, in certain countries, mainly in the West, one increasingly encounters in political and cultural circles, as well in the media, scarce respect and at times hostility, if not scorn, directed towards religion and towards Christianity in particular.” Pope Benedict XVI, January 10th, 2011

"The right to hold religious beliefs, and to act in keeping with one's faith, is being set against the right not to be offended – and is losing. ...the law is out of kilter. It no longer protects the freedom of the believer in the way that it defends the interests of those who consider themselves discriminated against. ...this is an unhealthy imbalance that needs to be redressed – if not by the courts, then by Parliament." The Daily Telegraph (editorial), January 18th, 2011

“It is curious that atheists have proved to be so intolerant of those who have a faith.” Lord Chris Patten, April 12th, 2011

“The attempt to impose the current prevailing template of equality and anti-discrimination on religious organizations is an erosion of religious liberty.” UK Chief Rabbi Lord Sacks, July 4th, 2011

“We need to create a country in which people can be unashamedly proud of their faith – where they don't feel that they have to leave religion at the door. That means being proud of Christianity, not downgrading it.” UK Government Minister, Baroness Sayeeda Hussain Warsi

(a Muslim), November 1st, 2011

For details and more quotes, please visit the [Report 2011](#) or the [Observatory](#)



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