

Press release: More than 2,400 anti-Christian hate crimes in Europe in 2023, finds Vienna-based NGO OIDAC Europe

(Vienna/Warsaw, 15 November 2024) New reports by the ODIHR/OSCE and OIDAC Europe reveal widespread intolerance and discrimination against Christians in Europe.

In its latest report, the Vienna-based Observatory on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians in Europe identified **2,444 anti-Christian hate crimes** which were documented by police and civil society in **35 European countries** in 2023, including **232 personal attacks** on Christians, such as harassment, threats and physical violence.

These figures include data from the **ODIHR/OSCE**, which found **1,230 anti-Christian hate crimes** recorded by 10 European governments in 2023, up from 1,029 recorded by governments in 2022. While only **10 European governments** submitted disaggregated data on anti-Christian hate crimes in 2023, **civil society** reported incidents from **26 European countries**. The ODIHR/OSCE Hate Crime Data Report is also released on 15 November, in view of the International Day of Tolerance.

Tragically and unsurprisingly, acts of violence against Jewish and Muslim believers were particularly high. Around **9,000 anti-Semitic** and **6,000 anti-Muslim** hate crimes were reported by European governments to the ODIHR/OSCE in 2023. *“As France and some other countries with high numbers did not submit their statistics to the OSCE, the actual numbers are even higher than the OSCE data suggests. As far as anti-Christian hate crimes are concerned, we have registered 2,444 cases for 2023, but assume a high number of unreported cases”*, explained **Anja Hoffmann**, Executive Director of **OIDAC Europe**.

According to OIDAC Europe, countries of particular concern were **France**, with nearly 1,000 anti-Christian hate crimes in 2023; the **United Kingdom**, where incidents rose to more than 700; and **Germany**, which saw a 105% increase in anti-Christian hate crimes, rising from 135 in 2022 to 277 in 2023. In terms of church vandalism, German police recorded more than 2,000 cases of property damage to Christian places of worship in 2023.

Commenting on the new findings, **Professor Regina Polak, OSCE Representative on Combating Racism, Xenophobia, and Discrimination**, also focusing on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians and Members of Other Religions, said: *“Christians are the target of hate crimes across the OSCE region. The nature of these crimes ranges from graffiti to vandalism and physical assaults against Christians distributing religious materials.”*

Of the incidents recorded by OIDAC Europe in 2023, the **most common forms of violence** were vandalism against churches (62%) – including many cases of desecration

(24%) and beheading of religious statues – arson attacks (10%) and threats (8%). While physical violence remains relatively rare (7%), there have been some tragic cases in 2023, including the murder of a Catholic altar server by a jihadist terrorist in Algeciras, a car-ramming attack on a procession in Poland, and the attempted murder of a convert to Christianity from a Muslim background in the UK, who was considered by the perpetrator to be an “apostate who deserved to die”.

Professor Polak also expressed concern about the implications: *“Anti-Christian hate crimes send a **message of exclusion** to the victims and their communities, and to society as a whole. We can observe **an increase of discrimination and hate crimes against Christians also in Europe**. These phenomena must also be seen in the broader context of intolerance and discrimination against other groups and in particular against members of religious communities, both minority and majority groups.”*

In addition to violent attacks, OIDAC Europe’s report also found **discrimination against Christians in the workplace** and in **public life** in some European countries. *“In particular, Christians who adhere to traditional religious beliefs face increasing discrimination and hostility, ranging from bullying at work to the loss of employment”,* Hoffmann said. *“It is very worrying that the peaceful expression of personal religious beliefs, for example on matters relating to marriage and family, has become the potential end of a political career or employment, or even the beginning of a court case.”*

OIDAC Europe sees these trends as one of the reasons for **increasing self-censorship** among Christians in Europe. According to a 2024 survey from the UK, **only 36% of Christians under the age of 35** said they **felt free to express their Christian views** on social issues at work.

The past year has also seen a number of **restrictions on religious freedom** by European governments, ranging from bans on religious processions to the targeting of Christians for the peaceful expression of their religious beliefs. Particularly shocking was the case of a man who was **prosecuted in the UK** for **praying silently in his own mind** in a public street in a so-called ‘buffer zone’ near an abortion clinic. This and similar cases have raised international concern, including from the US Commission on International Religious Freedom.

“These trends should alert us all to step up efforts to protect freedom of religion or belief, including the freedom to openly and respectfully discuss different philosophical and religious viewpoints on sensitive issues, without fear of reprisal and censorship”, **Anja Hoffmann** says. In light prevalent high numbers of anti-Christian hate crimes in Europe Hoffmann furthermore stressed the necessity of coordinated efforts, including through the creation of the position of an **EU Coordinator combating anti-Christian**

hatred, similar to the existing mandates on combating antisemitism anti-Muslim hatred.

In conclusion **Professor Polak** underlined that the increase of discrimination and hate crimes against Christians in Europe must *“be taken more seriously by governments and civil society and needs profound research to understand its specific nature and causes”*. She pointed to [guidance](#) on combatting anti-Christian hate crimes provided by ODIHR/OSCE and encouraged victims to report incidents to ODIHR.