

OBSERVATORY ON
INTOLERANCE AND DISCRIMINATION
AGAINST CHRISTIANS IN EUROPE

REPORT 2011
ВЕБОВІ СОНІ

That “public debate on intolerance and discrimination against Christians be initiated and that the right of Christians to participate fully in public life be ensured”

That “in view of discrimination and intolerance against Christians, legislation in the participating States, including labor law, equality law, laws on freedom of expression and assembly, and laws related to religious communities and right of conscientious objection be assessed”

To “encourage the media not to spread prejudices against Christians and to combat negative stereotyping”

To “encourage Christian churches to continue their participation in public life contributing to the defense of the dignity of all human beings and to freedom and social cohesion.”

*Parliamentary Assembly
Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE),
July 2011*

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HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

The exemplary cases in this report were chosen to give a full picture of the variety of incidents taking place in our day. Some cases are listed in more than one category, depending on their explanatory quality. All cases are portrayed fully on the Observatory's website www.IntoleranceAgainstChristians.eu. There is no national or European reporting mechanism that would allow us to give clear statistics of frequency or developments over the past years. What we are able to do is provide impressions of the phenomenon, revealing to the reader its diverse aspects and far-reaching scope. We are grateful to those who have given us permission to use their information on our website.

Many cases are brought to our attention by news networks. In these cases, we disclaim responsibility for the content as we rely upon the news network for correct information. As for cases we investigate ourselves, our tight criteria for accuracy upholds a high standard of quality.

WHO WE ARE

The Observatory on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians is an NGO registered in Austria. The Observatory hosts a website which monitors and catalogues instances in which Christians and Christianity are marginalized or discriminated against throughout Europe. The Observatory focuses on Europe (European Union, EU accession countries, and wider Europe).

The Observatory gathers incidents of discrimination against Christians from media sources and individuals who report to us. We brief international governmental organizations, such as the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (of which I am a member of the Advisory Panel) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). Our findings are available to politicians, NGOs, journalists and interested individuals through our website. The Observatory is a member of the Fundamental Rights Platform of the EU-Fundamental Rights Agency.

Our work aims to encourage victims of intolerance and discrimination to tell their stories, and to raise awareness among all people of good will that the phenomenon ought to be taken seriously and is in need of common responses.

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INTRODUCTION

In December 2010, the Observatory on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians published its first report covering the years 2005-2010. The response of the media, as well as the interest of politicians, intellectuals and international institutions was immense. In 2011, we continued to take much care to observe, research, document and inform about the phenomenon of intolerance and discrimination against Christians in Europe. We were pleased to note that many who have focused exclusively on third countries that demonstrated outright persecution, are beginning to notice that the marginalization and restriction of rights and freedoms of Christians in Europe are also of concern and deserves our attention.

2011 was marked by public discussions about religion – such as the one on the Norwegian killer Andres Breivik who was instantaneously and wrongly called 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 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.

Another highlight 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..

The year 2012 also began with a victory for freedom of education, conscience and religion. On January 31st, Spain stopped the compulsory class 'education for citizenship' which nearly 55,000 parents had conscientiously objected to, and against which more than 2,700 judicial complaints had been lodged.

There is more interesting news on freedom of religion that is expected this year. The Observatory will follow these processes closely. We hope that you will, too.

*Dr Gudrun Kugler, Mts, Director
Vienna, March 2012*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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. Numerous 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.

I) UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

1. Terminology and Definitions

The phenomenon of **Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians** has received wide recognition under different names.

‘Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians’ is the phrase we use to describe the denial of equal rights of Christians and the social marginalization of Christians.

The term ‘intolerance’ refers to the social dimension, the term ‘discrimination’, to the legal. Intolerant and discriminatory behavior results from opposition to individual traits of the Christian faith or moral positions that are intrinsically part of the Christian faith. Intolerant and discriminatory behavior also results from a negative, categorical bias against Christians or Christianity as a whole. This behavior causes various sectors of society to be used as vehicles of intolerance and discrimination against Christians. Such areas of society include the media or arts (through negative stereotyping or profane exhibitions); on the governmental level (through a discriminatory law or a biased court verdict); on the political level (exclusion from the public sphere, a resolution of a parliament, etc.). Intolerance and discrimination against Christians is also promulgated in the workplace, academia, and in the private and social sphere.

‘**Christianophobia**’ or ‘**Christophobia**’ as well as ‘Anti-Christianism’ are common terms describing the same problem.

Persecution? We do not generally use the term persecution when speaking of Christians in Europe, as it refers more appropriately to a systematic mistreatment commonly understood to focus on imprisonment, torture, execution, or confiscation of property.

“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

Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians can include, among other things, the following elements (individually explained and supplemented by cases which took place in 2011 below):

I) Discrimination: Denial of Rights of Christians

- Violation of freedom of expression
- Violation of freedom of conscience
- Violation of parents’ rights with regard to the education of the children
- Violation of the institutional or collective dimension of religious freedom
- Discriminatory “equality” policies

II) Intolerance: Marginalization of Christians

- Exclusion of Christians from social and public life
- Exclusion of Christian symbols from the public
- Social disadvantages for Christians
- Incitement, insult or defamation
- Misrepresentation of Christians in the media through negative stereotyping

III) Hate Incidents

- Hate crimes against Christians
- Hate incidents such as the disruption of services
- Vandalism and desecrations

“Perhaps more than ever before there is that ‘aggressive secularism’ and there are those who would indeed try to destroy our Christian heritage and culture and take God from the public square. Religion must not be taken from the public square. Recently, various Christians in our society were marginalised and prevented from acting in accordance with their beliefs because they were not willing to publicly endorse a particular lifestyle...”

Cardinal Keith Patrick O’Brien, Scotland, April 26th, 2011

2. Statistics

We are often asked to provide numbers. There are no European-wide surveys on the phenomenon yet. Also on the national levels there are but a few statistics which shed light on the full scale of the problem. The following three national studies published in 2011 provide some insight, however, and by comparison give answers to all European Union member states:

Christians in the UK feel more side-lined than ever. 74% of respondents of a ComRes Study⁽¹⁾ said: „There is more negative discrimination against Christians than people of other faiths.“ In November 2009, „only“ 66% said so. More than 60% felt that the marginalization of Christians is increasing in the government (66%, which compares to 59% in November 2010), in the workplace (61%), and in the public (68%). 71% of the respondents perceive an increase in the marginalization of Christians in the media.

Premier Christian Media, who conducted the polls, provides the following analysis:

- A significant number of Christians perceive a strong bias exists against Christians in favor of other groups i.e. other religions and those of a different sexual orientation, in British public life.
- The general public, in addition to Christians, believe that the marginalization of Christianity in public life is increasing and will get worse in the future.
- There is an inconsistency in the way the Courts apply and interpret equality laws with regards to Christians, and fail to recognize the way this conflicts with Human Rights Legislation.
- The media plays an important role in shaping public attitudes towards Christianity.
- Secularism, the rise of Islam and apathy were identified as the greatest threats to the Christian faith.

A report of the Scottish government⁽²⁾ revealed in November 2011 that 95% of religiously motivated violence is directed against Christians. In 2010 and 2011, 693 charges aggravated by religious prejudice were reported in Scotland. This is a nearly 10 percent increase in one year and the highest level in four years. 58 percent of charges related to offences which were derogatory towards Roman Catholicism, 37 per cent towards Protestantism, 2.3 per cent related to Judaism, and 2.1 per cent related to Islam. There were charges with a religious aggravation in 27 out of Scotland's 32 Local Authority areas.

Interesting figures were published in France, revealing that 84% of vandalism incidents in 2010 were directed against Christian sites, in addition to the following details: The French Governmental Services of Classified Information, les Renseignements Généraux, released a report saying that 522 sites have been the target of desecrating

acts in 2010. This represents a 34% increase compared to 2009 (389 acts) which had already known a 46% increase compared to 2008 (266 acts). This thus represents a 96% increase in two years. Figures of the year 2010 identify 214 acts of vandalism towards cemeteries, 272 towards chapels, 26 towards war memorials and 10 towards crosses or calvaries. 84% of vandalism was directed against Christian sites, according to analyst M. Hortefeux, former minister of internal affairs⁽³⁾.

There is a "basic danger of attempting to use religious diversity as an excuse to exclude signs of Christian civilization from the public and political realities of the continent, as though this would make our continent friendlier towards non-Christians."

Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, September 12th, 2011

3. OSCE's Parliamentary Assembly Urges States to Combat Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians in the West

In July 2011, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe adopted a resolution⁽⁴⁾ recommending that a "public debate on intolerance and discrimination against Christians be initiated and that the right of Christians to participate fully in public life be ensured" (12); that, "in view of discrimination and intolerance against Christians, that legislation in the participating States, including labor law, equality law, laws on freedom of expression and assembly, and laws related to religious communities and right of conscientious objection be assessed" (13); and "encourages the media not to spread prejudices against Christians and to combat negative stereotyping" (15); and "encourages Christian churches to continue their participation in public life contributing to the defense of the dignity of all human beings and to freedom and social cohesion" (16).

Read here the full text of the *Resolution on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians in the OSCE Area*, Belgrade, July 2011:

1. Recognizing that respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law is at the core of the OSCE comprehensive concept of security,
2. Reaffirming that acts of intolerance and discrimination pose a threat to democracy and, therefore, to overall security in the OSCE region and beyond,

3. Recalling that participating States have committed themselves to ensuring human rights and fundamental freedoms to everyone within their territory and subject to their jurisdiction and will therefore provide to all persons equal and effective protection of law,

4. Reaffirming the inviolable right of the individual to profess his or her faith alone or in community, in private and in public life and to live freely according to the dictate of his or her conscience,

5. Acknowledging the positive contribution of Christians to social cohesion, cultural enrichment and value-orientated debate in our societies,

6. Welcoming the work done in this field by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights,

7. Welcoming the efforts of the Personal Representative of the Chairman-in-Office on Combating Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination, also focusing on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians and Members of other Religions, in raising awareness of this urgent challenge,

8. Condemning the problem in its different forms, both in the eastern and western countries of the OSCE,

The Parliamentary Assembly of OSCE:

9. Decides to follow up the work started in 2009 at the Expert Roundtable on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians held in Vienna on 4 March 2009;

10. Decides to intensify efforts to monitor, research and publicize the need to fight against intolerance and discrimination throughout the OSCE area, which includes efforts in the fields of, inter alia, education, media, legislation, law enforcement, and hate crime; and to work closely with representatives of Christian churches;

11. Decides to intensify consultation and co-operation with the Personal Representative of the Chairman-in-Office on a national and international level;

12. Recommends that a public debate on intolerance and discrimination against Christians be initiated and that the right of Christians to participate fully in public life be ensured;

13. Recommends, in view of discrimination and intolerance against Christians, that legislation in the participating States, including labour law, equality law, laws on freedom

of expression and assembly, and laws related to religious communities and right of conscientious objection be assessed;

14. Urges the Government of Turkey to allow the reopening of the Ecumenical Patriarchate's Theological School of Halki, without condition or further delay, in keeping with the commitment from the 1989 Vienna Concluding Document affirming the right of religious communities to provide training of religious personnel in appropriate institution;

15. Encourages the media not to spread prejudices against Christians and to combat negative stereotyping;

16. Encourages Christian churches to continue their participation in public life contributing to the defense of the dignity of all human beings and to freedom and social cohesion.

"Our country isn't spared! A crucifix and three statues of the Virgin Mary profaned in the department of the Landes within ten days. Let alone arts, which, having been 'sacred' for several centuries in our country, is henceforth too often disrespectful of Christianity. There is Christianophobia in the East – but also in the West!"

French Member of Parliament, Jacques Remiller, November 23rd, 2011

4. European Court of Human Rights Clarifies: Presence of Crucifix in State Schools does not Violate Freedom of Religion of Atheists⁽⁵⁾

The European Court of Human Rights summarizes the case in the following way: Ms Lautsi's children attended a state school where all the classrooms had a crucifix on the wall, which she considered contrary to the principle of secularism by which she wished to bring up her children. During a meeting of the school's governors, Ms Lautsi's husband raised the question of the presence of religious symbols in the classrooms, particularly mentioning crucifixes, and asked whether they ought to be removed. Following a decision of the school's governors to keep religious symbols in classrooms, Ms Lautsi brought administrative proceedings and complained in particular, without success, of an infringement of the principle of secularism.

She complained before the Court that the display of the crucifix in the State school attended by her children was in breach of Article 9 (freedom of thought, conscience and religion) and of Article 2 of Protocol No. 1 (right to education). In its Grand Chamber judgment, the Court found no violation of Article 2 of Protocol No. 1, and it held that no separate issue arose under Article 9. It held in particular that the question of religious symbols in classrooms was, in principle, a matter falling within the margin of appreciation of the State - particularly as there was no European consensus as regards that question - provided that decisions in that area did not lead to a form of indoctrination. The fact that crucifixes in State-school classrooms in Italy conferred on the country's majority religion predominant visibility in the school environment was not in itself sufficient to denote a process of indoctrination. Moreover, the presence of crucifixes was not associated with compulsory teaching about Christianity; and there was nothing to suggest that the authorities were intolerant of pupils who believed in other religions, were non-believers or who held non-religious philosophical convictions. Lastly, Ms Lautsi had retained her right as a parent to enlighten and advise her children and to guide them on a path in line with her own philosophical convictions (*Lautsi v. Italy* (30814/06), Grand Chamber judgment, 18.03.2011).

5. Other Institutions about Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians in Europe

The problem of intolerance and discrimination against Christians in Europe is receiving more and more recognition. On the following pages, we provide a selection of passages from documents of key institutions on the pertinent issues of 2011:

Church of England Report Emphasizes to Counter Anti-Christian Attempts

(12.01.2011) Church of England seeks "to be explicit about the need to counter attempts to marginalize Christianity and to treat religious faith more generally as a social problem."

Council of Europe Underlines Freedom of Religion as "Essential Precondition for Living Together" in a Resolution

(20.01.2011) "There can be no democratic society based on mutual understanding and tolerance without respect for freedom of thought, conscience and religion. Its enjoyment is an essential precondition for living together."

Ecumenical Church Leaders Conclude that Combating Christianophobia is a Common Task

(15.03.2011) Russian Orthodox Archbishop Metropolit Hilarion met with Roman Catholic Cardinal Kurt Koch to discuss cooperation between the two Churches. They mentioned the combat against "Christianophobia" in Europe and other regions of the world as a "common key issue".

European Parliament Seminar Concludes: Intolerance and discrimination against Christians exist also in EU

(16.03.2011) "There is much talk of discrimination against Christians in the world and very little or almost anything on manifestations of intolerance and discrimination against Christians in the European Union, where intolerance and discrimination happens in different member states. Anti-Christian intolerance takes place in different forms in the European Union and, therefore, requires a multi-pronged approach", said Mario Mauro MEP, about the seminar organized by the EPP Group at the European Parliament.

Pope Benedict XVI: Human Rights Must be Defended from new Threats

(29.04.2011) "As I have observed on various occasions, the roots of the West's Christian culture remain deep; it was that culture which gave life and space to religious freedom and continues to nourish the constitutionally guaranteed freedom of religion and freedom of worship that many peoples enjoy today. Due in no small part to their systematic denial by atheistic regimes of the twentieth century, these freedoms were acknowledged

and enshrined by the international community in the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Today these basic human rights are again under threat from attitudes and ideologies which would impede free religious expression. Consequently, the challenge to defend and promote the right to freedom of religion and freedom of worship must be taken up once more in our days."

EU-Commission Apologizes for Forgetting Easter and Christmas in School Diary

(02.05.2011) The European Ombudsman, P. Nikiforos Diamandouros, has closed the case after the European Commission apologized for omitting Christian holidays in a school diary it had published for 2010/2011. The diary did not mention Easter and Christmas, although it contained certain non-Christian holidays, such as the Jewish and Islamic New Years.

Cross-Party Support for Decriminalizing "Insulting" Speech in Britain

(30.05.2011) There is cross-party support in the UK for a change in the law that would remove a single word from the Public Order Act 1986 that has allowed Christians to be arrested when they offend the sensibilities of homosexual activists. The amendment proposes to remove the word "insulting".

Majority of Christians Deplore Negative Stereotyping in the Media

(01.06.2011) The media plays an important role in shaping public attitudes towards Christianity. ComRes research reveals the majority of Christians believe current representations of Christians and Christianity

in the media is often negative or misleading. According to a BBC survey conducted in 2011, respondents said representations of Christians were often 'derogatory and in some instances, anti-Christian.'

Russian Orthodox Decry Anti-Christian Discrimination

(10.06.2011) A document from the Russian Orthodox patriarchate notes the "profound concern" of its synod at the increase of Christianophobia in the world.

Pew Research Center: Rising Restrictions on Religion

(09.08.2011) One-third of the world's population experiences an increase. The Pew Research Center (Washington DC) released an report on „Rising Restrictions on Religion“ in August 2011. It states: „Europe had the largest proportion of countries in which social hostilities related to religion were on the rise from mid-2006 to mid-2009. Indeed, five of the 10 countries in the world that had a substantial increase in social hostilities were in Europe: Bulgaria, Denmark, Russia, Sweden and the United Kingdom. The study also finds that social hostilities involving religion have been rising in Asia, particularly in China, Thailand and Vietnam.“

UK Medical Defence Union Guidance: Prayer with Patients OK if Tactful

(06.10.2011) Following a number of warnings given to people working in the medical profession after they had offered prayer to their patients, the Medical Defence Union, backed by the General Medical Council, issued a guidance saying that General Practitioners could pray with patients, as long as it was "tactful".

OSCE Seeks Ways to Combat Hate Crimes against Christians

(12.09.2011) The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe held a high-level meeting on September 12th in Rome to discuss hate-motivated crimes and incidents against Christians in the OSCE area, and find ways of preventing and responding to hate crimes and incidents against Christians, as well as to attacks on places of worship.

"It is curious that atheists have proved to be so intolerant of those who have a faith."

Lord Chris Patten, April 12th, 2011

II) CASES OF INTOLERANCE AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST CHRISTIANS IN EUROPE IN 2011

We document incidents in the areas of government, politics, media, arts, education, workplace and private life. In this report, we first highlight an especially vulnerable set of rights in which Christians experienced discrimination in 2011. Secondly, we illustrate a set of particularly common methods of intolerance and discuss a number of incidents, which took place in the same year. A few of these cases are mentioned in more than one category.

1. Discrimination: Where Rights Are Denied On The Basis Of One's Christian Faith

Discriminatory laws, policies or judgments directly and indirectly jeopardize the equal exercise of rights and freedoms. With regard to Christianity in Europe, this is especially the case in the areas of freedom of religion, freedom of speech and freedom of conscience, as well as parental rights. We recommend together with the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE that legislators carefully consider new legislation and assess existing legislation giving due consideration to freedom of religion, speech and conscience, especially with regard to its effects on Christians.

1.1. Freedom of Religion

Freedom of religion is understood to include the right to raise one's children in one's faith, to share one's faith peacefully with others, to publish religious materials without censorship, to change one's religion (by choice, not coercion) or to practice no religion at all. The collective dimension of freedom of religion implies the respect of public authorities for religious institutions by respecting the managerial autonomy of the churches. It guarantees churches sufficient autonomy to fulfill their vocation according to their religious faith and morals. The increasing disrespect for collective freedom of religion has led to undue pressures and interferences in church affairs. In extreme cases, this could lead to a criminalization and prosecution of church activities. In other cases, legislation indirectly forces religious institutions to alter or put an end to their activities.

Christians indirectly become targets of discrimination when they are denied the liberty to educate their children according to their philosophical and religious views. This takes place through direct or indirect interferences of public authorities with denominational schools, as well as in religious education in non-denominational schools. On the other hand, interferences could be caused by the prohibition of opting out of classes that contravene the religious and moral convictions of the parents.

A person's religious affiliation should not be cause for discrimination in the area of employment. Certain legislation, however, has direct or indirect effects on the employment of Christians; for example the narrow interpretation of the right to conscientious objection might cause discrimination against Christians. Equally, an overly strict separation of work and personal faith might force a Christian to "leave his or her faith in the lobby".

Spain: Suspension of Catholic Services at the University of Barcelona Due to Protests by Secular Students

January 2011: At the University of Barcelona, protests by a group of secular students against the Catholic liturgical service on campus, including the interruption of the service, led to a cancellation of the weekly Wednesday Mass - until the university would be able to guarantee the safety of attending students.

International: Threats by Islamists against Coptic Churches in Europe

January 2011: Christian Copts in Europe, particularly in France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Italy, celebrated Christmas on January 6th under special police protection.

United Kingdom: Guesthouse Owners Fined for Married-Couples-Only-Policy

January 2011: The Christian owners of a

"Religious freedom cannot be restricted to the simple freedom of worship, although the latter is obviously an important part of it. With due respect to the rights of all, religious freedom includes, among others, the right to preach, educate, convert, contribute to the political discourse and participate fully in public activities."

Archbishop Dominique Mamberti, Vatican State Secretariat, September 12th, 2011

guesthouse who restrict double rooms to married couples have been ordered to pay £3,600 in damages to a homosexual couple.

Spain: Religion Teacher Forced to Remove a Crucifix and an Icon

January 2011: A Catholic religion teacher was forced to remove a cross and an icon from a wall of a shared office in a secondary school in Zújar, Spain, because two teachers said they were "offended" by them.

Turkey: One of the World's Oldest Monasteries Expropriated

January 2011: The lands surrounding the Syrian-orthodox monastery of Mor Gabriel, near Midyat in South-Eastern Turkey, have been expropriated by Turkey's supreme court. According to the verdict, the treasury of Turkey has a right to claim the lands.

Spain: University of Valladolid Bars Access to Chapel Saying "Whoever Wants to Pray, Go To the Field"

February 2011: Due to "security reasons", a glass panel has been set up in order to prevent any worshippers from entering the chapel of the University of Valladolid. The Christian student union met with the president of the university in order to ex-

press frustration over such a barrier. Their complaints were not heard. The only answer received from the faculty was: "God is everywhere. Go away to pray in the field."

International: Christian iPhone Applications Removed

March 2011: Apple suppresses diversity of belief by shutting down two Christian iPhone applications claiming that they were "offensive to large groups of people", and the support of traditional marriage, family, and life "expose[d] a group to harm" and delivered "hate speech".

Germany: Mother Jailed for Refusing Government Sex-Ed

March 2011: Irene Wiens, mother of twelve, served a 43-day jail sentence in Germany for refusing to enroll her children in sex-ed classes, deemed by her husband and herself to teach a too permissive view of human sexuality. An appeal to the European Court of Human Rights has been filed.

Spain: Court Interferes in Church Self-Administration in Hiring Decision

April 2011: The Spanish Constitutional Tribunal ruled that Catechism teacher Resurrección Galera Navarro, whose working contract was not renewed after marrying

a divorced man and not informing her employer, was dismissed unlawfully. Employer Ferrer Guardia Catholic School in Almeria was sentenced to pay compensation.

Germany: Flash Mob Disturbs Good Friday Procession

April 2011: A flash mob, intended to protest against a law prohibiting dancing events on certain holidays, interrupted the Good Friday procession of the Croatian Catholic community in Frankfurt.

International: Anti-Pope-Campaign Sues Pope at International Tribunal

May 2011: The campaign "Calling the Pope to Account" sued Pope Benedict XVI at the International Criminal Court in The Hague for crimes against humanity. As charges were named: "the preservation and leadership of a worldwide totalitarian regime of coercion, which subjugates its members with terrifying and health-endangering threats; the adherence to a fatal forbiddance of the use of condoms, even when the danger of HIV-AIDS infection exists; and the establishment and maintenance of a worldwide system of cover-up of the sexual crimes". The campaign was accompanied by bill-board posters and a book.

United Kingdom: Medical Doctor Reprimanded for Talking about Christianity to a Patient

May 2011: Richard Scott, a medical doctor with a 28-year spotless work record, has been given a disciplinary call for sharing his faith with a patient who had previously consented to this.

Italy: Church Service Disturbed By Activists

June 2011: In the parish of St. Giuseppe Calasanzio in Milan, activists wanted to harass a priest for his views on homosexuality. They interrupted mass carrying banners, shouting and jostling.

Italy: Local Government Eliminates Traditional Barbecue at Ascension Day During the Time of Ramadan in Novara

August 2011: In the first year after the centre-left's victory at local elections, local politicians decided to prohibit the traditional Ascension Day barbecue – at which 'Crostone' and 'Salamelle' (special Italian sausages) have been indispensable for decades. The reason was that Ascension Day took place during Ramadan. Concerned with not offending the Muslim minority, the local government decided to serve only watermelon instead of the traditional barbecue.

United Kingdom: Call for Ban on Church Marriage if Churches Would Not Perform Same-Sex Unions As Well

September 2011: Mike Weatherley, member of U.K. Prime Minister David Cameron's government is calling for a ban on marriages at Christian churches if they refuse to also perform same-sex unions.

International: Moslem Protester Calls for "Jihad to Christian Extremists"

September 2011: On a protest against the USA and the UK in London on September 11, a group of Muslims marched through London. A sign was carried which read "Jihad to Christian Extremists".

Ireland: Legal Proposal Endangers Freedom of Religion by Seeking to Interfere with the Seal of Confession

September 2011: The Irish Government is set on passing a law that will require priests to break the seal of confession if they hear about child abuse in the confessional.

Russia: City Halts Construction of Catholic Church with Legal Hardships

October 2011: The archbishop of Moscow, Msgr Paolo Pezzi, has criticized the city of Pskov (North-West Russia) for discriminating against the Catholic Church by denying the prolongation of a building permit.

United Kingdom: Two Local Councils in South East England Told to Stop Holding Prayers at the Beginning of Council Meetings

October 2011: Crowborough Town Council and Mayfield Parish Council - both in East Sussex - have both been told that prayers "should not be part of a council meeting". The warning comes from the Sussex Association of Local Councils, which is responsible for local government in the area.

Spain: Aggressive Campaign to Remove Theology Department at University of Granada

November 2011: The 'Association in Defense of Public and Laity at Universities' has asked the Dean of the University of Granada in a letter to dissolve the Theology Department saying: "The creation of a Theology Studies Department is a violation of the neutrality and laity principles consecrated in the Spanish Constitution; it is an attack at the university because it undermines the independence and accuracy of the rational and critical thinking, because it puts theology at the same level as science, even though it has not other fundament that the faith itself. With the institution of a Theology Department the university moves forward into Catholicism, and thereby backwards to medieval times and national-socialism [dictatorship]."

United Kingdom: High Court Action against Council Prayers Under Way

November 2011: The National Secular Society went to court to stop Bideford Town Council from keeping opening prayers on its agenda.

"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

1.2. Freedom of Expression

Voltaire is quoted for this sentence: "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it." Freedom of expression or speech is one of the fundamental rights of a democratic society. This includes the right to publically make declarations however unpopular and unpleasant they may be. This right also applies to public acknowledgement of one's faith and enables people to declare the truth according to their faith, as long as they are not direct instigations to violence. Also unpopular, impolite, disrespectful or stupid statements are protected under freedom of expression. The European Court of Human Rights even speaks of a "right to shock"⁽⁶⁾. So-called hate-speech legislation is often in contradiction to the fundamental freedom of expression.

Germany: Christian Pro Life Activist Sentenced for Expressing His Opinion

January 2011: Mr Günther Annen demonstrated in front of the abortion clinic of Dr. Karl-Heinz Jordan twice in August 2010, displaying a sign which said: „Why does Dr. Karl-Heinz Jordan kill unborn children?“ He was sentenced for insult to a penalty of 1500 € by the Darmstadt public prosecutor's office on Jan. 25, 2011.

France: Teacher Dismissed for Showing a Film About Abortion

March 2011: A French history teacher was permanently dismissed for showing his students a video on abortion and talking about French abortion law.

Germany: Sidewalk Counselling Prohibited in Munich

May 2011: The local authorities in Munich (Kreisverwaltungsreferat, KVR) have prohibited all pro-life activity in front of Germany's biggest abortion clinic (Dr. Friedrich Stapf, 4000 abortions per year) and called the so-called side-walk counselling

a serious impropriety („grobe Ungehörigkeit“) to be punished by a fine of 500 €.

Germany: Ban on Faith-Based Pregnancy Conflict Counselling in Freiburg and Mannheim

June 2011: In Freiburg, the Agency for Public Order restricted access around the entrance area of Pro Familia (an organisation which offers pregnancy conflict counselling including the option of abortion) for counsellors of the faith-based non-profit association 'Centre of Life - Helpers of God's Precious Infants' (Lebenszentrum - Helfer für Gottes kostbare Kinder e.V.) The aim of the association is to encourage and support expecting mothers in conflict to give birth to their child by offering different kinds of support.

United Kingdom: Christian Media Ad Banned By Authorities Banned Ad

July 2011: The media group Premier Christian Radio's advertisement on marginalization of Christians in the workplace was banned by the Radio Advertising Clearance Centre (RACC) for being "politi-

"The law does not prevent Christians from expressing their views at work. The law, rightly, expects everyone, including those of no faith, to act with due respect for other people's rights and duties in the field of religion or belief. However some employers have interpreted the law in ways which seem to assume that reasonable and respectful expressions of faith are, almost by definition, offensive. This is a cause of great concern."

Dr Philip Giddings, Church of England, July 11 th, 2011

cally motivated". Even though the ad was modified and redone several times, RACC upheld the ban.

Germany: Politician Plans to Sue Physicians for Offering Therapy for People Struggling With Unwanted Same-Sex Attraction

August 2011: Volker Beck, member of the German Bundestag (parliament) and speaker on human rights issues of the Green party, has launched an initiative to engage the German Medical Association against the German Union of Catholic Physicians (BKÄ). On their website, the BKÄ provides information about therapeutic options for unwanted same-sex attraction.

Poland: Poznan Medical University Breaks Previous Agreement to Host Reparative Therapy Conference

September 2011: A reparative therapy conference, which aims to help people who struggle with same sex attraction,

was denied the use of the Medical School Foundation (UM) facilities in Poznan, Poland. The conference, featuring psychologist Dr. Joseph Nicolosi of the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH), received criticism in the Polish newspaper Gazeta Wyborcza which led the UM to decide not to host the event.

United Kingdom: (Jersey) Post Refuses to Deliver "Offensive" Bible CD

September 2011: Postal workers in Jersey refused to deliver audio recordings of St Mark's Gospel after deeming it "offensive material". Several churches clubbed together to pay for 45,000 CDs to be produced to mark the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible. A copy of the recording was due to be delivered to every household on the Channel Island of Jersey.

France: Pro-Life Manifestation Attacked

September 2011: The Christian pro-life

"In our right to speak freely, please let us not become too politically correct, because surely political correctness is as severe a form of censorship as any."

Camilla Mountbatten-Windsor, May 11th, 2011

group “SOS Tout Petits” was attacked by pro-choice and anti-Christian activists during a manifestation in front of the Paris Hospital Tenon while praying peacefully.

Germany: Left Wing Extremists Violently End Pro-Life Rally in Düsseldorf

September 2011: Left-wing extremists prevented a pro-life group from showing a short movie about the development of the human embryo on the square in front of Düsseldorf’s main railway station.

United Kingdom: Police Visits Christian Cafe for Display of Bible Passages

September 2011: Jamie Murray, the owner of Salt & Light Coffee House in Blackpool, has been visited by the Lancashire Police and threatened for the display of Bible verses on a TV screen inside his coffee house. The police told Murray that the Bible passages used offensive, insulting words, and this constituted a violation of Section 5 of the Public Order Act. The next day, the officer apologized to Mr. Murray.

United Kingdom: Demotion and Pay Cut After Criticizing Gay Marriage on Facebook

October 2011: Adrian Smith of Manches-

ter was demoted by his employer Trafford Council and Trafford Housing Trust, and suffered a 40% pay cut after making a comment regarding the controversial plans of the ministers that could allow same-sex couples by law to „marry” in Church although the Church of England refuses to participate.

Austria: Pro-Life Sidewalk Counsellors Condemned by Court

October 2011: On October 25th, the state court of Graz, Styria, upheld a judgment of the first instance condemning pro-life side-walk counsellors to payments between 350 and 6200 Euro.

United Kingdom: (Scotland) Former Leader Becomes Victim of Religious Discrimination

October 2011: Former Scottish National Party leader Gordon Wilson has said a ‘lynch mob’ booted him off the board of Dundee Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) because of his support for traditional marriage after Mr Wilson had responded to the Scottish Government’s consultation on redefining marriage, saying that he was opposed to the idea.

“Britain is a Christian country. Christianity has given a huge amount to our country, and continues to do so... I think Churches, and religious organisations, have a huge amount to bring to the Big Society... So I think the Big Society is something that people of all faiths, but particularly of the Christian faith, can get very involved in... I’ve never really understood this argument about ‘Should the Church get involved in politics? Yes or no?’ To me, Christianity, faith, religion, the Church, is involved in politics because so many political questions are moral questions... So I don’t think we should be frightened about having these debates, and these discussions. . .”

UK Prime Minister David Cameron, May 10th, 2011

France: Prefecture Prohibits Pro-Life Manifestation, Allows Left Wing Counter Protests

November 2011: The French Christian pro-life group “SOS Tout-petits” registered a manifestation against abortion to take place on Nov 19th in front of the Paris Hospital Tenon. Even though the request for the permit came in due time, the prefecture withdrew the permission last minute. The reasons given were that the

manifestation could be a disturbance of the public order and safety could not be guaranteed. At the same time, pro-choice groups which had organized a counter manifestation, and who had violently attacked the pro-life group during previous manifestations, were allowed to hold their manifestation by walking around the hospital.

1.3. Freedom of Conscience

Freedom of conscience enables a believer to live according to the demands of his faith, which gives meaning to his own life. Limiting or denying an individual the right to freedom of conscience, voids this right of meaning and violates personal autonomy as a main requirement of human dignity.

United Kingdom: Homosexual Couple Sues Christian B&B Owners for Denying them a Room

January 2011: Christian bed and breakfast owners Francis and Susanne Wilkinson were inundated with abusive calls and emails and face a possible lawsuit after denying a double room to a homosexual couple.

United Kingdom: Government Requires Foster Parents to Affirm Homosexuality Rules High Court

February 2011: Experienced foster parents lose rights to foster due to religious beliefs on homosexuality. Appeal to High Court lost.

Germany: Windows Shattered of Pharmacy in Which Morning-After-Pill was not Sold for Conscience Reasons

March 2011: The windows of a pharmacy in Berlin’s Neukölln district were shattered

because the owner does not sell the so called ‘morning-after-pill’ due to his catholic convictions. The offenders called their attack a “contribution to the international women’s action day”.

Spain: Medical Doctor Forced to Refer to Abortion

April 2011: A Spanish general practitioner from Antequera, whose beliefs conflict with abortion, must refer women seeking pregnancy termination to doctors who will do it. This was clarified by Malaga Court.

United Kingdom: Christian Counsellor Victim of Under-Cover Investigation

May 2011: Psychotherapist Lesley Pilkington faces being stripped of her professional status by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy for giving therapy to a homosexual man who pretended to be a Christian wishing to

stop practicing homosexuality. In reality, the man was a homosexual activist who secretly recorded and subsequently complained about her. It was reported that a key witness in favor of Ms Pilkington was threatened into not speaking at the hearings.

Sweden: Parliament Decides to Campaign to Force Health Professionals to Perform Abortions in the Council of Europe Member States

May 2011: The Swedish Parliament voted to campaign against a Council of Europe resolution, which reiterated the right to conscientious objection for health professionals who do not want to perform abortions.

Poland: Christian-Inspired Polish Abortion Law Targeted by International Institutions

June 2011: Poland's life-protecting abortion law, which is inspired by its strong Christian identity, is under attack by international and supranational bodies. This disrespect of national sovereignty is intolerant towards Poland's Christian heritage.

Netherlands: Conscientious Objection in Peril for Amsterdam Marriage Commissioners

June 2011: Marriage commissioners in a

district of Amsterdam will be forced to undergo annual evaluations to ensure they support same-sex 'marriage' after revelations that two commissioners had refused to officiate at the ceremonies. Since 2007, the government in Amsterdam's Nieuw-West district has only employed commissioners who agree to perform same-sex 'marriages', and officials apparently believed the district was "free" of "conscientious objectors".

United Kingdom: Hospital Attempted to Force Christian Nurses to Perform Abortions

August 2011: A hospital in London which had attempted to force two Christian nurses to participate in abortions has backed down after legal threats using the Equality Act to protect the nurses' pro-life beliefs.

United Kingdom: New Guidelines from the General Pharmaceutical Council Threaten Freedom of Conscience

August 2011: New guidelines issued by the UK pharmaceutical regulatory board define professional conduct with conscientious objection too narrow: mandatory referral after a confirmation that the respective drug is on stock; mandatory

indication of the objection during a job interview, which might force applying pharmacists to decide between their consciences or getting a job.

Netherlands: Doctors Should Refer Patients for Euthanasia Say New Dutch Guidelines

September 2011: According to new guidelines from the Dutch national doctors association, doctors with moral objections to euthanasia have "a moral and professional duty" to refer patients to another

doctor willing to euthanize them.

International: Ongoing Outside Pressure on Ireland to Legalize Abortion

October 2011: At a UN meeting, delegates from Britain, Denmark, Spain and other countries called for Ireland to legalize abortion - with Denmark calling for legislation to allow for abortion on demand, constituting pressure which seeks to undermine the Christian convictions of the majority of the Irish population.

1.4. Discriminatory Equality Policies

We often come across overly-broad equal treatment or anti-discrimination legislation which causes indirect discrimination of Christians as a side-effect. This we call *discriminatory equality policies*. Similarly, hate speech legislation has a tendency to indirectly discriminate against Christians by criminalizing core elements of Christian teaching.

United Kingdom: Guesthouse Owners Fined for Married-Couples-Only-Policy

January 2011: Peter and Hazelmary Bull, Christians and owners of a guesthouse, restrict double rooms to married couples. They have been ordered to pay £3,600 in damages to a homosexual couple.

United Kingdom: Homosexual Couple Sues Christian B&B Owners for Denying Them a Room

January 2011: Christian bed and breakfast owners Francis and Susanne Wilkinson inundated with abusive calls and emails and face a possible lawsuit after denying a double room to a homosexual couple.

European Institutions: EU High Representative Lady Ashton Deems Condemnation of Christian Persecution Politically Incorrect

January 2011: EU Foreign Ministers rejected a draft resolution condemning the atrocities against Christian minorities in Egypt and Iraq, as they could not agree on the word 'Christian' in their draft statement in an effort to remain "politically correct."

United Kingdom: Government Requires Foster Parents to Affirm Homosexuality Rules UK High Court

February 2011: Experienced foster parents lose rights to foster due to religious beliefs on homosexuality. Appeal to High Court lost.

We are "in danger of putting religion in a box only to be brought out on ceremonial occasions. Religion, certainly the Christian faith, is much more than that ... the right to liberty of conscience, freedom of expression and religious liberty is not restricted to the private realm. One does not lose them when one steps into the public sphere. Indeed, for the sake of everyone's liberty it is paramount that such rights are upheld in the public realm."

Lord Mackay of Clashfern, February 1st, 2011

Croatia: Attempt to Silence Catholic Catechism Teacher

March 2011: Catholic catechism teacher of a Zagreb primary school was accused of homophobia for saying nothing else but Catholic Church teachings during catechism classes.

International: Christian iPhone Applications Removed

March 2011: Apple suppresses diversity of belief by shutting down two Christian iPhone applications claiming that the were “offensive to large groups of people”, and the support of traditional marriage, family, and life “expose[d] a group to harm” and delivered “hate speech”.

Spain: Legal Proposal Seeks to Deny Public Funding to Schools that Separate Boys from Girls

May 2011: With the approval of the Council of Ministers of Spain, the State Department of Education submitted a motion to the Congress to deny public funds to schools that teach their students in gender-separated classrooms. This method of education has been applied mostly by Christian school in Spain. The same was previously attempted in the regions of Asturias, Cantabria, and Andalucía.

Netherlands: Conscientious Objection in Peril for Amsterdam Marriage Commissioners

June 2011: Marriage commissioners in a district of Amsterdam will be forced to undergo annual evaluations to ensure they support same-sex “marriage” after revelations that two commissioners had refused to officiate at the ceremonies. Since 2007, the government in Amsterdam’s Nieuw-West district has only employed commissioners who agree to perform same-sex ‘marriages’, and officials apparently believed the district was “free” of “conscientious objectors”.

United Kingdom: Catholic Care Forced to Close or Allow Gay Adoption after Tribunal Decision

August 2011: Catholic Care of the Diocese of Leeds was ordered to close or allow gay adoption. It was however granted to appeal this latest decision against it in the long-running case sparked by the Charity Commission’s refusal to allow it administer its adoption service only to heterosexual married couples.

International: Pro-family Groups Discriminated Against by PayPal Services

September 2011: Homosexual activists’ websites are boasting of victory in an ongoing campaign to induce PayPal, one of the world’s largest payment processing companies, to eliminate pro-family Christian sites from its service.

United Kingdom: MP Calls for Churches to be Stripped of Licenses for Refusing to Marry Gays

September 2011: Churches which refuse to conduct gay marriages should be stripped of their license, according to Member of Parliament Mike Weatherley of Hove. While marriage between people of the same sex is not legal in the UK but civil partnerships were introduced in

2005 to give couples the same legal protection as if they were wed. Mr Weatherley said according to ‘The Argus’: “As long as religious groups can refuse to preside over ceremonies for same-sex couples there will be inequality. Until we untangle unions and religion in this country we will struggle to find a fair arrangement.”

2. Intolerance: Where Christians and Expressions of Christianity are Marginalized

Religious intolerance is demonstrated in different ways. Attempts are underway to make the public expression or exercise of the non-tolerated religion impossible. When such intolerance is conducted by the state, it often becomes discrimination with regard to the exercise of fundamental freedoms. When it is conducted by individuals or groups of society, it becomes a social phenomenon. This phenomenon must be recognized and tackled by soft political measures, such as awareness campaigns, training of professional groups, etc. Also, the arts have become a playground for anti-Christian activity. Some of the most desecrating and blasphemous acts today are sadly found in art exhibitions varying from defamatory paintings to obscene depictions of what is considered holy by many. The Observatory calls for respect of religious identity and convictions in the art community, including artists as well as gallery owners and hosts. Works of art that are solely directed towards mocking faith, as we often witness with regard to mocking the Christian faith, should not be offered a stage.

2.1. Exclusion of Christians from Social and Public Life

Most social incidents do not come to light. Christians tend to believe that they should not call attention to their own situation. They are embarrassed or do not see any gain in being tolerated only as a result of public pressure. Many cases therefore never come to light and do not receive the attention they deserve. Please find a selection of those few who did in the following:

“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

United Kingdom: "Get Bishops Out Of Our Law-Making" Demands Journalist

February 2011: Under the headline: "Get bishops out of our law-making", journalist Mr Hari criticizes the bishops for voting against measures within the highly controversial Equality Bill and for their stance on end-of-life issues.

Spain: Easter Holidays Renamed to "Trimester Break" in School Calendar

March 2011: The traditional school break during Easter was renamed as the Education Council of Castilla-La Mancha decided to call the Easter holidays "break between trimesters". A similar proposal was suggested in Barcelona but it did not succeed as the original name was considered to be not only linked to Christianity, but also to the traditions and the history of the region.

France: Teacher Dismissed for Showing a Film About Abortion

March 2011: A French history teacher was permanently dismissed for showing his students a video on abortion and talking about French abortion law.

Spain: 300 Academic Signatures in Support of Removing Chapels from Campuses

March 2011: Professors and authorities of several Spanish public universities have signed a document supporting the anti-chapel students' movement. After a violent incident took place at Somosaguas Chapel located on Computense University campus, in Madrid, the professors affirmed in the document that "the presence of chapels and other symbols

of religion power has no relation with the freedom of religion but with a Catholic Church privilege; and the time to end such [privileges] has arrived".

Spain: Socialist Youth Political Movement Promotes Elimination of Religious Symbols and Funding Cuts to Church

April 2011: The Socialist Youth of Spain (Juventudes Socialistas de España) has started an electoral platform that supports the removal of every religious symbol from public schools, and the progressive reduction of funds including the elimination of schools that receive taxpayers' money but are run privately (which are mostly confessional schools).

Austria: Landowner at Pilgrims' Route Prohibits Priests to Enter Property

May 2011: One of the routes to the main Austrian Catholic Shrine, Maria Zell, located in the Austrian mountains, leads through the forest of Mr. Josef Rothwangl. Mr. Rothwangl put up a sign prohibiting priests to enter his property when accompanied by children or youth, implying that all priests were child abusers.

United Kingdom: Personal Experiences of Marginalization

May 2011: Evangelical Premier Media conducted a survey called "Freedom of the Cross Consultations" in May 2010. 12 % of the respondents answered that they had experienced discrimination personally, another 10% indicated that they knew someone who had.

United Kingdom: Employee Suspended Upon Display of Cross

August 2011: A UK Christian electrician who won a fight with his employer over his right to display a small Palm leaf cross in his van is now saying that the company has reneged on its agreement. 64-year-old Colin Atkinson was asked by his employers, Wakefield and District Housing (WDH) in West Yorkshire, to remove the cross after an anonymous complaint from a WDH tenant. The company threatened Atkinson with disciplinary action when he refused, but backed down when their threats prompted a public outcry and criticism from prominent religious leaders.

United Kingdom: MP Calls for Churches to be Stripped of Licences for Refusing to Marry Gay Couples

September 2011: Churches which refuse to conduct gay marriages should be stripped of their licence to perform any marriage, according to Member of Parliament Mike Weatherley of Hove. While same-sex marriage is not legal in the UK, civil partnerships were introduced in 2005 to give couples the same legal protection as if they were wed. Mr Weatherley said according to 'The Argus': "As long as religious groups can refuse to preside over ceremonies for same-sex couples there will be inequality. Until we untangle unions and religion in this country we will struggle to find a fair arrangement."

United Kingdom: Christian Debt Counselling Charity Excluded from Support Network for Offering Prayer to Clients

September 2011: 'Advice UK', the largest support network for free advice centres in

the UK, has pushed out a Christian debt counselling charity from its membership for offering to pray with clients suffering from debt problems.

United Kingdom: High Court Action against Council Prayers Under Way

November 2011: The National Secular Society uses courts to stop Bideford Town Council from keeping prayers on its agenda.

France: Prefecture Prohibits Pro-Life Manifestation, Allows Left Wing Counter Protests

November 2011: The French Christian pro-life group 'SOS Tout-petits' registered a manifestation against abortion to take place on Nov 19th in front of the Paris Hospital Tenon. Even though the request for the permit came in due time, the prefecture withdrew the permission last minute. Reasons given were that the manifestation could be a disturbance of the public order and safety could not be guaranteed. At the same time, pro-choice groups which had organized a counter manifestation, and who had violently attacked the pro-life group during previous manifestations were allowed to hold their manifestation by walking around the hospital.

United Kingdom: Consistent Harassment of Christian Employee by Muslim Colleagues

November 2011: Nouhad Halawi claimed she and other Christian colleagues at Heathrow Airport's World Duty Free shop are victims of a hate campaign run by fundamentalist Muslims. According to Halawi, she suffered consistent pressure and threats because of her beliefs, and for

wearing a necklace cross.

United Kingdom: A Study Reveals That Christians are a Minority at the BBC

December 2011: A diversity survey conducted internally by the BBC revealed

that only 22.5 of its employees are Christians. In a country where the majority of the population identified themselves as Christians, the fact that the BBC staff do not constitute a fair representation of the public constitute a factor that needs to be corrected, said BBC veteran Roger Bolton.

2.2. Repression and Mockery of Religious Symbols

The wearing or displaying of religious symbols is a constitutive element of one's faith. The beholder could wrongly perceive the displaying as an attempt of proselytizing, as a symbol of not tolerating another or no religion, or be simply unpleasantly reminded of what Christianity stands for. While the Observatory understands such emotional reactions, it sees no reason to limit freedom of religion by repressing or removing religious symbols. Freedom of religion includes the wearing of religious symbols in schools or in the work place as an expression of identity as long as no danger for public health or order derives from it. The Observatory also calls for respect of long-standing traditions and historic-cultural parameters when considering religious symbols in public places. The Christian symbol of the cross is more than a religious symbol, it illustrates historical roots and its removal is not an act of neutrality.

Spain: Religion Teacher Forced to Remove a Crucifix and an Icon

January 2011: A Catholic religion teacher was forced to remove a cross and an icon from a wall of a shared office in a secondary school in Zújar, Spain because two teachers said they were "offended" by them.

Spain: Film Trailer Displays A Jesus as Homosexual Activist

April 2011: "The Pink Wall", a film by Enrique del Pozo and Julian Lara, presents Christ crucified to a pink wall, wearing eye shadow and lipstick, wrapped in a gay flag around his hips. At the top of the cross the letters "INRI" have been replaced with "LGTB" (lesbian, gay, transsexual and

bisexual).

France: Art Exhibit Displays Demeaning Image Called "Piss Christ"

April 2011: 'Piss Christ' is a photograph by Andres Serrano which shows a crucifix submerged in yellow liquid. Serrano, an American artist, said that the amber liquid is his own urine. 'Piss Christ' has been displayed since the beginning of April at the art gallery 'Collection Lambert' in Avignon.

Spain: Hurtful Painting Displayed at the Beginning of the Holy Week

April 2011: As part of the 'Casus Belli art exhibition', the painting 'Cristo das Rías Baixas' attributed to Manuel Moldes,

has been displayed in Santiago de Compostela. The mural size artwork shows a crucified body, upside down, and totally naked. The display of the painting, which is supported by the City Mayor of Compostela, is an act that is hurtful to the faithful, especially while they celebrate the 800th anniversary of the Cathedral and the beginning of the Holy Week. The Archdioceses of Santiago expressed its disappointment because the painting offended the religious sentiments.

Spain: Image of the Virgin Mary Removed Because Official Visit

April 2011: The image of the Virgen del Pilar, patron of the Spanish Civil Guard, has been removed from its original location in Aranjuez. The image was placed years ago at the students' cafeteria inside the Spanish Civil Guard Academy. The removal was due to the visit of the Ministry of Interior and vice president of the socialist political party (PSOE), Alfredo Pérez Rubalcaba. The order came from one of Rubalcaba's close collaborators because "it was not appropriate to see the image while the officer was having a wine of honor".

United Kingdom: Employee Suspended Upon Display of Cross

August 2011: A UK Christian electrician who won a fight with his employer over his right to display a small Palm leaf cross in his van is now saying that the company has reneged on its agreement. 64-year-old Colin Atkinson was asked by his employers, Wakefield and District Housing (WDH) in West Yorkshire, to remove the cross after an anonymous complaint from a WDH tenant. The company threatened Atkinson with disciplinary action, but

backed down when their threats prompted a public outcry and criticism from prominent religious leaders.

Germany: Crucifixion Group Defaced in Wassenberg-Myhl

August 2011: On August 21st a crucifixion group was defaced with black paint in Wassenberg-Myhl by strangers.

Switzerland: Immigrant Club Calls For Removal of the Cross in the Swiss Flag

August 2011: The Swiss club of immigrants 'Secondos Plus' demands that the Swiss Cross be removed from the flag of Switzerland because it "didn't correspond anymore to the multicultural Switzerland of today." As alternative, they suggest returning to the national flag of 1799 which contains green, red and yellow stripes.

France: Contemptuous Play Shown in French Theaters

August 2011: 'Golgotha Picnic', a theater play written by Rodrigo García, abuses Christian icons and Bible passages by bringing them in the proximities of terror and barbarism. Christ is called "el diablo puto" ("the f... devil"); money notes are placed at the Jesus' side wound; burger bread covers the floor as a parody of the multiplication of the loaves; and a piano player, totally naked, ridicules the 'Seven Last Words of Christ on the Cross' by Haydn.

France: Marketing Campaign for Canal+ Series Smashes Holy Images

September 2011: „Borgia“ TV series produced by the French TV channel "Canal+" in association with EOS Entertainment

and distributed by Beta Film GmbH, used holy symbols for promotional advertisements in a profane way.

Germany: Destruction of Crosses as Protest Against the Visit of the Pope

September 2011: A radical atheist group called „What the f...“ released a video on YouTube in which crosses are being destroyed with much violence and hatred.

France: Theater Play Hurts Feelings of Christians

September 2011: Several French theaters have scheduled Romeo Castellucci's play 'Sur le concept du visage du fils de Dieu' (On the concept of the face of the son of God) or 'Golgotha picnic' to be on their stage this year. The play 'Sur le concept du visage du fils de Dieu' depicts in the second act a group of children throwing grenades onto a large image of Jesus displayed in the back of the stage. After Jesus is stoned, the third act shows the same image of Jesus being torn apart while the words "you are (not) my Shepherd" are displayed.

United Kingdom: (Scotland) Christmas Snubbed by Government

October 2011: The Scottish Government failed to mention Christmas in its 'Winter Festivals' program. In an official news release, the Government mentions 'St Andrew's Day' eleven times, 'Hogmanay' five times and also 'Burns Night' several times. Christmas is not mentioned at all.

France: Catholic Cemetery of Sussargues Vandalized

November 2011: The cemetery of the vil-

lage of Sussargues in France has been vandalized. The perpetrator(s) damaged about thirty graves and memorials. Crucifixes were broken or turned upside down, statuettes of the Virgin Mary were planted head in the ground. Satanist expressions are visible on many graves.

Switzerland: Vandalism against Wayside Crosses and Corpuses

November 2011: In the Swiss village of St. Pantaleon-Nuglar, unknown perpetrators have attacked Christian images several times. Corpuses were pulled off crosses, taken away or destroyed. One corpus was hung on a tree. The image of a naked woman was sprayed on a cross which had before been vandalized and stripped of the corpus. A charge against unknown persons was submitted by the private owner of the wayside cross.

Germany: Theater Play Advertisement Portrays Jesus as King of Lies and Meaninglessness

November 2011: 'Die Präsidentinnen' – 'The female presidents' is a theater play by Werner Schwab, first shown in Vienna. In November 2011, it was restaged in Cologne. It is a play about the "lies of life", disappointed hopes and meaninglessness. The advertisement poster of the restaged performance shows a crucifix hanging on a toilet. For Christians, this implies that Jesus Christ was the king of lies and ought to be flushed down the toilet in the cleansing process. This is offensive and hurtful to Christians.

United Kingdom: Children DVD Stripped of Christian Christmas-related Content

November 2011: Produced by 'Hit Enter-

tainment', the TV episode 'Keeping up with James' based on Reverend Wilbert Audry's books was stripped of every reference to Christmas. The Christmas season is called winter holidays, and the Christmas tree is named the holiday tree. On the DVD narrator Michael Angelis tells viewers: "You'll always see a tree with decorations during the winter holidays."

France: Five Christian Icons Vandalized on a Week of Anti-Christian Raids in Dax (Landes)

November 2011: Three images of Mary and two crucifixes were vandalized in the city of Dax between November 10th and 18th. The statue of Mary located in Pontonx church was covered from the top to the bottom with red paint; the face of a Virgin located at the Sagnac-y-Cambran junction was covered with red as well, and the Virgin of Buglose's face was covered with black paint. One of the vandalized crucifixes was painted in red and the arms were cut off, while the one located inside Rion-des-Landes church was covered with red paint.

Germany: Pro-Condom Campaign Takes Image of the Mother of Jesus "Hostage" and Symbolically Drowns Her

December 2011: 'Jugend gegen AIDS' (Youth against AIDS), a Hamburg based youth organization, launched a campaign in support of the use of condoms and against Catholic policy, targeting Mary, the mother of Jesus. In a video, a statue of Mary is taken hostage and placed in glass tank. A pipe is connected to the Virgin's eye, and every time a Facebook user 'likes' the campaign web site on the social media, a drop of water falls from Her eye, and increases the level of the water in the tank where the Virgin has been placed.

United Kingdom: Anti-Christian Sculpture Displayed in Art Gallery

December 2011: An anonymous artist donated a stone bust of a cardinal with his face covered in pixels to a gallery in Liverpool. The sculpture implies that Church officials are criminals. "... it's easy to forget the true meaning of Christianity - the lies, the corruption, the abuse," says the producer. Reyahn King, the art gallery's director, is "thrilled".

"It is clear that if relativism is considered an essential element of democracy, one risks viewing secularity solely in the sense of excluding or, more precisely, denying the social importance of religion. But such an approach creates confrontation and division, disturbs peace, harms human ecology and, by rejecting in principle approaches other than its own, finishes in a dead end. There is thus an urgent need to delineate a positive and open secularity which, grounded in the just autonomy of the temporal order and the spiritual order, can foster healthy cooperation and a spirit of shared responsibility."

Pope Benedict XVI, January 10th, 2011

2.3. Insult, Defamation and Negative Stereotyping

Generalizing insulting or defaming statements about individual Christians, Christian institutions or Christianity as whole, on broadcasts or in person, in graffiti, on leaflets or posters, often during manifestations or political activities, are not only hurtful to Christians but create social hostility and professional difficulties. Such demeaning statements are disrespectful to the dignity of persons, irrespective of their religion or belief. While the Observatory does not recommend creating new laws against insults or weaker forms of defamation, a more friendly and positive atmosphere in favor of religion in general and Christianity, in particular, ought to be fostered.

The consequence is negative stereotyping. This is the process of standardizing and simplifying negative conceptions of groups based on prior assumptions. It reinforces existing prejudices through the display of negative images of the Christian religious denominations, institutions and renowned Christian individuals in the media (equally in the areas of mainline media or entertainment media), or through the communications of opinion leaders. The media, as the most powerful tool to build informed, tolerant and benevolent public opinion, ought to be more aware of the marginalization of Christians when they are selecting information and choosing how it is presented. Opinion leaders must also be aware of their responsibility in shaping a tolerant public discourse, and should refrain from negative stereotyping of Christianity. Here are some recent cases of negative stereotyping:

United Kingdom: Homosexual Activists Threaten Christian B&B Owners With Abusive Calls For Married Couples Only - Policy

January 2011: Christian bed and breakfast owners Francis and Susanne Wilkinson inundated with abusive calls and emails and face a possible lawsuit after denying a double room to a homosexual couple.

Italy: Pope Mocked in Controversial Cartoon

January 2011: A satirical cartoon depicting Pope Benedict XVI was shown in Italy's public television RAI2. In the cartoon, the Pope says about Silvio Berlusconi since he "likes minors, he can always become a priest". This caused quite an uproar due to its defamatory character.

Poland: Reporter Calls Church Homophobic Talking About the European Soccer Championship

February 2011: Homosexual Polish soccer fans are demanding that a separate seating section be created at the 2012 European Soccer Championship in Poland out of fear of harassment: Associated Press Sports Editor, Ms. Terry Taylor, reported about this plea with the following comment: "Homophobia also remains deeply embedded in Poland because of the legacy of communism which treated homosexuality as a taboo and the teachings of the church in the predominantly Roman Catholic country."

Spain: Atheists Announce Public Campaign Against Catholics

April 2011: In a broadcasting interview by ELA radio, in Madrid, a group of people who identified themselves as "representatives of different atheist groups", expressed openly that their goals are to "punish" the Catholic belief, and to "damage" the perception of Catholics. They praised the burning of churches in 1936, and they expressed their intention to "welcome" the Pope "as he deserves", during the announced visit to Madrid in the summer of 2011.

International: Anti-Pope-Campaign Sues Pope at International Tribunal

May 2011: The campaign "Calling the Pope to Account" sued Pope Benedict XVI at the International Criminal Court in The Hague for crimes against humanity. The defamatory charges include: "the preservation and leadership of a worldwide totalitarian regime of coercion, which subjugates its members with terrifying and health-endangering threats; ..., and the establishment and maintenance of a worldwide system of cover-up of the sexual crimes committed by Catholic priests and their preferential treatment, which aids and abets ever new crimes".

United Kingdom: BBC Survey Finds that Viewers Think the Broadcaster is Anti-Christian

June 2011: The BBC is widely regarded as displaying an anti-Christian attitude in its programming, according to the Corporation's own research. According to viewers, the BBC uses "derogatory stereotypes" of Christians which portray them as "weak" and "bigoted". The BBC report, carried out

as part of the corporation's diversity strategy, said: "In terms of religion, there were many who perceived the BBC to be anti-Christian and as such misrepresenting Christianity. ... Christians are specifically mentioned as being badly treated, with a suggestion that more minority religions are better represented despite Christianity being the most widely observed religion within Britain."

International: Norway Killer Anders Breivik Wrongly Labelled a "Christian Fundamentalist"

July 2011: Shortly after his ruthless murder of at least 76 innocent men, women, and children Anders Breivik has been called a "Christian fundamentalist", "Christian terrorist", and "Christian extremist". The media picked up the solitary, premature and unjust comment of a police officer right after the incident, which quickly was proven wrong.

Northern Ireland: Gay March Signs Offend Christians

August 2011: Belfast's Gay March 2011 was (again) marked by offensive anti-Christian signs. One sign read: "Jesus had two dads (and he turned out just fine)". Another protester carried a placard that said "Jesus protect me from your followers".

Italy: Campaign Against Catholic Church's Tax Exemption

August 2011: A political campaign supported by a social media campaign advocated the removal of the tax exemption granted to the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church properties are exempted from tax because of the community ser-

Fintan O'Toole called the media's coverage of religion "snobbish and dismissive." People are "quite right to be upset about that and critical of the attitude - I think it is there." "It no longer takes any courage to attack the Church."

Fintan O'Toole, assistant editor for the Irish Times, September 9th, 2011

vice they provide and the social function church buildings serve. In the fall of 2011, the issue was dropped.

International: US Officials Call Catholic Church Source of Spreading "Homophobia" in Poland

September 2011: American embassy officials under the Obama administration complained that the Catholic Church teaching is a major source of "homophobia" in the heavily Catholic country, according to private cables published by Wikileaks.

Austria: Graffiti Insults Christians in Vienna's First District

September 2011: In Postgasse, a fancy Vienna downtown street, graffiti was placed on a residential house saying: "Pig Christians destroy the world", signed with an anarchy symbol.

Germany: Paint Bomb on Welcome Poster for Pope's Visit

September 2011: In the night from the 18th to the 19th of September, unknown perpetrators cast a paint bomb on a welcome poster at a Church in Berlin.

Ireland: Blasphemous Play Hurts Feelings of Christians

October 2011: At the Dublin Grand Canal Theatre „Jerry Springer: The Opera“ was

screened in the country for the first time on October 31st, 2011. Christians protested outside the theatre before the performance while several people walked out during the show.

United Kingdom: (Scotland) Former Leader Becomes Victim of Religious Discrimination

October 2011: Former Scottish National Party leader Gordon Wilson has said a "lynch mob" booted him off the board of Dundee Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) because of his support for traditional marriage after Mr Wilson had responded to the Scottish Government's consultation on redefining marriage, saying that he was opposed to the idea.

United Kingdom: Consistent Harassment of Christian Employee by Muslim Colleagues

November 2011: Nouhad Halawi claimed she and other Christian colleagues at Heathrow Airport's World Duty Free shop are victims of a hate campaign run by fundamentalist Muslims. According to Halawi, she suffered consistent pressure and threats because of her beliefs, and for wearing a necklace cross.

France: Heated Debate on Anti-Christian Theater Play Portrays Christians Negatively

November 2011: The Golgota Picnic (Golgotha Picnic), a provocative anti-Christian play written by the Argentine-born author

Rodrigo Garcia, has drawn the anger of French Christians who protested outside the Garonne Theatre in Toulouse. While the theater's manager, Jacky Ohayon, insisted the play was harmless and ran previously in Spain "with no trouble", Catholic Bishop Dominique Rey of Frejus-Toulon said that "Garcia's play shows Christ as 'madman, dog, pyromaniac, messiah of Aids, devil-whore, no better than a terrorist'"

International: Clothing Company Benetton Disrespects Christians By Defamatory Image of Pope in Ad

November 2011: An advertisement campaign of the clothing company Benetton featured the Pope intensely kissing on the lips the Islamic Shek of the Al-Azhar Mosque. The campaign is called 'UnHate' and claims to stand for peace in the world. The image of the pope kissing the imam implies that the Pope would currently "hate" the Imam, or be intolerant towards Muslims. After many protests, Benetton removed the photo montage off their website.

United Kingdom: Business Leader Says "Christians who Defend Marriage are Evil"

December 2011: "I'm...campaigning against evil Christians (that's not all Christians, just bad ones) who think that gay people should not lead happy lives and get married to their same-sex partners," said Nick Lansley, TESCO Head of Research and Development for the Tesco website.

"There is no lack of ways, often sophisticated, of hostility to the faith... The fact that in some realms there is a tendency to consider religion as a socially insignificant factor, even annoying, does not justify trying to marginalize it, at times through denigration, ridicule, discrimination and even indifference in face of incidents of clear profanation which violate the fundamental right of religious liberty inherent to the dignity of the human person."

Pope Benedict XVI, address to Spain's new ambassador to the Holy See, April 18th, 2011

3. Hate Incidents

When a crime is driven by hate, some criminal law traditions treat this as an aggravating circumstance and call it a hate crime. With regard to faith, a hate crime is a crime that is driven by hatred against Christianity or against a person because of his or her Christian faith. This, however, is dealt with by criminal law. The Observatory collects data on hate crimes against Christians in order to show that hatred and hostility is a social problem, because it is also important to be aware of instances where hostility goes overboard. Hate crimes are the tip of a social iceberg which needs to be addressed by Western societies.

3.1. Hate Incidents

A hate incident is an act of disturbance which does not constitute in itself a breach of criminal law, but violates rights and freedoms through non-criminal means. The act is driven by hate, in our case, hate of Christians or Christianity.

Spain: Suspension of Catholic Services at the University of Barcelona Due to Protests by Secular Students

January 2011: At the University of Barcelona protests by a group of secular students against the Catholic liturgical service on campus, including the interruption of the service, led to a cancelation of the weekly Wednesday Mass - until the University would be able to guarantee the safety of attending students.

International: Threats by Islamists against Coptic Churches in Europe

January 2011: Christian Copts in Europe, particularly in France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Italy, celebrated Christmas on January 6th under special police protection.

Spain: University Chapel Desecration at Complutense University in Madrid

March 2011: On March 11, 2011, Paula Nieto, the President of the Students' Union at the Complutense University in Madrid, reported incidents at the Moncloa campus law school chapel in a radio interview. According to Nieto, several students locked themselves in the chapel, smoked weed and drank beer, while making statements against the Catholic Church. Nieto attributes the attacks to the ultra-left student group 'Contrapoder'.

Spain: Anti-Chapel Demonstrators Disrupt Mass Services

April 2011: A group of 40 youths, dressed in black, with their faces hidden and holding signs against the Catholic Church, marched in support of the violent attack that took place at the Somosaguas Chapel in Barcelona.

Germany: Flash Mob Disturbs Good Friday Procession

April 2011: A flash mob intending to protest against a law prohibiting dancing events on certain holidays, interfered with the Good Friday procession of the Croatian Catholic community in Frankfurt/Main.

Belgium: Belgian Archbishop Hit in Face with Cream Pies

April 2011: The head of Belgium's Roman Catholic Church, Archbishop Andre-Joseph Leonard, was hit four times by custard pies at the Catholic University of Louvain while people were cheering.

Italy: Church Service Disturbed By Activists

June 2011: In the parish St. Giuseppe Calasanzio (Milan) activists wanted to harass a priest for his views on homosexuality. They interrupted mass, carrying banners, shouting and jostling.

Austria: Militant Left Wing Activism Against Peaceful Pro Life Manifestation

July 2011: The left wing radicals praised themselves for their actions by saying: „Over 50 emancipated people were present to block and disturb and they were not afraid of nervous cops. They prevented stupid prayers and managed to disrupt the pro-life manifestation in a way that it had to be ended early. During almost the entire pro-life manifestation, they made their feminist viewpoints clear by shouting parolés. They showed that militant resistance against anti-emancipatory conditions and ass-holes is possible.“

Spain: Violent Counter Demonstrators Attack Youth at World Youth Day in Madrid

August 2011: A demonstration against the Catholic Church and the visit of the pope during the major Catholic event of World Youth Day resulted in the young Christian visitors being booed, spat on and shouted at. Several World Youth Day participants were physically attacked; one had to be treated by a hospital as a result of receiving kicks in the stomach. Eight anti-pope demonstrators were jailed.

Austria: Masked Vandals Attack Pro-Life Office in Austria

August 2011: The office of Johannes Bucher, the European Regional Director of Human Life International's (HLI), was attacked after a pro-life manifestation in Salzburg, Austria. The office suffered seven broken windows, causing thousands of Euros in damage.

Ireland: Christian Think Tank Receives Threatening Phone Call

September 2011: The Dublin based Christian Think Tank Iona Institute received a threatening phone call in September: The anonymous caller said the Institute was "scum", that its director "David Quinn should be castrated and hung up on O'Connell Street", that they had "the nerve to portray your "f**king religion", and that the people at the Institute were "filth".

France: Pro-Life Manifestation Attacked

September 2011: The Christian pro-life group "SOS Tout Petits" was attacked by pro-choice and anti-Christian activists during a manifestation in front of the Paris Hospital Tenon while praying peacefully.

Ireland: Catholic Newspapers Site Hacked; Anti-Christian Message Displayed

September 2011: The homepage of the Irish Catholic website was hacked and replaced with a blue and white screen which read "Site off-line. You. Got. Taken". The hacker's message went on to say "And wish you to continue believing [sic] in your false religion", and: "Gotta love false hope."

Germany: Paint Bomb on Welcome Poster for Pope's Visit

September 2011: In the night from the 18th to the 19th of September, unknown perpetrators cast a paint bomb on a welcome poster at a Church in Berlin.

Germany: Left Wing Extremists Violently End Pro-Life Rally in Düsseldorf

September 2011: Left-wing extremists prevented a pro-life group from showing a short movie about the development of the human embryo on the square in front of Düsseldorf's main railway station.

United Kingdom: Consistent Harassment of Christian Employee by Muslim Colleagues

November 2011: Nouhad Halawi claimed she and other Christian colleagues at Heathrow Airport's World Duty Free shop are victims of a hate campaign run by

fundamentalist Muslims. According to Halawi, she suffered consistent pressure and threats because of her beliefs, and for wearing a necklace cross.

Italy: Radical Feminists Undressed as Protest on St. Peter Square

November 2011: Three radical feminists undressed at St. Peter Square in Vatican City right after the Pope's traditional Sunday blessing to the pilgrims gathering there on November 6th. One of the women, identified as Oleksandra Shevchenko, leader of the responsible non-governmental organisation Femen, took off her jacket uncovering a transparent blouse under the balcony of the pope while holding a sign with the phrase "Freedom for Women". According to the media reports, she screamed "We are free" and bit into a cross. When the police came, she took off her blouse, and even her trousers.

Switzerland: Police Force Necessary to Protect Pro Life Activists from Left Wing Mob

November 2011: Police in Zurich, Switzerland were forced to use water cannons and tear gas against anti-life protesters who tried to disrupt a recent March for Life of about a thousand pro-life supporters marching through the streets of the Swiss capital.

"Hate incidents and hate crimes directed against Christians strike at the core values of the OSCE community. They violate fundamental freedoms that have formed an integral part of the OSCE acquis since the Helsinki Final Act of 1975."

Lamberto Zannier, OSCE Secretary General, September 12th, 2011

3.2. Vandalism and Desecrations

Hatred of Christianity is often directed against church buildings. Acts of vandalism and desecration take place more frequently than many would expect. Some desecrations prove to be satanic acts, others an expression of disapproval of moral viewpoints of Christianity. The Observatory recommends that European states collect data on hate crimes against Christianity in separate statistics in order to have a full picture of the problem and comparable data.

France: Church Partially Burned, Religious Symbols Put on Fire

January 2011: A Christian Church building in Hérouville-Saint-Clair, the outskirts of Caen, was vandalized at about 6 am on a Sunday morning. The Church of St. Francis, partially burned, cannot accommodate the faithful until it is rebuilt.

France: Church Shattered and Partially Burned

January 2011: On Saturday January 1 between 12 a.m. and 3 p.m., the church of Montfermeil was severely damaged and partially burned. According to sources, a group of individuals broke the door to the place of worship with the help of a car. They then set fire to a bunch of paper that was inside the church. Thus, three additional rooms, including the room used for worship for children, were damaged and must now be rebuilt.

Germany: Vandalism at St. Barbara's in Peißenberg

January 2011: A group of teenagers caused great damage in the parish church of St. Barbara in Peißenberg over a longer period of time. They tossed down lamps, lit numerous candles and burnt death cards, rumped altar cloths and stuffed them into the holy water vessel; they

threw altar candles around in the church, and wrote with chalk on the church's door. The sacristan had to dump 40 liters of holy water twice, and clean the distribution vessel, in which the youth had urinated.

Liechtenstein: Statue of Mary, Mother of Jesus, Destroyed in Church

February 2011: Unknown perpetrators have destroyed a statue of the Virgin Mary by pulling it from the altar in a church in Schaan, Liechtenstein.

France: Chapel of Caubin Vandalized

February, 19th, 2011: the Chapel of Caubin, a XIIIth century Historical Monument was the target of vandalism on Saturday, February 19th. Three windows were broken open with stones, lanterns and projector destroyed and crosses of the cemetery broken into pieces.

France: Cemetery Vandalized in Alès

February 12th, 2012: ten to twelve graves were desecrated in the cemetery of Silhol in Alès. Stone crosses were broken and thrown to the floor. Funeral ornaments were destroyed and the door of a tomb was damaged.

France: Closing of Churches after Vandalism Acts

February 2011: The churches of Rieux-Minervois and of Toucy had to be closed after several acts of vandalism and thefts.

Spain: Communion Vessels Stolen From Church in Majadahonda

February 2011: After a fire was set at the doors of Santa Catalina Mártir Church in Majadahonda on December 25th, 2010, the tabernacle containing two communion vessels was stolen in February 2011. The perpetrators used a lever to commit the crime, and took advantage of the fact that the Church doors remain open for prayers and meetings.

Spain: Fire Set to Catholic Church in Barcelona

March 2011: During the night of March 22th, early morning of March 23th, 2011, a group of radical feminists started a fire at the doors of San Vicenç Church, in the Sarrià neighbourhood, in Barcelona. According to the priest Manuel Valls this was the fifth attack against the church in the last three years.

Spain: Vandalism in Madrid Church

March 2011: The Ascensión del Señor Church, located in the Madrid suburb of Carabanchel, a working class neighborhood, has suffered the loss of their most precious sacred items: the chalice with the Eucharist and the Holy Oils. The Church, built 60 years ago in a poor vicinity, has no item of value, and "the burglars knew about it", affirms Francisco Pérez, the church Pastor. Fr. Perez adds: "They only took the most precious treasure for our community, the body of Christ".

France: More Than 50 Graves Desecrated in Séjalon

March 19th, 2011: more than fifty graves have been vandalized: funeral ornaments, flowerpots and crucifix have been broken. Windows were damaged and tagged with the satanic number "666".

France: Church Vandalized and Partly Burned in Pézenas

March 29th, 2011: Three young men entered the church of Saint-Martin of Conas at approximately 8:00 p.m. They broke a stained window, set fire in the sacristy, broke crosses, statues, benches and chairs and damaged the main altar. The facts, discovered the next morning, are estimated to a cost of 50 to 100 000 euros.

Turkey: Catholic Church Vandalized on Good Thursday

April 2011: Two men armed with swords and knives broke into a Catholic Church in Adana last Thursday. After learning that the priest was not in the church, the 26-year-old aggressors proceeded to vandalize the property.

Spain: Assault on the Church of Santa Maria Magdalena de Ciempozuelos in Madrid

April 2011: On a Thursday morning a group of vandals broke into the Church of Santa Maria Magdalena, destroying the altar shrine and the crown of the Virgin. The church suffered great damage, and the content of the collection box was stolen.

Germany: Vandalism at Nathan-Söderblom Church in Reinbek

April 2011: A gang of about 20 youth has been rampaging repeatedly around the Nathan-Söderblom church in Reinbek in the spring of 2011, including the urination into a work of art that represents the grave of Christ. Police and social service have not been able to calm down those involved, and are considering hiring a social worker to find a remedy.

Spain: Statues of Saints Beheaded in Burgos

April 2011: The sculptures of St. Peter and St. Laurent located outside the gate of San Esteban Church in Burgos were beheaded. The Church was built during the XIII century in a Gothic style; the sculpture of St. Peter had been restored six years ago while St. Laurent's image had been under renovation 12 years ago. The decapitation took place on the night of Good Friday.

France: Statue of the Virgin Marie Beheaded in La-Roche-Sur-Yon

April 2011: On the night of Sunday April 24th, around 3:00 am, the statue of the Virgin Mary located behind the church of the Sacred Heart of La Roche-sur-Yon was beheaded and then thrown on the ground. Its head was transported to the other side of the park.

Spain: Church in Altavista Vandalized

April 2011: Father-Claret Parish, located in Altavista (Lanzarote), was vandalized by burglars. According to the media, the criminals broke into the church searching for money. Once they realized no money was there, they vandalized the property, causing significant damage. Before they

left, they threw away the vase containing the Holy Communion.

France: Church Vandalized at Aulnay-Sous-Bois

April 18th, 2011: The church of Saint-Jean of Aulnay-Sous-Bois has been twice vandalized in April. The parish priest and numerous catholic communities are shocked by such acts.

France: Church Tagged in Vannes

April 4th, 2011: Four young men tagged the church Saint-Pie-X in Vannes, insulting believers and claiming to denounce "fundamentalism". They underlined the "political" nature of their behavior and claimed to defend "anticlerical values".

France: Church Vandalized in Echirolles

April 2011: The church of Saint-Jean-Bosco of Echirolles has been victim of desecration. The main Crucifix was found broken on the floor. Missals had been flung to the ground and benches damaged and turned over. Apparently, the perpetrators had entered the church by forcing a side door. No theft has been reported.

Germany: Vandalism at Cemetery in Velen

May 2011: Unknown perpetrators knocked over gravestones and pulled out plants in a cemetery located in Velen.

Germany: Attempt of Arson at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Elmar

May 2011: An attempt of arson was noticed by a neighbour at Immaculate Heart of Mary church in Elmar on May 13th. Stranger(s) tried to set fire to several items in the church, including curtains, carpets and cushions. Locals extinguished the

fire with water. The damages amount to about 2000 €.

Spain: Vandalism at the 'Diálogo' Library in Madrid

May 2011: The Diálogo library in Madrid suffered serious damage as an unidentified perpetrator smashed the window in which books related to the beatification of Pope Juan Pablo II were displayed. The library is well-known for specializing in religious subjects.

Spain: Attacks on the Parish Church of Navalcarnero in Madrid

May 2011: The parish church of 'Nuestra Señora de la Asunción' suffered great damage on Sunday May 8, as several religious images made of plaster were destroyed. Local police arrested the assailant, a 35-year-old male local resident who made previous threats toward the church. As stated by Pastor Marcos Fermin, this is not only a financial problem for him, but also causes great emotional pain.

Germany: Vandalism at Church in Anshar

May 2011: Vandals broke into the church of Anshar on May 7th, damaged several objects in the main church, threw down a crucifix and paintings in the sacristy, and tore everything out of the closets. Nothing was stolen, but fixing will be expensive. A new alarm system will be installed shortly to prevent any further attack. The incident was reported to the police.

Germany: Vandalism at St. John's in Heidelberg

June 2011: Unknown perpetrators ravaged in the church of St. John's in Heidelberg on June 1st. Police confirmed that

they sloshed around drinks on the altar and in the area of the organ, put meatballs in the organ pipes and dog dirt on the clavier.

France: Cemetery of Saint-Lys Desecrated

June 2011: The cemetery of La Moutonne of Saint-Lys in the department of Haute-Garonne has been vandalized in the night from Thursday to Friday, June 30th, 2011. Memorial plaques were lying on the ground, damaged. A bench of the cemetery had been split into pieces, urn compartments had been opened and no less than twenty graves had received stroke of large stones flung against them, thus breaking plaques, ceramics and flowerpots.

France: Vandalism in the Cemetery of Belleville-sur-Meuse

June 2011: Fifteen Christian graves were damaged in the cemetery of Belleville-sur-Meuse and many crosses and statues broken into pieces. Ashes of three deceased have been scattered. Several crosses, marbles and plaques were broken into pieces and scattered on the ground. Statues of Christ were wrenched and let to lay on the floor.

Germany: Vandalism at St. Ann's in Ascheberg

July 2011: Unknown perpetrators urinated into a Holy Water vessel of St. Ann Catholic church, in Ascheberg. They also damaged organ pipes, several apostle statues and a censer. The damage amounts to several thousand Euros. The police have not yet convicted the vandals and does not rule out that they are a gang of teenagers.

France: Church Vandalized in Saint-Jouin-Bruneval

July 2011: The church of Saint-Jouin-Bruneval in the Seine Maritime department of Normandy has been vandalized during the night from Saturday 15th to Sunday 16th of July. An unknown number of persons came through the door of the church tower, descended a ladder and took a choir bench to break down the door of the sacristy which they completely wrenched. They tumbled the candles and the candle-holders and then ripped off a wooden chest near the main altar. Finally, they broke open the offertory-box were to take its contents.

Germany: Crucifixion Group Defaced in Wassenberg-Myhl

August 2011: On August 21st a crucifixion group was defaced with black paint in Wassenberg-Myhl by unknown perpetrators.

Germany: Vandalism at Cemetery in Schönau

September 2011: A 16 year-old admitted being responsible for the desecration of numerous graves in Schönau on the 17th of September. He had knocked over memorial candles and gravestones, and had pulled out a wooden cross and destroyed it.

France: Catholic Cemetery of Buxy Wrecked

September 2011: Twenty graves and tombstones have been desecrated in the small village of Buxy in Burgundy. The 2,000 residents of Buxy and their mayor are shocked and incredulous, the police has opened an investigation.

France: Smearings on a Catholic Church in Dijon

September 2011: The Saint-Michel Catholic church of Dijon has been smeared on during the night on September 13th. The mayor's office quickly responded by clearing out the inscriptions. One could see a scored of cross and read "No Gods, no Masters".

Germany: Vandalism of Church in Kallenhardt

October 2011: An attempt of arson occurred on October 22nd at the church of Kallenhardt. As a consequence, the church, which was freely accessible for prayer and recollection, had to remain closed for a longer period of time.

Italy: 'Occupy Rome' Activists Destroyed Sacred Icons During Demonstration

October 2011: A group of youth who were marching as part of the anti-capitalist movement "Occupy Rome", detoured from the main stream of the parade, and made their way into Saints Marcellino and Pietro Parish, located between Labicana and Merulana streets. The youth, with covered heads and handling sticks, broke into the parish house and took the statue of the Immaculate Conception and a crucifix. They carried the sacred icons outside the parish premises into the street, where both were destroyed and the debris was left in the street.

Germany: Vandalism in Presbytery in Rütten-Menzel

October 2011: Strangers set fire to the entrance door of the presbytery by means of petrol in Rütten on Oct 12th. The fire had already made its way under the door and set the tapestry on fire when it was dis-

covered and extinguished. Police asked the public for help.

Germany: Vandalism at Immaculate Conception Church in Vohwinkel

October 2011: On October 12th unknown perpetrators vandalized the parish church of the Immaculate Conception in Vohwinkel. They damaged valuable pieces of art: a sword was pulled off a statue and attached to a crucifix, and a branch of a seven-branched candelabrum was torn off.

Germany: Recurring Vandalism at Cemetery in Essen

October 2011: Recurring instances of vandalism at Essen cemetery amount to 30 000 Euros in damage. The acts of vandalism include the stealing of vases, the removal of letters on graveyards, and the ignition of over 50 compost containers in the time period of a few weeks. Several relatives of those whose graves had been attacked were under significant emotional distress.

Germany: Vandalism at Cemetery in Niedereschach

October 2011: On the night of October 30th, vandals raged on the graveyard of Niedereschach, damaging graves, memorial candles, statues of Mary and of angels, flowers, and jardinières. They also pulled out wooden crosses from fresh graves and lined them up upside down which could indicate a satanic background.

Germany: Vandalism at Cemetery in Westerkappeln

October 2011: Several cases of vandalism were recorded regarding the graveyard

in Westerkappeln between October 26th and October 28th, including the use of graveyard lanterns as footballs.

Germany: Vandalism at Graveyard of Ostbevern

October 2011: In Ostbevern, strangers knocked off the nose, feet, and part of the knee of a figure of Christ located in the graveyard. This is not the first time that the statue suffered from vandalism.

Germany: Vandalism of Cemetery in Mülheim

October 2011: Strangers ravaged on the graveyard of Styrum in Mülheim and damaged 30 graves in the night from Oct 22 to 23.

France: Church Desecrated in Vauréal

November 2011: The church of Sainte-Claire of Vauréal has been desecrated and Christian symbols specifically attacked. A city councilor criticizes the lack of response by governmental institutions.

Germany: Vandalism at St. Georg Church in Munich

November 2011: For several years local youth have been vandalizing St. Georg Church in Munich. They took tiles off the roof, sprayed graffiti on the outside walls, urinated into the holy water vessels and set fire at the local graveyard. The attacks were ongoing in the end of 2011. Some of the youth are known to the parish priest, who does not want to report them to the police. One of the youth stated in a TV interview with blurred image that he was Moslem and felt uncomfortable with the majority denomination. The priest says that many youth are aggressive towards the Church due to emotional neglect they suffer at home.

France: Churches Vandalized in Bayeux and Bessin

November 2011: A wave of crime and vandalism hit several parishes in the area of Bayeux and Bessin. Notre-Dame du Bessin, Saint-Loup Hors and Manoir churches have suffered material damage whereas in the parish of Port en Bessin a chalice was stolen.

France: Five Christian Icons Vandalized during a Week of Anti-Christian Raids in Dax (Landes)

November 2011: Three images of Mary and two crucifixes were vandalized in the city of Dax between November 10th and 18th. The statue of Mary located in Pontonx church was covered from the top to the bottom with red paint; the face of a Virgin located at the Saugnac-y-Cambran junction was covered with red as well; and the Virgin of Buglose's face was covered with black paint. One of the vandalized crucifixes was painted in red and the arms cut off, while the one located inside Riondes-Landes church was covered with red paint.

France: Catholic Cemetery of Sussargues Vandalized

November 2011: The cemetery of the village of Sussargues in France has been vandalized. The perpetrator(s) damaged about thirty graves and memorials. Crucifixes were broken or turned upside down, statuettes of the Virgin Mary were planted head in the ground. Satanists tags are visible on many graves.

Switzerland: Vandalism Against Wayside Crosses and Corpuses

November 2011: In the Swiss village of St. Pantaleon-Nuglar, unknown perpetrators have attacked Christian images several times. Corpuses were pulled off crosses, taken away or destroyed. One corpus was hung on a tree. Now, the image of a naked woman was sprayed on a cross which had formally been vandalised and stripped of the corpus. A charge against unknown persons was submitted by the private owner of the wayside cross.

"At the heart of fundamental human rights is freedom of religion, conscience and belief... As the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Religious Discrimination recognizes, the spiritual dimension of life is a vital part of human existence... But an increased proliferation of episodes of discrimination and acts of violence against persons and communities of faith and places of worship in several different geographical regions of the world denies in practice the principle proclaimed in law..."

Archbishop Silvano Tomasi, at the Human Rights Council in Geneva, March 2nd, 2011

3.3. Hate Crimes against Individuals

Hate crimes directed against individuals are often an issue of physical violence, ranging from beatings to killings. Hate crimes could also be directed against property.

International: Threats by Islamists against Coptic Churches in Europe

January 2011: Christian Copts in Europe, particularly in France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Italy, celebrated Christmas on January 6th under special police protection.

Germany: Windows Shattered of Pharmacy at Which "Morning-After-Pill" is not Sold for Conscience Reasons

March 2011: The windows of a pharmacy in Berlin's Neukölln district were shattered because the owner does not sell the so called "morning-after-pill" due to his catholic convictions. The offenders called their attack a "contribution to the international women's action day".

Spain: Violent Counter Demonstrators Attack Youth at World Youth Day in Madrid

August 2011: A demonstration against the Catholic Church and the visit of the pope during the major Catholic event of World Youth Day, resulted in the young Christian visitors be booed, spat and shouted at. Several World Youth Day participants were physically attacked, one had to be treated in hospital for being kicked in the stomach. Eight anti-pope demonstrators were jailed.

Germany: Anonymous Caller Threatens School

for Displaying Welcome Poster for Pope

September 2011: A welcome poster for pope Benedict XVI upon his visit to Germany in September 2011 was removed in Fürstenwalde (Oder-Spree) after an anonymous caller said that „something would happen, if the posters were not immediately removed.“

Ireland: Christian Think Tank Receives Threatening Phone Call

September 2011: The Dublin based Christian Think Tank Iona Institute received a threatening phone call in September: The anonymous caller said the Institute was "scum", that its director "David Quinn should be castrated and hung up on O'Connell Street", that they had "the nerve to portray your "f**king religion", and that the people at the Institute were "filth".

International: Moslem Protester Calls for "Jihad to Christian Extremists"

September 2011: On a protest against the USA and the UK in London on September 11, a group of Muslims marched through London. A sign was carried which read "Jihad to Christian Extremists".

Ireland: Singer Sinead O'Connor Says She'd Shoot the Pope If He Came to Ireland

September 2011: The popular Irish singer, Sinead O'Connor used social media to

warn the Pope that if he comes to Ireland, there "would be a bloodbath". The singer posted the threat on her Twitter account after a poll was conducted on whether the Pope should visit Ireland. Previously, in 1992 during a TV show, O'Connor tore a photo of John Paul II into pieces and called him evil.

"On the level of raising awareness about discrimination against Christians we can do more. ... I have ... suggested to the States that wish to participate the celebration of a Day of Christian Martyrs of our time, to be celebrated not – or not only – in churches, where there are already similar initiatives in place, but in schools, cities, and public institutions because the persecution of Christians does not affect just Christians, but everyone."

Dr. Massimo Introvigne, OSCE Representative on Combating Racism, Xenophobia, and Intolerance against Christians, February 18th, 2011

III) FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON THE WORK OF THE OBSERVATORY

1. I do not see any persecution of Christians in Europe. What are you so concerned about?

A point religious leaders have mentioned persistently, was also raised as a major concern by OSCE and the United Nations: growing anti-Christian sentiments in the West are resulting in intolerance and marginalization on a societal and cultural level on the one hand, and discrimination on a governmental level or in the workplace on the other. Even though, in the academic sense of the word, this could be called a form of persecution, we prefer to use the terms intolerance and discrimination for what we see in Europe and reserve the word persecution in reference to the millions of Christians who face daily threats of murder, beating, imprisonment and torture in various parts of the world. History teaches to address injustices before they become a slippery slope towards even greater injustices.

2. In the course of the centuries Christians in Europe have treated minorities in an intolerant manner when they were in power. They should not be so quick to complain now.

In history there have been and continue to be countless Christian voices speak-

ing up for the rights of the vulnerable – be they indigenous people, the poor, the sick, or children. Today's political dialogue must not be led by retribution. We seek to protect human rights universally, whether they are held by people we agree with or not.

Certain standpoints and decisions of Christians in history are today difficult to understand – but history cannot be judged by today's standards alone. It would be highly incorrect to blame or punish today's Christians or all of Christianity for the past.

3. Isn't the main problem of Christianity its own intra-Christian intolerance, i.e. Christians of one denomination discriminating against Christians of another?

Christian denominations have, for a large part, learned to co-exist. They work together, and differences are being discussed with mutual respect. But even if there are disputes amongst Christians, which might in some instances lead to intolerance, indeed, what Christians face all together is a broad phenomena of intolerance and discrimination caused by those who reject and disrespect Christianity as a whole: radical lobbies which have gone overboard, seeking to limit the practice of

the Christian religion and with it fundamental rights and freedoms.

4. Isn't what you call intolerance or discrimination just a natural process of losing historical privileges?

Historical privileges – which do not per se discriminate against other religious communities – are not always irrational. As the name already suggests, historical privileges are, after all, historical. No community exists disassociated from its past or from its own historically evolved identity and traditions. Full neutrality is impossible. Even an empty white wall is a colored statement, especially if it is a consequence of the removal of the crucifix. One religious community holding privileges for historical reasons does not mean that others are being discriminated against – as long as their enshrined rights are protected. Christians should neither be marginalized nor discriminated against for being heirs of a religious group that played in the past, and still plays, a relevant role.

The withdrawal of reasonable privileges from Christianity (such as a more significant or visible presence in public life) constitutes an unnatural break with history and identity, and it is an expression of hostility. This hostility often does not stop at the removal of privileges. It causes marginalization and social exclusion, and it leads sooner or later to the denial of rights. What is at stake, in the long run, is equal rights for Christians.

5. How is it possible that Christians argue that they are being discriminated against since they hold a majority in Europe?

Some people conclude - from the premise that minorities deserve protection - that it is not possible to discriminate against a majority. Wrong! South African blacks were not a minority when they suffered from apartheid. Also women always constituted a majority in history. Rocco Buttiglione was not accepted as an EU commissioner due to his adherence to Christianity, the majority faith. Imagine one person at a microphone insulting a silent Christian crowd. Imagine a small group of CEOs not hiring members of a majority religion because they do not like that religion. This is possible! It is true that intolerance and discrimination more often affect minorities. But this is not necessary by definition. More essential than numbers is power: who sets the tone, who is listened to, and who creates the agenda. Every day Europe's majority faith is being treated disrespectfully; its faithful are faced with hostility and cultural animosity; and its free exercise is confronted with unjust limitations. And yet another thought: As Christianity in Europe undergoes a transition today, one might speak of a majority only with regards to nominal Christians, i.e. people who hold baptism certificates but do not practice the faith. But these are not the ones who are experiencing intolerance and discrimination.

6. Do Christians really face intolerance in Europe? Are you not just a little over-sensitive?

For some people, discrimination and intolerance against Christians could be a “minor issue” in Europe, whereas Christians in other regions are confronted with blatant persecution even to the point of martyrdom. Reports suggest that 200 million Christians worldwide are being persecuted, and that 80% of all religious persecution is directed against Christians. Certainly the plight of Christians in these regions is dreadful and every effort to relieve their suffering should be supported. But it was John Paul II who asked back in 1983 not to overlook “besides common forms of persecution ... more sophisticated punishments, such as social discrimination or subtle restrictions of freedom, possibly leading to a kind of civil death.”

7. Shouldn't Christians be consistent with the bible, and turn the other cheek to their aggressors?

For Christians to “turn the other cheek” is a personal attitude, which cannot be imposed on an individual by the community. When Jesus was hit by a soldier he asked: „Why do you strike me?” It is a Christian commandment to take action to help an unjustly treated or persecuted neighbor. A Christian must not look away from an injustice done to another but work towards a free and just society, including for Christians.

8. Why do you focus on relatively small issues in Europe – taking away attention from the real problems – like the violent persecution of Christians in specific countries?

The Observatory is very much in favor of helping persecuted Christians with all means possible. But legal violations of freedom of religion are not small issues. In order to be credible in international activities, European countries should put their house in order. These events come like a wave. You have to stop the wave when it is coming.

9. Christianity is intolerant in itself especially with regards to women, homosexuals, atheists or non-believers. Society cannot tolerate intolerance against vulnerable groups. Christians should not feel discriminated against when society is working toward the protection of minorities.

The root of Christian teaching uniquely upholds and defends the dignity of each and every human person, including members of minority groups or people with non-Christian convictions.

Freedom of religion comprises the right to teach and practice the faith, and to witness and communicate it publicly – even if it contradicted individual aspects of what the majority thinks. Different core teachings of Christianity have caused contradictions in different periods of history. The state must create a free space in which a religion can act and govern according to its self-understanding. To discriminate as a form of education or retribution violates

freedom of religion and human dignity, and is unacceptable.

10. Is your work useful at all? You are only reporting, why don't you actually help the victims?

The Observatory's research is needed to be able to see the problem of intolerance and discrimination against Christians in Europe. This is such a scattered multi-causal and multi-faceted phenomenon that without an overview and clearly structured information, the main facts would be easily overlooked. Understanding the problem is the basis for all remedy. It is the goal and intent of the Observatory that raising awareness with opinion makers and legislators will, in the long run, be of great benefit for the individual.

11. Are you not making too much fuss about isolated cases?

The Observatory reports facts, not feelings. It is indispensable to connect the dots, namely to make sense of these facts, which disclose that they spring from similar and widespread attitudes and ideologies. The cases the Observatory reports are merely symptoms – but whoever sees the larger picture will notice quickly that marginalization and discrimination of Christians in Europe do not consist of isolated cases at all.

The problem is manifold and has several root causes. This may give some the impression of cases happening in isolation. The problem becomes apparent, however, when observed in the entirety of its aspects, and in the pattern that the cases

have. The atheist and humanist lobbies, the LGBT lobby and the radical gender lobbies, for instance, are campaigning for laws which violate rights of Christians. They are creating a hostile atmosphere against Christians and the utterance of Christian positions in public. This has become a measurable and increasing social phenomenon.

12. Should there not be more anti-discrimination legislation to protect religious groups, including Christians?

There is no need for special laws to protect against all kinds of phobias or discrimination if society stays faithful to its general legal norms. There is also a realm of good behavior and tolerance that should be fostered by politics and media. But legislation cannot replace education. There is also a danger with anti-discrimination legislation: it can actually backfire and discriminate, also against religious groups. Many cases reported by the Observatory are cases of discrimination caused by anti-discrimination policies.

13. Aren't there issues of intolerance in almost every group of people? Although mainly unrelated, if you look carefully, you could fill many observatories with cases of intolerance against, for instance, red-haired-people or fat people, or simply rich people.

Many persons regrettably experience various degrees of insults or disadvantage, and there are innumerable social and political initiatives that protect the needs and rights of various people groups. But

in our day it is also particularly important to keep a watch on the phenomena of intolerance against Christians because of the fact that several widely publicized and very outspoken ideologies against Christianity are going unchallenged and are being uncritically passed on by politicians and opinion makers in the public square.

14. How is it possible that a country may speak up against persecution happening in other parts of the world, for instance outside of the West, yet may itself discriminate against Christians?

This is often a reality because injustice becomes more evident when blood, torture, murder and displacement are involved. But denying religious liberty - whether by persecution or intolerance and discrimination - is part of the same fallacy, which causes consequences of varying degrees of gravity or tragedy for individuals or communities. Denying religious liberty is a slippery slope.

"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 Warsi (a Muslim), November 1st, 2011

IV) A ROADMAP TO FREEDOM OF RELIGION

In 2011, the European Union took a closer look into religion through its 'Religare' Project. The Observatory submitted a paper to the project – partly as answer to a submission to a radically secularist paper of the European Humanist Foundation – which became a roadmap to freedom of religion in Europe. In the following, we reprint parts of the executive summary. The reader will find it helpful to understand the public debate on religion in a deeper way.

Freedom of Religion as Human Right

Freedom of Religion is recognized in all major human rights documents. Its most detailed definition is found in a document of the Roman Catholic Church, *Dignitatis Humanae*. It is the right to adhere, or not to adhere to a religious belief; the right to be free from coercion in religious matters; and the right to manifest religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance.

The right to religious freedom is not only an individual right, but also applies, as a collective right, to religious communities. For them, it comprises inter alia the right to govern themselves according to their own norms, the right to public worship, the right to instruct their members in the practice of the religious life, the right to select, educate, appoint, and transfer their own ministers, the right to erect buildings for religious purposes, and to acquire and use suitable funds or properties, the right to public teaching and witness to their faith, whether by the spoken or by the written word, and the right to hold meetings and to establish educational, cultural, charitable and social organizations, under the impulse of their own religious sense.

Religion and the Common Good

Religion, and most of all the Christian faith, is a valuable asset for society: Religious people have a healthier lifestyle and higher life expectancies; are less likely to suffer from depression, have more stable marriages, are less likely to engage in criminal activity, and are more generous in contributing to the common good. Therefore religion should be fostered and encouraged, not restricted or oppressed. Given that those advantages apply in particular to Christians, it follows that, in the eyes of any reasonable and well-intentioned politician, practicing Christians must be the most desirable of citizens.

Secular 'Humanism' – or Militant Atheism?

It should be noted that the humanists' often hold unsubstantiated negative stereotypes through which religion is identified as the single source of all social evils: religion is portrayed as "totalitarian" (p.3), and Christianity is accused of "dividing rather than uniting" society (p.4) and producing "alienation". Strangely enough, no mention is made of the fact that the great totalitarian ideologies of the 20th century, Communism and Fascism, were decidedly anti-Christian.

Secular 'humanism' appears to have the sole purpose of attacking other worldviews and life stances. Such an ideology, which defines itself as *ex negativo* (i.e. solely through its opposition to other people's beliefs and values) is not likely to make any significant contribution to the common good. Whereas religious communities entertain a great number of hospitals, dispensaries, residences for elderly people, nursery schools, schools, universities, all of which are open to the general public, one never sees a similar commitment to the public good on the side of atheist groups.

Dialogue with Non-Believers

Atheist and humanist organizations argue that they should be granted similar consideration, or official standing in a regular and transparent dialogue with the European Institutions as is foreseen for churches by Article 17 of the TFEU.

Such requests, which aim at giving disproportionate consideration and influence to a marginal social group, are manifestly ill-founded because:

- Someone who professes to have no religion or belief cannot claim a right to manifest his irreligion or non-belief "in worship, teaching, practice and observance". What worship, practice or observance would that be?
- It is unclear who these humanist organizations actually represent. The actual membership of, for example, the European Humanist Federation (EHF) seems to be negligible. It is wrong to claim that any person who does not frequent a Church every Sunday is not a Christian, or to assert that any person not holding a baptism certificate (or similar) must be considered to share the militantly anti-religious views of the EHF.
- One should be mindful of the risks and dangers associated with granting any consideration or official standing to organizations that must be expected to promote an agenda that is not conducive, but radically opposed, to human rights. The historic experience with atheist totalitarian regimes provides ample proof for the radical antagonism between militant atheism and human rights. There is no reason why the ideology of irreligion should be given a second chance.

The Meaning of 'Secularism'

The European Humanist Federation (EHF) calls secularism "the principle that, in a plural, open society where people follow many different religious and non-religious ways of

life, the communal institutions that we share (and together pay for) should provide a neutral public space where we can all meet on equal terms." However, in this definition, what is called a 'neutral' public space would in reality be a public space from which all religious symbols, views, opinions, or other elements must be removed. Therefore, such a 'neutral' public space would not be neutral at all - it would accommodate the ideology of atheism and exclude all others.

The EHF claims that "The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR)... considers the principle of secularism as one of the founding principles of the rule of law and the best guarantee for democracy and the respect of human rights." This statement is wrong. The ECtHR never made such a statement. What it did say was something different: that a country where the constitution gives particular importance to the principle of 'secularism' has the right of defending this constitutional value by prohibiting and dissolving a political party that wants to introduce a legal order based on the principle of theocracy. But this argument could equally operate in the inverse direction: If a country in its constitutional law foresees a state religion or an established church, it may prohibit as 'unconstitutional' all political activities that seek to overturn that situation.

Christianity recognizes the secular character of the State, but interprets it differently. The term "secular" is derived from the Latin word *saeculum*, which designates not necessarily a determined amount of time (one century), but is also used to designate the life span of a person. 'Secular' is thus everything that is of limited duration, such as the earthly life of each human being, or that has to do with (merely) earthly or temporal matters. For Christians, there is thus no difficulty in recognizing the 'secular' character of the State. The task of politicians and public administrations is to ensure the temporal well-being of citizens, whereas it is the task of the Church to ensure their eternal salvation. Both tasks should be separate from each other. But it does not mean that the State should be irreligious or anti-religious, or that the public sphere should be cleansed from all traces of religiosity, nor can it justify the exclusion of religious views and opinions from public debate.

Concept of "Neutrality" or "Secularism" is not Binding

There is thus one fundamental assumption held by humanist organizations and which needs to be challenged: it is the notion that there is an obligation for States to be "neutral" with regard to religious or secular world-views.

There are many States in Europe, and even within the EU, that have not signed on to "neutrality" or "secularism" which becomes evident by looking at their constitutions. References to God are made and / or a special status is granted to religion in the constitutions of Germany, Switzerland, Ireland, Greece, Italy, Liechtenstein, Malta, Monaco, Denmark, England, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Andorra, Poland, and Spain.

“Turning our gaze from East to West we find ourselves faced with other kinds of threats to the full exercise of religious freedom. I think in the first place of countries which accord great importance to pluralism and tolerance, but where religion is increasingly being marginalized. There is a tendency to consider religion, all religion, as something insignificant, alien or even destabilizing to modern society, and to attempt by different means to prevent it from having any influence on the life of society.”

Pope Benedict XVI, January 10th, 2011

The UDHR, the ECHR, or the EUFRC do not demand the equal treatment of all religions and worldviews. Freedom of religion and conscience does not demand equal treatment of all religions. Instead, it demands, as a minimum, tolerance and accommodation for all religious beliefs unless they are found to stand at variance with fundamental requirements of justice.

Public Space

The European Humanist Federation argues that the presence of religious symbols in the public space violates a principle of ‘neutrality’ or ‘secularism’. This point of view is manifestly ill-founded, given that such principles are inexistent in EU and international law. The mere existence or presence of religious symbols or religious language can, moreover, never be considered a violation of a person’s freedom of religion or conscience.

Restrictions with regard to religious clothing severely restrict the personal liberty of citizens, and must thus be duly justified. In a free society, everybody should be free to wear what he or she wants except for reasons of safety, decency, or where the wearing of a uniform is reasonably required.

With regard to the education of children, the State’s role is ancillary to that of the parents. The State has, therefore, no right to indoctrinate children with the ideologies that may, at a given time, prevail among the political elites. It follows that the role of publicly funded schools is to support the parents in giving to their children the education they want to give them. If parents want to educate their children in the Christian faith, the state – even if it defines itself as “secular” or “neutral” – must support them in this effort. This could be done by adequately supporting confessional schools and / or by establishing the possibility for religion lessons in state-owned schools, if there is sufficient demand for it.

The Workplace

Current EU legislation to prohibit discrimination in employment recognizes the need for exceptions for organizations with a specific ethos. Similar respect ought to be paid to the ethos based on religion or belief of individual employers. To reduce limitations on contractual freedom, it should be remembered that the principle of ‘neutrality’, and hence the obligation to provide equal treatment irrespective of religion, applies to the State more strictly than it does to private employers.

With regard to conscientious objection, it should be noted that some humanists’ call for ‘regulation’ are in fact a call for restriction of this fundamental right.

The European Humanist Federation suggests that “human rights, including rights to conscientious objection, apply only to individuals and not to institutions” and that for this reason, Christian hospitals, or even Christian Churches are not entitled to them. It is, however, nowhere said in international law that human rights can only be exercised individually. On the contrary, with regard to certain human rights, their collective nature is explicitly recognized or implied in the nature of the right (e.g. the right to free assembly, or the right to maintain a given cultural identity, or religious freedom, which is to be exercised “either alone or in community with others”).

Contrary to EHF’s claim, ‘conscientious objection’ cannot be restricted to ‘religious liberty’ issues. Moral objections are generally based on solid and objective reasons, and the objector may even be an atheist.

State Support

In most European countries, religious organizations are financed in large part by the voluntary contributions of their believers. However, through these contributions, religious believers provide not only a direct support to their own religious community, but also an indirect support to the common good.

When financial support is given by governments, it is justified by the following reasons:

- the public interest to maintain and cultivate the country’s cultural heritage and identity;
- the support for specific initiatives that contribute to common good (such as schools, hospitals, etc.). Such support usually only complements the funding provided by the faith-based group itself, and would in the same way be provided to any organization making a similar contribution.
- a third reason is the compensation, usually contractually agreed upon, for property that was – often under rather questionable pretexts – seized from the religious communities in question in the course of history.

It is, therefore, obvious that calls for the reduction of current state funding of churches and religious bodies have hardly any justification. What certainly has no foundation at all is the suggestion that other religious communities that have only been recently established, or indeed 'humanist' groups such as the EHF, should be entitled to the same funding.

"Opponents question Christians' right to present their views and their democratic efforts to have them reflected in European legislation. It has been an encouragement and inspiration to see the recent recommendation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe upholding the right to conscientious objection for medical workers who refuse to take part in such operations."

Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, Chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department of External Church Relations on September 12th, 2011

ENDNOTES

(1) (page 10) The survey was conducted in October 2011 on a base of 544 active Christians, <http://www.comres.co.uk/poll/559/premier-media-marginalisation-survey.htm>, and compares to surveys in 2009 (ComRes Cpanel- Fieldwork 19th Oct-4th Nov 2009) and 2010 (ComRes Online field survey 21-23 May 2010- General public poll).

(2) (page 10) Source: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2011/11/18120149>

(3) (page 11) Read more: <http://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/reports-and-documents-detail/article/report-france-2010-vandalism-up-34-84-directed-against-christian-sites.html>

(4) (page 11) http://www.oscepa.org/images/stories/documents/activities/1.Annual%20Session/2011_Belgrade/BelgradeDeclarationFINALEnglish.pdf (pages 50 and 51).

(5) (page 13) This summary was provided by the European Court of Human Rights. Fact sheets of key human rights cases are available on <http://www.echr.coe.int/ECHR/EN/Header/Press/Information+sheets/Factsheets/>

(6) (page 22) *Handyside v. the United Kingdom*, 7 December 1976, § 49, Series A no. 24.

"For many years, I have been saying that the stronger we are as a Christian nation, the more understanding we will be of other faiths."

UK Government Minister, Baroness Warsi (a Muslim), November 1st, 2011

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