

CDDH comments on Parliamentary Assembly Recommendations 2055(2014) – “Threats against humanity posed by the terrorist group known as ‘IS’: violence against Christians and other religious or ethnic communities”

CDDH: 82nd meeting – 19/21 November 2014 CDDH(2014)R82

1. The Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH) takes note of Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 2055 (2014) on “Threats against humanity posed by the terrorist group known as ‘IS’: violence against Christians and other religious or ethnic communities”. It shares the concerns expressed by the Parliamentary Assembly in Resolution 2016 (2014) about the situation in the Middle-East regarding ongoing violent actions, including large-scale religious and ethnic cleansing perpetrated by the “ISIL”¹. The CDDH notes that the large-scale violence by 'ISIL' targets not only specific religious and ethnic groups, such as Alawis, Christians, Jews, Shias, Sunnis and Yezidis, but is directed against anyone who does not share their views and beliefs. It thus poses a serious threat in general to the observance of fundamental rights and human dignity to all.
2. As regards the humanitarian consequences of the current crisis, the CDDH acknowledges that current humanitarian aid supplies are insufficient and joins the Assembly’s call to the Committee of Ministers to exhort its member states to increase and expand them further “as part of a strategic, longer-term approach to foster plurality and human rights with a particular focus on greater support to religious and ethnic communities”.
3. The CDDH takes note of the Assembly’s call to the Committee of Ministers to develop the political aspect of its annual “Exchanges on the Religious Dimension of Intercultural Dialogue” and to contemplate discussions on different religious perspectives of human dignity. It also acknowledges the call to the Committee of Ministers to envisage possible ways to monitor the situation of governmental and societal restrictions on religious freedom and related rights in Council of Europe’s member states and neighbouring states and to periodically report to the Assembly. In this context, the CDDH wishes to recall the importance of the Council of Europe’s work on intercultural dialogue, including its religious dimension, especially since the launch of the White paper on intercultural dialogue, which constituted an important milestone for intercultural dialogue policy in Europe, and was followed up with a new version published in 2010 and Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1962 (2011) on “The religious dimension of intercultural dialogue”. Moreover, the Venice Commission has prepared a number of studies and reports related to human rights in culturally diverse societies², to which should be added the

¹ According to the terminology employed by the United Nations.

² CDL-AD(2008)026 Report on the relationship between Freedom of Expression and Freedom of Religion: the issue of regulation and prosecution of Blasphemy, Religious Insult and Incitement to Religious Hatred adopted by the Venice Commission at its 76th Plenary Session (Venice, 17-18 October 2008); CDL-AD(2005)009 Report on Electoral Rules and Affirmative Action for National Minorities' Participation in decision-making process in

work of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)³. The CDDH also recalls the Manual on hate speech⁴ and the Declaration of the Committee of Ministers on human rights in culturally diverse societies⁵.

4. In this regard, the CDDH acknowledges the relevance and importance of such calls and initiatives and expresses its readiness to assist in such requests, not least through its ongoing work on Human Rights in culturally diverse societies. The drafting group on this issue (CDDH-DC), which held its 2nd meeting on 21-24 October 2014, took account of the Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 2055 (2014) and Resolution 2016 (2014) in the process of compiling the existing Council of Europe standards relating to the principles of freedom of thought, conscience and religion and the links to other Convention rights, in particular freedom of expression. The Drafting Group's next step will be the elaboration of guidelines on the protection and promotion of human rights in culturally diverse societies with the purpose of providing guidance to member States on enhancing the effective implementation of the Council of Europe standards in this field.

Recommendation 2055(2014)

Final version

Threats against humanity posed by the terrorist group known as “IS”: violence against Christians and other religious or ethnic communities

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly refers to its [Resolution 2016 \(2014\)](#) on threats against humanity posed by the terrorist group known as “IS”: violence against Christians and other religious or ethnic communities, whereby it expresses its deep concern about the threats posed by this terrorist group and draws attention once again to the situation of Christian and other religious and ethnic communities in the Middle East, in general, and in Iraq and Syria in particular.

European countries adopted by the Council for Democratic Elections at its 12th meeting (Venice, 10 March 2005) and the Venice Commission at its 62th Plenary Session (Venice, 11-12 March 2005); CDL-AD(2007)001 Report on Non-citizens and Minority Rights adopted by the Venice Commission at its 69th plenary session (Venice, 15-16 December 2006).

³ In this context, see ECRI General Policy Recommendation No. 1 “[Combating racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance](#)”.

⁴ Drafted by a consultant at the request of the CDDH and published in 2008.

⁵ Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 1st July 2009 at 1062nd meeting of the Ministers’ Deputies.

2. The Assembly therefore asks the Committee of Ministers to:

2.1. develop the political aspect of its annual Exchanges on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue, and consider discussing the different religious perspectives of human dignity;

2.2. envisage possible ways to monitor the situation of governmental and societal restrictions on religious freedom and related rights in Council of Europe member States and in States in the Council of Europe's neighbourhood, and report periodically to the Assembly;

2.3. bring to the attention of the governments of the member States the specific recommendations included in Resolution 2016 (2014), in particular as regards the need to increase humanitarian aid supplies to refugee camps across Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, and expand aid programmes further.