

Statement regarding the situation of Christians in the Islamic World

The European Christian Political Movement is deeply concerned about the recent months' wave of killings and reprisals against Christians in the Islamic world.

- About 500 Christians were murdered in March in Nigeria's state of Plateau.
- In Iraq, the on-going killings and intimidations have provoked the exodus of tens of families from Mosul in February. According to UN estimates, since 2003, up to 500,000 Christians (half the total Christian population of Iraq) had to flee the country.
- In January, six Christians of the Coptic rite from Egypt were murdered near their church during Coptic Christmas celebration (January 7.)
- The Iranian police continues arbitrary raids on Christian communities, detaining and mistreating worshippers and clergy.
- In March, the Moroccan authorities cracked down on a Christian-run orphanage, arrested and expelled from the country a number of Christian missionaries under the pretext of "proselytizing Muslims."

Whereas some of these incidents can be attributed to inter-sectarian violence, in other instances local and central authorities acquiesced or even contributed to attacks against Christians.

In ECPM's view, these regrettable actions should be regarded in the light of a state-encouraged climate of intolerance and structural flaws in Islamic countries' legislation and policies towards religious minorities. Although in many cases Christians represent the aboriginal population in nowadays Muslim countries, their rights are drastically limited. In many countries ruled according to Islamic precepts, leaving Islam is punishable by death. Christian missionaries or relief workers contacting with Muslims face imprisonment, expulsion, torture or execution. Worship services, public display of faith or introduction of religious literature is restricted or prohibited, even for Christians from abroad.

Bearing in mind that many regimes involved in persecutions of Christians and other minorities are considered "partners" of the European Union and European governments, ECPM believes that avoiding open discussion and promoting the silent policy of appeasement can no longer be regarded as appropriate strategies. ECPM recalls that European tax-payers money is offered in blank to assist the regimes, which openly disregard the very basic values for the European civilization: the right to life, freedom of thought and religion, freedom of assembly, respect to minorities, equality and tolerance.

ECPM therefore urges the European bodies and governments in charge of channeling funds and assistance to Islamic governments to firmly condition their further support by receiving tangible and measurable guarantees of a minimum level of freedom and protection offered to religious minorities.

ECPM appeals to those regimes of Islamic countries that are using discriminatory and aggressive policies towards Christians to cease such practices and allow for freedom and tolerance. ECPM reminds that citizens and originates from the Islamic world living and visiting Europe enjoy the full range of civil, political and social rights. We hereby call on Islamic countries' political and religious authorities to manifest reciprocity, good will and humanity by guaranteeing at least the very basic human rights to Christians and missionaries living and visiting Islamic countries.

In our vision, an efficient cooperation between Europe and the Islamic world can only be attained if the existing problems are brought to an open discussion and understanding and tolerance are manifested not only by one side.