



OIDAC Europe

Intolerance and Discrimination Against Christians in Europe Report 2024





The Observatory on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians in Europe (OIDAC Europe) is a non-governmental organisation with a focus on classifying and providing objective, reliable and comparable data on the phenomena of intolerance and discrimination against Christians at the European level, in order to help politicians, institutions and Christian churches to take effective measures to safeguard religious freedom in Europe.



www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu



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Vienna, November 2024

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
METHODOLOGY AND TERMINOLOGY.....	2
INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS PROVISIONS	3
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS.....	5
PART I ANTI-CHRISTIAN HATE CRIMES	6
ANTI-CHRISTIAN INCIDENTS IN 2023	8
MOST AFFECTED COUNTRIES	9
KINDS OF INCIDENTS	11
MOTIVES AND PERPETRATOR GROUPS.....	13
PART II DISCRIMINATION AGAINST CHRISTIANS	14
RECENT REPORTS ON ANTI-CHRISTIAN DISCRIMINATION	15
DISCRIMINATION AT THE WORKPLACE	17
DEBANKING AND DEFUNDING OF CHRISTIAN ORGANISATIONS ...	21
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST CHRISTIAN POLITICIANS	21
SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES	23
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST CHRISTIANS IN THE MEDIA	25
SELF-CENSORSHIP: A COMMON RESPONSE TO DISCRIMINATION ..	27
PART III RESTRICTIONS ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM	30
INDIVIDUALS PROSECUTED FOR PRAYING	31
RESTRICTIONS ON RELIGIOUS MANIFESTATIONS	37
FREEDOM OF RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION	39
CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTIONS	42
PARENTAL RIGHTS	44
RELIGIOUS AUTONOMY RIGHTS	45
RELIGIOUS ASYLUM	47
CONCLUSIONS	49
RECOMMENDATIONS	51
ENDNOTES	53

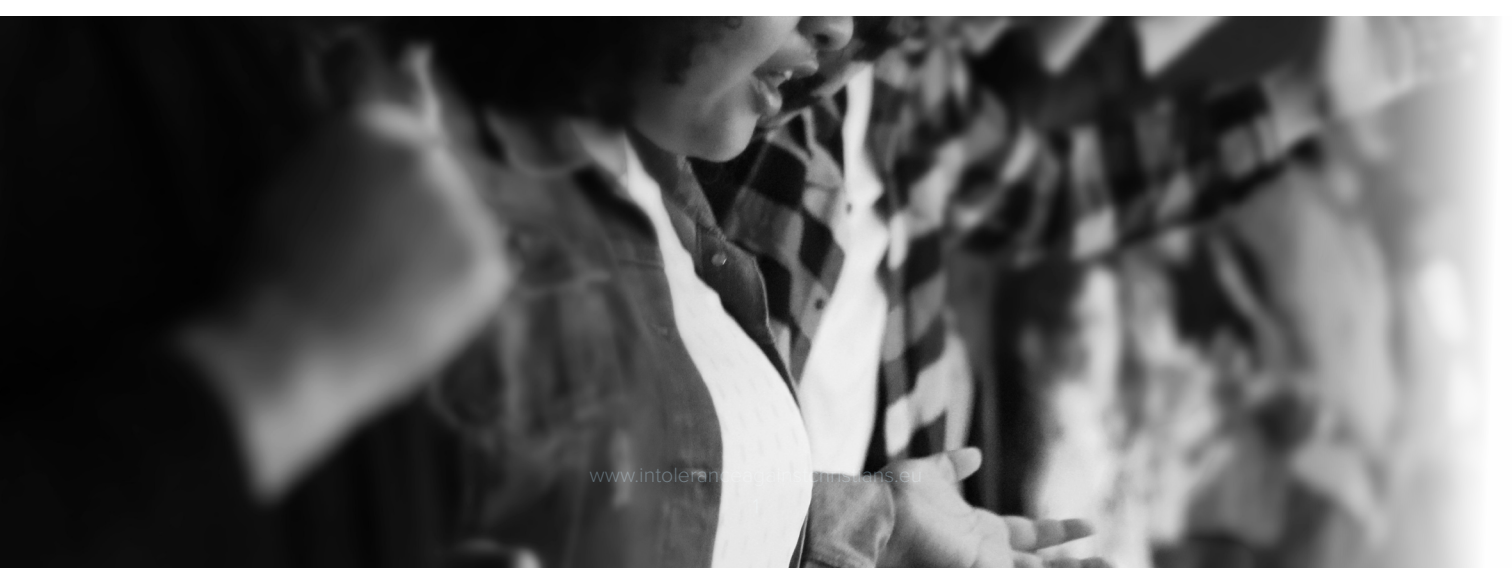
INTRODUCTION

The human right to **freedom of thought, conscience, and religion**, as enshrined in international and European human rights law, protects the very core of human personal freedom. As this right points to the conscience of the human person, which is foundational to human dignity, it can be seen as a philosophical foundation of human rights.¹ Freedom of thought, conscience and religion, together with freedom of expression, has therefore been described as the “**nucleus of the Bill of Rights**”² of the United Nations (UN).

In Europe, religious freedom is protected under the Council of Europe’s **European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)**, which is the most effective regional human rights body as it allows for individual complaints before the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). Nevertheless, violence and discrimination against Christians and other believers has increased in recent decades.

Against this backdrop, the **Observatory on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians in Europe (OIDAC Europe)** was founded in 2010 with the aim of classifying and providing **objective, reliable and comparable data** on the phenomena of intolerance and discrimination against Christians at the European level, in order to help politicians, institutions and Christian churches to take effective measures to safeguard religious freedom in Europe.

OIDAC Europe’s **Annual Report 2024** provides data on **(I) anti-Christian hate crimes (2023)**, **(II) discrimination against Christians (2023-24)** and **(III) restrictions of religious freedom** and related fundamental freedoms of Christians (2023-24) in Europe.



METHODOLOGY AND TERMINOLOGY

This report presents exploratory research of the phenomena of intolerance and discrimination against Christians in Europe. "Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians" is the term we use to describe the denial of equal rights and the social marginalisation of Christians.

The term 'intolerance' refers to the social dimension, i.e. social hostilities and anti-Christian hate crimes, including threats or physical violence against Christians and vandalism of Christian places of worship. Data on these incidents are collected using a variety of methods and sources to ensure comprehensiveness and accuracy. The chapter on anti-Christian hate crimes thus provides an overview of data from official government statistics, international organisations, local civil society organisations and our own research.

'Discrimination', on the other hand, refers to the legal dimension and describes the denial of equal rights in the workplace or through discriminatory laws. While there are no comprehensive statistics or research on anti-Christian discrimination in Europe, the exemplary cases in this report have been chosen to illustrate the variety of incidents of anti-Christian discrimination, revealing its diverse aspects and far-reaching scope.

Due to the significant number of cases of intolerance, discrimination and legal developments affecting the religious freedom of Christians, this report discusses only a selection of incidents that took place in 2023-24. This report therefore does not provide an exhaustive overview of all recorded instances. To see all of our documented cases (over 5,000), we encourage the reader to visit the archive on our website www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu.

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS PROVISIONS

FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE AND RELIGION



Art 9 ECHR

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice, and observance.

The right to religious freedom as enshrined in human rights law extends to both a private dimension, including to live and act in accordance with one's conscience, which enjoys absolute protection from external coercion or state interference,³ and a public dimension, guaranteeing communal worship and manifestations, which may be subject only to a narrow set of limitations.⁴ Due to this broad scope, religious freedom rights intersect with a number of related human rights.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION



Art 10 ECHR

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers.

According to international human rights law, freedom of religion and expression are closely interrelated, as the manifestation of one's religion has a strong communicative aspect.⁵ Both rights guarantee open communication, "thus contributing to (...) a culture of free public discourse."⁶ In this context, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) holds that freedom of expression includes the right to disturb or shock.⁷ The introduction of overly broad 'hate speech' legislation, which criminalises speech that is deemed by others to be 'alarming' or 'distressing', may therefore violate the right to freedom of expression.

PARENTAL RIGHTS AND EDUCATION



Art 2 ECHR Protocol

The State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions.

Parental rights are violated when Christian parents are denied the freedom to educate their children according to their moral and religious beliefs. Infringements also occur when parents are refused the possibility of withdrawing their children from classes that are in violation of their conscience and religious or moral beliefs.

PROHIBITION OF DISCRIMINATION ON RELIGIOUS GROUNDS AND CONSCIENCE CLAUSES



Art 14 ECHR

The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this Convention shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion...

In order to ensure the non-discrimination of Christians in the workplace, states should accommodate objections to certain tasks if the individual's conscience forbids this action. In this context, the abolition of conscience clauses in employment is particularly problematic as it may result in the exclusion of Christians with conscientious objections to certain practices from entire professions. Similarly, an overly strict separation between work and personal faith may prevent Christians from disclosing their faith at work.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

ANTI-CHRISTIAN HATE CRIMES

1. Combining police statistics and civil society data, **2,444 anti-Christian hate crimes** were identified in **35 European countries**, including **232 personal attacks** on Christians.
2. The most affected countries in 2023 are **France**, the **United Kingdom** and Germany, with anti-Christian hate crimes **doubling in Germany** compared to last year.

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST CHRISTIANS

3. New findings have revealed **widespread discrimination against Christian in the workplace** and in various spheres of society. The expression of traditional religious beliefs is increasingly met with hostility and can lead to discrimination and bullying at work or even loss of employment.
4. **Christian politicians** are particularly vulnerable to discrimination on the basis of their personal religious beliefs and may be forced to choose between their political career and their religious beliefs.
5. These forms of discrimination have a **'chilling effect'**, leading many Christians, particularly among the younger generation, to **self-censor** or even hide their beliefs at university and in the workplace, as recent findings demonstrate.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM RESTRICTIONS

6. A number of **restrictions on religious freedom** affecting Christians in Europe have been identified, concerning public prayer, religious manifestations, public expression of religious beliefs, religious autonomy, parental rights and conscientious objection to military service and certain medical procedures.
7. In 2023-24, several people have been **fined and prosecuted for peacefully praying** in public streets in so-called 'buffer zones' around abortion clinics, including a man convicted in the UK for praying silently in his own mind.

PART I
ANTI-CHRISTIAN
HATE CRIMES

ANTI-CHRISTIAN HATE CRIMES

OIDAC Europe has been documenting anti-Christian hate crimes for **almost 15 years** and has seen a **steady increase** in the number of incidents. While most documented anti-Christian hate crimes are cases of vandalism, threats, physical attacks and even murder also occur.

In the absence of comprehensive statistics on anti-Christian hate crime in Europe, the following chapter draws on a variety of sources to provide as complete a picture as possible. It presents and compares official **government statistics**, **OSCE/ODIHR hate crime data**, figures from local **civil society** organisations and our **own research**.

In our own research, OIDAC Europe follows the OSCE definition of hate crimes as “criminal acts motivated by bias or prejudice against certain groups of people”. According to this definition, vandalism of places of worship are considered anti-religious hate crimes, as they are criminal acts directed against a building with symbolic significance for the religious community. Not all government and civil society statistics cited in this report follow the same definition. Where available, we have therefore supplemented government statistics with police data on church vandalism.

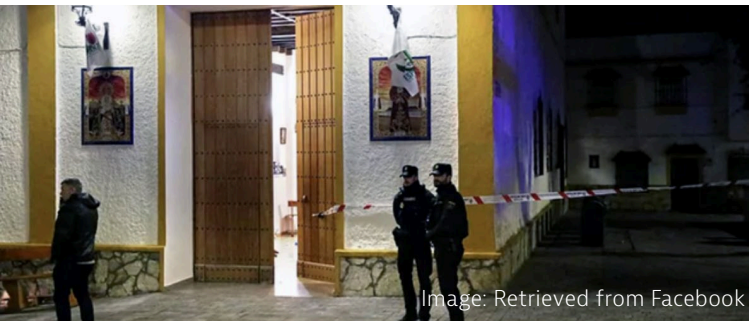


Image: Retrieved from Facebook

In January 2023, a jihadist terrorist attacked two Catholic churches in Algeciras, Spain. The man killed an altar server with a machete and injured four people, shouting “Allah is great” and “Death to Christians.”⁸

In November 2023, a Tunisian Christian convert from Italy was beaten and robbed for ‘attending a Christian church’. The attackers were fellow countrymen who opposed his conversion to the Christian faith, a judge found.⁹



Anti-Christian Incidents in 2023

Out of a total of **793** incidents recorded by OIDAC Europe in 2023, including thefts of money and copper¹⁰ and break-ins, **501 cases** were identified as anti-Christian hate crimes.

Police statistics on anti-Christian hate crime were only publicly available from Austria, Finland, France, Germany and the United Kingdom (England and Wales). These five countries recorded a total of **2,111 anti-Christian hate crimes**.

As police statistics include incidents that are inaccessible to civil society groups, the most accurate representation of anti-Christian hate crime in Europe can be obtained by **matching police and civil society data**. Government statistics were therefore used where available, and supplemented by OSCE/ODIHR hate crime data and OIDAC Europe's data for those countries that did not publish data on anti-Christian hate crime.

The **total number** of incidents obtained through this integrated approach is **2,444 anti-Christian hate crimes in 35 countries**, including **232 personal attacks** against Christians, such as harassment, threats and physical violence.

Most Affected Countries in 2023

Country	Police Statistics		OIDAC Europe
France*	950 ¹¹		112
United Kingdom**	702 ¹²		63
Germany***	277 (politically motivated) ¹³	2,000* (estimated property damage)	109
Poland	10 ¹⁴		70
Italy	-		65
Spain	-		54
Austria	150 ¹⁵		23

*The French Ministry of Interior does not publish the exact number of hate crimes against any religious group, but the spokesperson of the Ministry indicated that between 900 and 1,000 anti-Christian hate crimes were recorded in 2023.

** Statistics for England and Wales, reporting period from April 2023 to March 2024.

*** For a detailed explanation of the two sets of numbers shown here, please see the section on Germany (p.9).

Most Affected Countries



France: Nearly 1,000 Anti-Christian Hate Crimes in 2023

With almost **1,000 anti-Christian attacks**¹⁶ in 2023, France remains the country with the highest number of incidents. While 90% of the attacks were directed against churches and cemeteries, the ministry's statistical services also documented **84 personal attacks** on people.¹⁷

In March 2023, two nuns announced their departure from Nantes because of the constant hostility and insecurity.¹⁸ They reported that they had been subjected to "beatings, spitting and insults". In January 2023, four churches in Paris were **attacked by arson**, including Molotov cocktails.¹⁹ According to the French Religious Heritage Observatory, criminal arson attacks in France have been on the rise since 2023, with 8 confirmed cases in 2023 and 14 in the first ten months of 2024.²⁰



United Kingdom: 702 Cases in England and Wales

In the UK, the number of anti-Christian hate crimes in England and Wales **rose to 702** in 2023 (reporting period from April 2023 to March 2024), an **increase of 15%** from the previous year.²¹

One particularly disturbing incident in 2023 was the attack on Javed Nouri, a **convert to Christianity** from a Muslim background, who narrowly escaped an **attempted murder** by his roommate, who considered Nouri an apostate "who deserved to die".



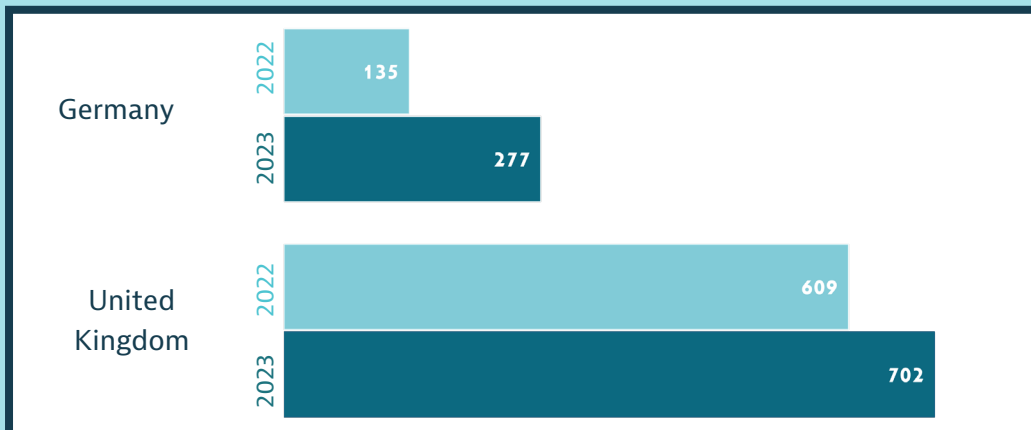
Germany: 105% Increase Between 2022 and 2023

In Germany, anti-Christian hate crimes have seen a worrying **increase of 105%** between 2022 and 2023, rising to **277**.²² However, official government statistics only include politically motivated hate crimes. Vandalism or arson attacks on churches are therefore not counted if a political motive could not be established.

The number of cases of damage to churches and monasteries is therefore an interesting point of reference. Using police data on vandalism to places of worship in 2023, obtained on request from most German federal states, OIDAC Europe estimates that there were at least **2,000 cases of property damage** to Christian places of worship in Germany in 2023.

Highest Increases 2022 to 2023 Recorded by States

Country	2022	2023	Increase
Germany ²³	135	277	105%
United Kingdom ²⁴	609	702	15%



In January 2023, a man attacked Father Antoni Kovtonyuk, slashing him on the neck with a knife after he tried to stop the attacker from vandalising a church in Vinnitsa, Ukraine. The priest was taken to intensive care.²⁵

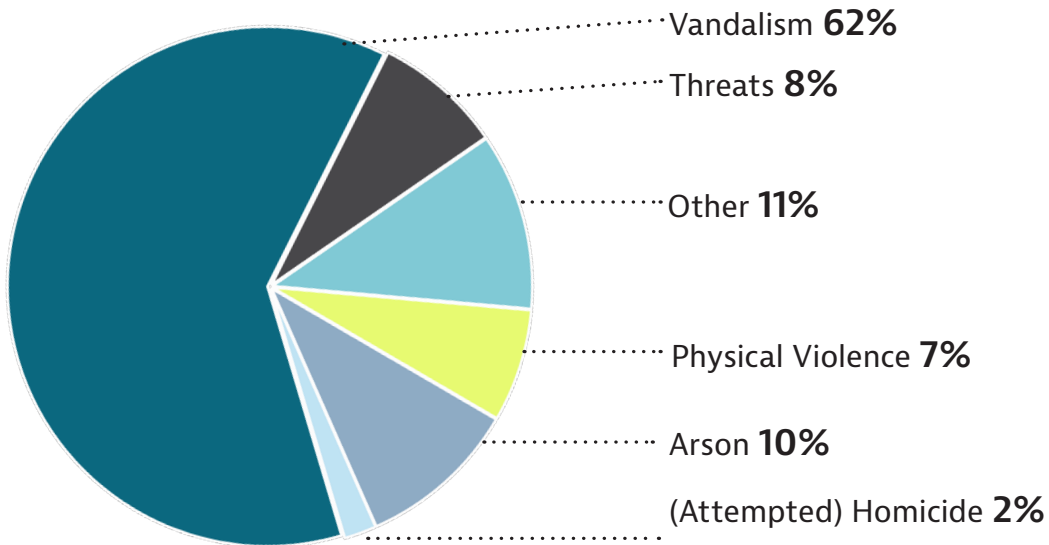


During the distribution of Holy Communion in the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, Spain, in July 2023, a man struck the priest and also tried to stab him in the neck with a sharp object, while cursing the Catholic Church and shouting that he wanted to kill the bishop.²⁶

Kinds of Incidents

Of the European countries that published police statistics on anti-Christian hate crimes for 2023, seven governments provided information on the types of incidents. While most incidents targeted places of worship, these seven countries also recorded **169 incidents** in which Christians **targeted personally**. When supplemented with civil society data, the total number of **verbal and physical attacks on Christians is 232**.

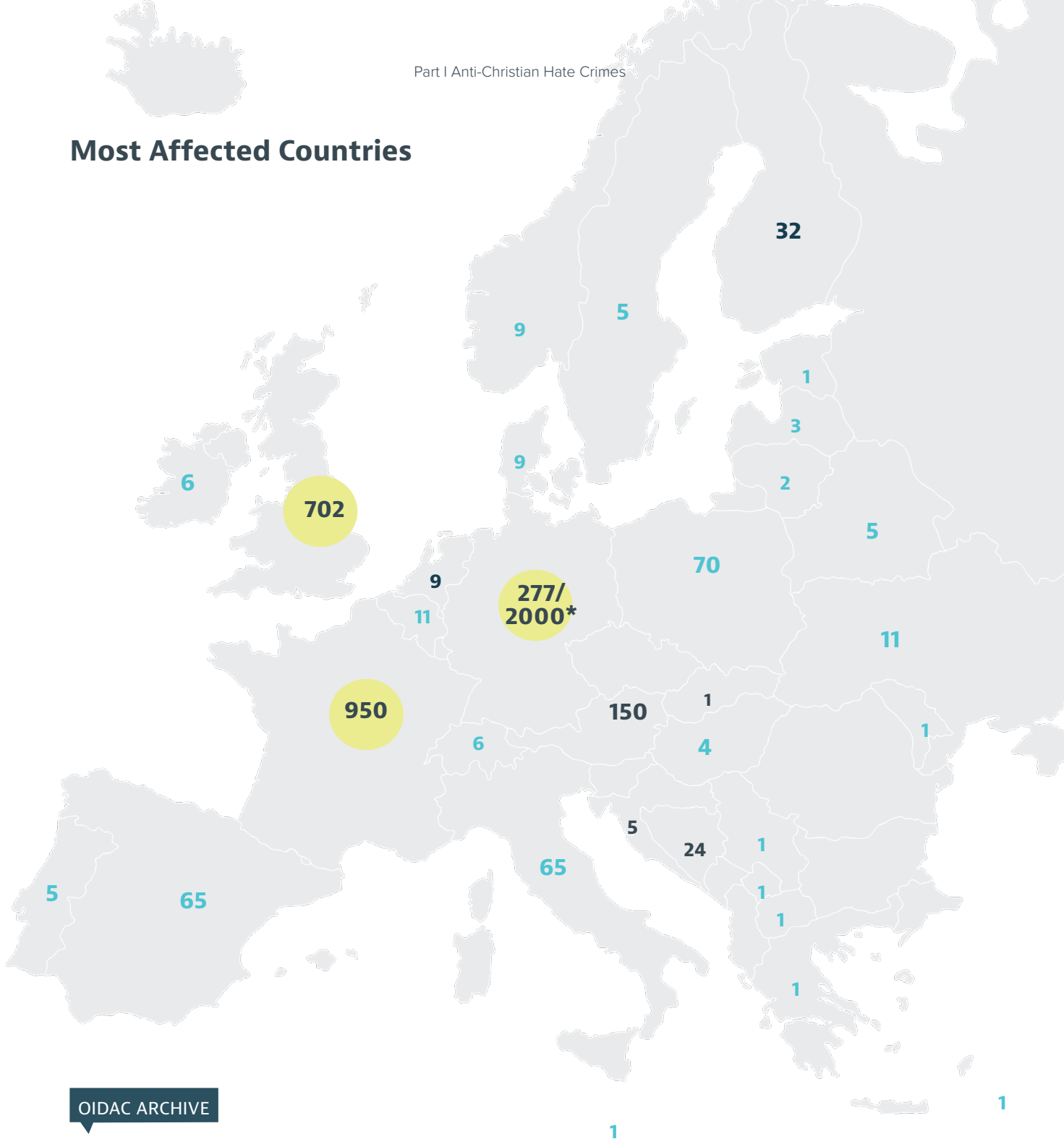
Of the incidents recorded by OIDAC Europe in 2023, the most common forms of violence were vandalism (62%), including many cases (24%) which involved acts of desecration, as well as arson attacks (10%), threats (8%) and physical violence (7%). However, in 2023, OIDAC Europe also recorded **1 case of murder, 7 cases of attempted murder** and a total of **68 attacks on persons** with an anti-Christian bias. In terms of physical violence, **converts to Christianity from a Muslim background** are particularly vulnerable.



More than 100 people, including around 60 children, were targeted in a car ramming attack by a man who drove his car through a Corpus Christi procession in Poland. Several victims were injured.²⁷



Most Affected Countries



OIDAC ARCHIVE



- Most Affected Countries
- Hate Crimes Documented by Police
- Hate Crimes Documented by Civil Society

*see section on Germany (p.9).

Motives and Perpetrator Groups

Identifying the motives and perpetrator groups behind the attacks remains a challenge, as police tend not to disclose this highly sensitive information. Of the European countries that compile statistics on anti-Christian hate crime, only **Germany** reported the background of politically motivated attacks on churches (92), with most perpetrators having '**political right**' motives (31), followed by '**religious ideologies**' (16) and '**political left**' (14) motives.

Of the cases documented by OIDAC Europe, where the motives or background of the perpetrators could be established (69), most attacks had a **radical Islamist** background (21), followed by **anti-religious** (14), **radical left** (13) and other **political motives** (12), some of which were linked to the war in Ukraine. Compared to the cases documented in 2022, the numbers remained almost the same, except for cases with an Islamist background, which increased from 11 to 21.

One man was seriously injured and another killed in a knife attack in the UK in October 2023. The first victim, a convert to Christianity from Islam and the perpetrator's flatmate, was stabbed repeatedly while lying in bed and suffered serious injuries. The perpetrator considered him an "apostate" and "therefore somebody who deserved to die".²⁸



In September 2023, Spanish pro-abortion activists harassed parishioners attending mass in Barcelona and smeared offensive graffiti on the walls of the church.²⁹

Image retrieved from X

PART II
DISCRIMINATION
AGAINST
CHRISTIANS

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST CHRISTIANS

In recent years, OIAC Europe has documented increasing discrimination against Christians because of their faith and the expression of their religious beliefs.

Cases collected in 2023-24 range from discrimination in the workplace, universities and even schools, to the debanking of Christian organisations and pressure on Christian politicians to denounce their beliefs or resign from office.

Recent Reports on Anti-Christian Discrimination

In October 2024, the Commission of Inquiry into Discrimination Against Christians (CIDAC)³⁰, which is tasked with investigating the nature, context and scale of discrimination faced by Christians in the UK, published its interim report.³¹

The report is based on 17 hearings, which were held between October 2023 and July 2024. CIDAC sees these hearings as *“the tip of a very large iceberg – of Christians self-reportedly feeling marginalised in what they regard as an increasingly hostile and discriminatory environment.”*³²

The report reveals that Christians who **follow traditional teachings** of their respective denominations suffer various forms of discrimination, which sometimes even amount to loss of employment, unfounded criminal investigations, the closing of bank accounts, humiliation or bullying. Expressing religious convictions such as ‘marriage is a union between one man and one woman’ or ‘human life begins at conception’, for example, have been among the reasons why Christians have lost their jobs.

In the context of employment, Christians who expressed traditional views, were often reported by activists, subjected to disciplinary hearings – which some described as interrogations about their personal beliefs – and subsequently dismissed.

“Our witness hearings indicate overall a growing intolerance towards those who hold traditional Christian beliefs.”

- CIDAC Interim Report

Survey: Christians in the UK: More Than Half of Respondents Experienced Hostility

In June 2024, a study was published based on qualitative and quantitative research using questionnaires completed by **1,562 respondents** from different Christian denominations and age groups in the UK. According to the study, entitled *The Cost of Keeping the Faith*, **56% of respondents** said they had experienced **hostility and ridicule** when discussing their religious beliefs, rising to **61% among those under 35**. The quantitative data also showed that **18% of people** had experienced **discrimination**, with these experiences increasing in the younger age group.

As the research lists discrimination against Christians in various spheres of life, the findings have been included in the following chapter.



Discrimination at the Workplace

One of the areas where Christians are most likely to face discrimination due to their religious convictions is the workplace. In recent years, OIDAC Europe has documented numerous cases of Christians being **discriminated against in the workplace** because of their **religious beliefs**. This trend appears to be continuing in 2023-24. The expression of religious beliefs is increasingly met with hostility and can lead to discrimination and bullying at work or even loss of employment, as recent findings show.

According to the aforementioned study, **18% of respondents** felt that they had been **disadvantaged** at their workplace because of their religious belief. This figure rose to **22%** among those aged between **35 and 54**. A total of 282 people felt that they had been disadvantaged because of their religion. In some cases, simply **mentioning one's Christian faith in a job interview** was grounds for **discrimination**.

"Any mention of faith in a CV precludes one from an interview. My yearly assessment was lowered because I spoke of Christ."

(The Costs of Keeping the Faith: Male respondent, 55-64, employed, non-denominational)³³

In some cases, hostile reactions to Christians in the workplace can even amount to bullying, as some respondents to the survey reported:

"I was bullied at my workplace, made to feel less than, despite being very successful at my job in other settings, until I left. Another Christian was bullied out of her job for her beliefs and refusing to do shifts on Sundays so she could attend church. The management treated her badly until she left. We believe it was because of her faith."

(The Costs of Keeping the Faith: Female respondent, 45-54, employed, CoE)³⁴

In most cases, however, discrimination against Christians in the workplace is based on the **expression of religious beliefs** about societal issues.³⁵ Unfortunately, these cases have even extended to private conversations³⁶ or posts on private social media accounts.

Case: Dismissed for Sharing Biblical Beliefs in Private Facebook Post

Kristie Higgs³⁷, a mother of two, who had been working as a pastoral assistant at her local secondary school for six years, was **dismissed after sharing her concerns** about the **promotion of transgenderism** in sex education lessons at her **son's primary school** in a private Facebook post. According to Higgs, telling children that they could be born in the wrong body went against her religious beliefs.

Ms Higgs was reported to her headteacher by an anonymous person who had seen her post, told that her private posts could “[bring] the school into **disrepute**” and subsequently dismissed.

In June 2023, the **Employment Appeal Tribunal** ruled that Ms Higgs’ right to freedom of belief and expression had not been adequately taken into account. The case was recently heard by the Court of Appeal in October 2024. In a statement outside the tribunal, Ms Higgs said:

*“I am not alone to be treated this way – many of the others here to support me today have faced similar consequences. This is not just about me. It cannot be right that so **many Christians are losing their jobs** or facing discipline for sharing biblical truth, our Christian beliefs.”*



Screenshot: Interview with Kristie Higgs retrieved from YouTube - © Christian Concern

In particular, **traditional Christian beliefs**, such as the conviction that God created man as male and female for each other, may be **labelled as 'discriminatory'** – even if the person has **never been found to have discriminated** against a colleague or client – and can lead to interrogation, suspension or even dismissal.

Maureen Martin, for example, was sacked by her housing association employer for publicly stating that she believed that **marriage** is a union between one man and one woman. She was accused of **gross misconduct**. In April 2023, she won substantial damages following a legal challenge.³⁸

Some employers have even admitted a **lack of commitment to protecting religious freedom**. For example, an employer in an NHS trust stated in a letter to a Christian employee that the trust's equality and diversity policy "takes precedence over religious belief."³⁹

One more indirect form of discrimination is disproportionate demands on Christian employees to work Sunday shifts, preventing them from attending church services and thus forcing them to decide between their job and their religious practice.⁴⁰

A study confirming this problem quoted a Christian woman who said she had been "turned down for employment because of not wanting to work on Sundays, even though the job was not an essential public service." Another woman shared that she was even "forced to work Sundays when others in the same position were not."⁴¹



Case: Job Offer Withdrawn After Beliefs Were Discovered

Felix Ngole, a Christian social worker, had a **job offer withdrawn** after the company discovered that he held traditional religious beliefs. While Mr Ngole made it clear that he would not discriminate against anyone, he also told the employer that *“what I cannot do, and you cannot reasonably expect me to do without yourselves being discriminatory, is make my participation in the ‘promotion of homosexual rights’ a condition of my employment.”*⁴²

“No one has ever told me that I have not treated them well in my professional experience. I have never been accused of forcing my beliefs on anyone. I have supported vulnerable individuals from all backgrounds, including LGBT.”

- Felix Ngole

In a judgement handed down on 1 July 2024, an employment tribunal found that his employer had “directly discriminated” against Mr Ngole on grounds of his Christian beliefs and had ***“wrongly confused the expression of religious views with the notion of discrimination”***⁴³.

However, the employment judge’s ruling also had chilling implications for Christian freedoms and freedom of expression. Mr Ngole has therefore announced his intention to appeal.



Image: Felix Ngole - © Christian Concern

Debanking and Defunding of Christian Organisations

In the Norwegian town of Klepp, nine councillors have launched an investigation into a suspected case of discrimination in the funding of Christian organisations. It is suspected that church organisations that appoint their leadership in accordance with traditional religious criteria are **excluded from municipal grants**.⁴⁴

As reported in June 2024, two Christian pro-life organisations in Sweden and the Netherlands, have been '**debanked**'. Mats Selander, who founded the Christian Centre for Bioethical Reform in Sweden (CBR-S), was forced to end his 30-year customer relationship with the Scandinavian bank Nordea. The bank subsequently even closed his private account. Selander believes this is because of his pro-life views. With increasing DEI regulations, some banks are said to be closing customers because of their beliefs.⁴⁵

Discrimination Against Christian Politicians

Christian politicians in Europe increasingly report feeling hostility and pressure. In many Western European countries, holding certain core values in line with one's religious beliefs is an obstacle to equal opportunities in political competition.

Citing the well-publicised hostility towards the Scottish politician Kate Forbes and her colleague Tim Farron over their Christian beliefs, Ann Widdecombe, a former Shadow Home Secretary, said Christians "*shouldn't have to leave their faith at the door*".

"Diversity and tolerance seem to extend to every group except Christians in modern Britain. Christians face a secular inquisition, especially from so-called 'liberals' who claim to champion equality and inclusion"⁴⁶.

- Ann Widdecombe

In May 2024, more than 400 members of the **Liberal Democrats** filed a complaint with the UK's Equality and Human Rights Commission after the party **'deselected'** **David Campanale** as a candidate **because of his Christian faith** and tolerated a "hostile environment" for people of faith.

David Campanale, an Anglican believer and award-winning former BBC journalist, was targeted by an activist group within the party who has been lobbying against him because of his Christian beliefs and subsequently convicted the party leadership to deselect him as a candidate.⁴⁷

While some Christian politicians have been reinstated⁴⁸ after discriminatory dismissals, the **consequences, including for their reputation**, can hardly be underestimated.

Councillor Anthony Stevens, who was arrested by police officers in front of his children after sharing a petition to support freedom of speech of a Christian fellow councillor on social media, stressed that his vindication could not compensate for the damage caused by the investigation.⁴⁹

Image: David Campanale (left), retrieved from X



"Yes, I have been vindicated and I am relieved that no further action will be taken, but look what I have been put through. My reputation, business, health and even my relationships have been seriously affected by this abuse of police."

- Councillor Anthony Stevens

Schools and Universities

Research conducted by OIDAC Europe has shown that **public universities** in some European countries are perceived as one of *“the most hostile environments for people with alternative worldviews, including Christian worldviews.”*⁵⁰ This perception seems to stem mainly from a hostile attitude towards Christianity among students from the political left⁵¹ and from **negative preconceptions** about Christians that are attributed to anyone who professes the Christian faith.⁵²

In June 2023, a study of four British universities showed that Christian students were one of the groups most likely to report hostility and discrimination in secular academic environments.⁵³ In particular, students with **pro-life views** across Europe have reported **hostility** and even **death threats**.⁵⁴

*“I have been ostracised by most of my university friends for holding pro-life views – when they found out they began to question ‘whether it was moral to stay friends with me’ and a lot of them decided against it.”*⁵⁵

(The Costs of Keeping the Faith, Male respondent, 18-24, student, Roman Catholic)

The survey *The Costs of Keeping the Faith* also identified some **schools** as particularly hostile to the Christian faith, even to the point of **parents encouraging their children to keep quiet about their faith** to avoid bullying and ridicule.

"I have raised my daughter in the Christian faith. However, I have also taught her to be quiet about what she believes when at school. She does go to a Church youth group but she does not mention this either when at school. Too many teachers express anti-Christian sentiments if this is found out."⁵⁶

(The Costs of Keeping the Faith: Female respondent, 45-54, employed, non-denominational)



Discrimination Against Christians in the Media

A thematic report by OIDAC Europe published by the Media Diversity Institute in 2024, analysing media coverage of Christians in several European countries, found that secular media in Europe tend to **under-report anti-Christian violence**, omit specific Christian references and sometimes even spread distorted facts, negative stereotypes and defamation of Christians and Christian churches. The lack of outcry against defamation of Christians in the media indicates a certain public indifference to derogatory speech and misrepresentation against them.

According to the Global Faith and Media Study, 61% of respondents felt that the media "perpetuate faith-based stereotypes", and 43% felt that "today's news coverage of religion creates unease and anxiety."⁵⁷ This is also true of Christian groups. According to the above-mentioned survey *The Cost of Keeping the Faith*, "**many respondents identified the media as having a central role in encouraging discrimination against Christians. This was either through creating foolish or unpleasant characters in television programmes, allowing anti-Christian blasphemy, or simply by perpetuating existing stereotypes.**"⁵⁸ Respondents also felt that Christians were **more likely to be portrayed in a bad light** than other religious and identity groups.⁵⁹

When documenting incidents of vandalism against Christian churches, OIDAC Europe is also sometimes confronted with certain biases and a lack of awareness of anti-Christian hate crimes.

For example, after vandals tore down a crucifix and ripped off the hand of a statue of a saint in a German chapel in May 2024, two local media channels commented that despite the brutality of the gestures there were "*no indications that the suspect acted on grounds of faith or even a rejection of the Christian church*", only because the perpetrator was under the influence of alcohol.⁶⁰

In 2024, a report⁶¹ was published about hostility and slander against a public prayer gathering in Croatia. A group of men had started to gather regularly in Zagreb's main square to peacefully pray the rosary. When it became known that they were praying, among other things, for chastity and the protection of unborn children, radical left-wing activists began to attack the prayer gathering. Some media, instead of condemning the violence against the praying believers, perpetuated prejudices, insults and even false information about the praying Christians.

The slander against the prayer gathering included media articles describing the men who attended the privately organised meeting as **“citizens with unconstitutional, dangerous, intentions”**, and a **“conservative movement under the auspices of the extreme and part of the clerical right”**. Some media even used open verbal abuse against the faithful, calling them **“fat, moustachioed and ****ing knights of Mary”** and claiming that they were **“protesting against women’s rights”**, even though the gathering consisted only of praying the rosary without any element of protest.



Self-Censorship: A Common Response to Discrimination

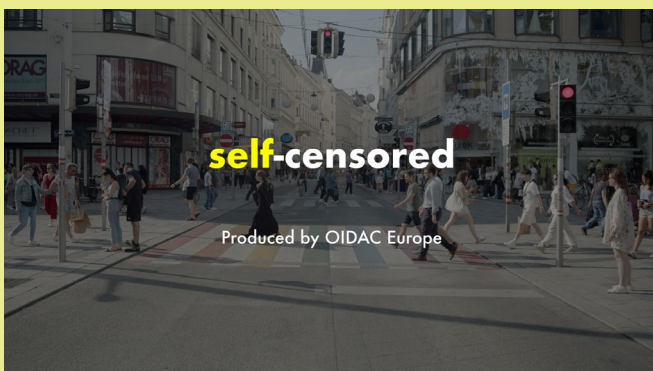
Since the publication of the study *Perceptions on Self-Censorship: Confirming and Understanding the 'Chilling Effect' in 2022*⁶², OIDAC Europe has continued to conduct research on the phenomenon of self-censorship among Christians in Europe.

As this problem particularly affects the younger generation⁶³, OIDAC Europe conducted **in-depth interviews** with nine Christian university students from seven European countries, which were then used to produce the **documentary "Self-Censored" (2024)**. The film presents the common experience of Christian students from different denominations, countries and ethnic backgrounds of withholding opinions or even hiding their faith out of fear of **discrimination, rejection** or other negative consequences.



"When I came to Europe, I thought there was some unwritten law here that your faith should remain something between you and your God alone."

- Yusuf, Nigeria, student in Hungary



For most of the students the **decision to hide their beliefs** came after **experiencing discrimination** or ridicule from professors or hostility from other students. For some, however, it is the result of **observing others** being discriminated against for expressing their beliefs. This reaction is what has been described as the '**chilling effect**'.⁶⁴

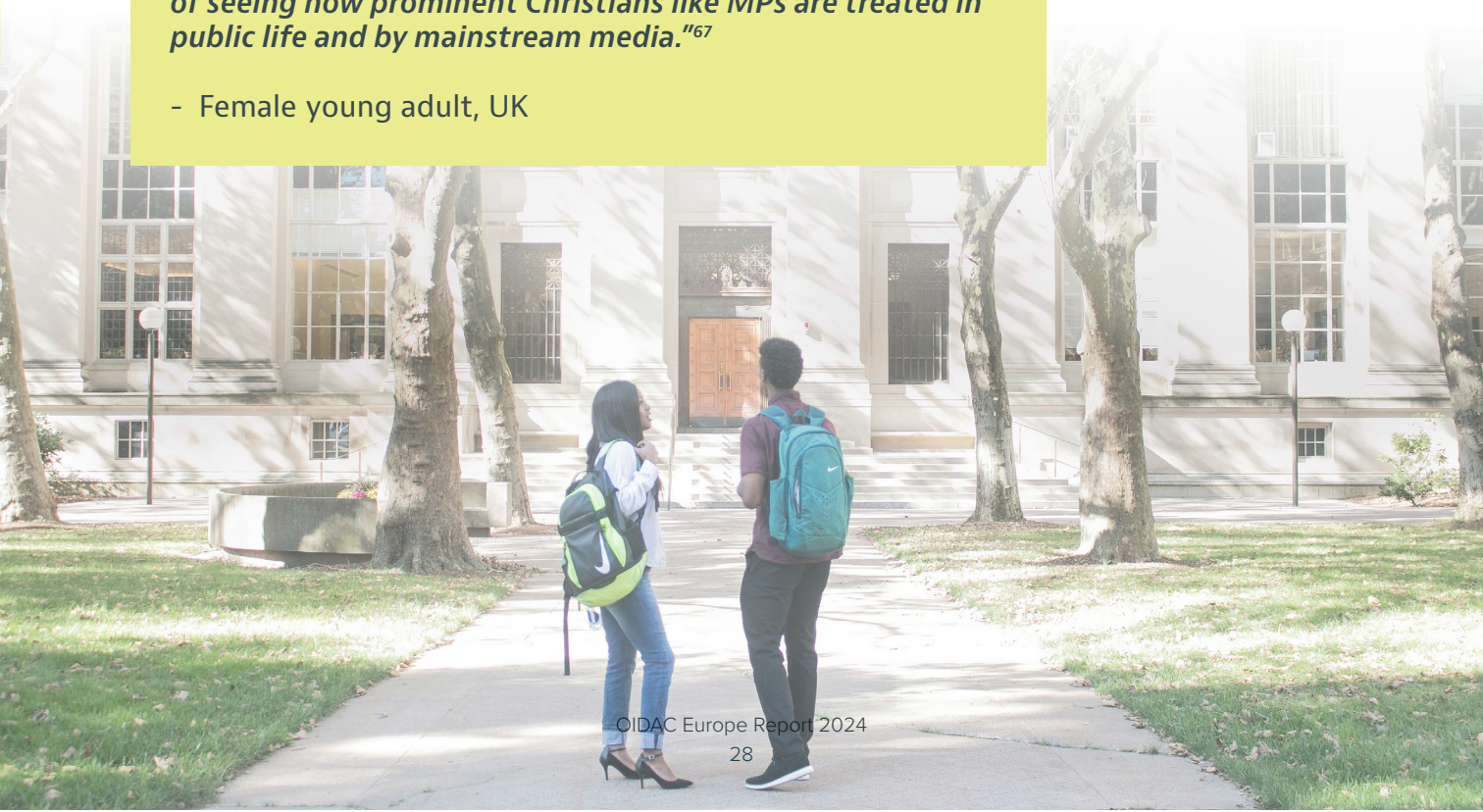
"I wouldn't feel comfortable expressing my religious worldviews in a seminar. It's largely a secular university. (...) If I expressed them in a seminar, for example, they would get shot down."⁶⁵

- Fiona, student in the UK

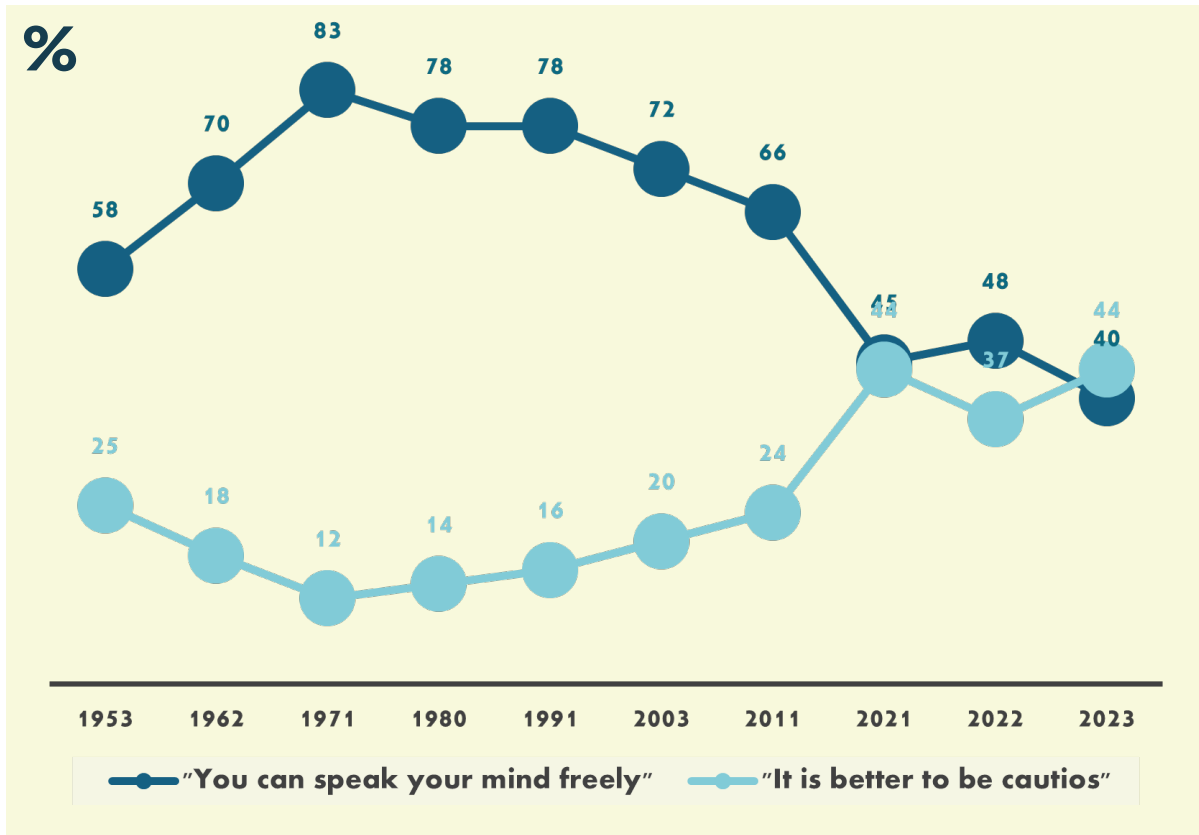
The study *The Costs of Keeping the Faith* also confirmed that self-censoring on opinions about societal issues is particularly high among the younger generation, with **only 36% among Christians younger than 35 saying they feel free to express their views on social issues at work.**⁶⁶

"I have never been disadvantaged but this is because I self-censor at work. (...) This is partly due to the chilling effect of seeing how prominent Christians like MPs are treated in public life and by mainstream media."⁶⁷

- Female young adult, UK



The chilling effect and lack of freedom of expression does not just affect Christians or religious issues. The **German Freedom Index** found that, in 2023, for the first time since the index began in the 1950s, more Germans said they could **not express their political opinions freely** (44%) than said they could (40%).⁶⁸



PART III
RESTRICTIONS
ON RELIGIOUS
FREEDOM

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM RESTRICTIONS

While religious freedom is enshrined in international human rights law, the full exercise of this right is unfortunately not always fully respected in practice. In recent years, Christians in Europe have faced **increasing restrictions on their religious freedom** or even criminal prosecution for the peaceful expression of their religious beliefs.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom noted in its most recent report that *“during the year, several European governments targeted individuals for their peaceful religious expression,”*⁶⁹ citing the criminal investigations of Isabel Vaughan-Spruce of the United Kingdom and Finnish MP Päivi Räsänen as examples.

The examples given are not an exhaustive list but illustrate the main developments.

Individuals Prosecuted for Praying

In 2023 and 2024, several individuals were interrogated by police, fined and some even prosecuted after **peacefully praying in public areas** near abortion clinics in the UK and in Spain.⁷⁰

In May 2023, a citizen who was silently praying outside the Dator abortion clinic in Madrid was arrested by the Spanish National Police.⁷¹



Image retrieved from Telegram

Adam Smith-Connor – Convicted for Praying in His Mind

In October 2024, the **conviction of Adam Smith-Connor** by a British court caused international concern. The army veteran and father was found guilty by Bournemouth Magistrates' Court after **praying silently in his own mind** in a public area in a so-called 'buffer zone' surrounding an abortion clinic.

In its decision, the court reasoned that his **prayer amounted to "disapproval of abortion"**, which is illegal in the local 'buffer zone', because at one point his **head was seen slightly bowed** and his hands were clasped.

Responding to the ruling on 16 October 2024, **Smith-Connor said:**

"Today, the court has decided that certain thoughts – silent thoughts – can be illegal in the United Kingdom. That cannot be right. All I did was pray to God, in the privacy of my own mind – and yet I stand convicted as a criminal?"



Adam Smith-Connor praying - Image: © ADF International

"Are you here to pray for the lives of unborn children?"



Screenshot retrieved from YouTube - ©ADF International

In March 2023, the authorities in Birmingham interrogated and arrested **Isabel Vaughan-Spruce** for silently praying outside an abortion clinic within a so-called 'buffer zone' where 'protests', including prayer, are banned by city council order.⁷²

While Ms Vaughan-Spruce has received a payout from the police for wrongful arrest, the UK introduced a national 'buffer zone' legislation at the end of October 2024, which criminalises any 'influencing' of those accessing abortion clinics, including through prayer.

In May 2024, another person who was simply standing on a public street corner in a 'buffer zone' in Birmingham was approached by police and asked: "***Are you here to pray for the lives of unborn children?***"⁷³



Isabel Vaughan-Spruce - Image: © ADF International

Concerns about UK legislation criminalising prayer and other peaceful religious expression have raised international concern, including from the US Commission on International Religious Freedom.⁷⁴

Legal Background

In most of these cases, fines and prosecutions were based on local Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs). However, some countries such as **Germany**⁷⁵, **Spain**⁷⁶, **Northern Ireland**,⁷⁷ **Scotland**⁷⁸ and **England and Wales**⁷⁹ have introduced **national 'buffer zone' legislation**.

Under the new law in Northern Ireland, a woman who is currently being prosecuted after peacefully praying by the roadside faces **up to six months in prison** if found guilty.⁸⁰

The **Spanish law** criminalises any behaviour deemed offensive by the woman or the staff of the abortion centre⁸¹. The crime can be prosecuted **without the victim's reporting**, allowing for discretionary prosecution by the State⁸². Despite this massive interference with fundamental rights, the Spanish Constitutional Court⁸³ upheld the constitutionality of this law in May 2024.

Scotland: Extreme “Buffer Zone” Law Criminalises Display of Pro-Life Signs in Own Home

In September 2024, an **extremely restrictive ‘buffer zone’ law**⁸⁴ came into force in Scotland. The law has raised serious concerns, as it **criminalises any ‘influencing’** of those accessing abortion facilities within 200 metres of the premises.

The ban on ‘influencing’ also **extends to private homes**, and could therefore criminalise conversations in private gardens if they are audible from the street, or the display of any sign perceived as “pro-life” in one’s home if it is visible from the outside.



§ 4. Offence of influencing, preventing access or causing harassment etc. in safe access zone

(1) A person who is in a safe access zone for protected premises commits an offence if the person does an act with the intention of, or is reckless as to whether the act has the effect of—

(a) **influencing the decision** of another person to access, provide or facilitate the provision of abortion services at the protected premises,...

§ 5 Offence of influencing, preventing access or causing harassment etc. in area visible or audible from safe access zone

(1) A person who is in a relevant area relating to protected premises commits an offence if the person—

(a) does an act that is **capable of being seen or heard** by another person who is within the safe access zone for the protected premises, and

(b) does so with the intention of, or is reckless as to whether the act has the effect of (i) influencing the decision of another person to access, provide or facilitate the provision of abortion services at the protected premises,..."

- **Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) (Scotland) Bill, 2023**

In September 2024, a **letter from the Scottish Government** to all residents within the 'buffer zones' was made public, warning citizens that ***“activities in a private place (such as a house) within the area (...) could be an offence if they can be seen or heard within the Zone and are done intentionally or recklessly.”***⁸⁵

“You can report a group or an individual that you think is breaking the law by contacting Police Scotland,” the letter concluded.

In another case, restricting peaceful prayer in the public sphere, an individual in Spain was **fined three times** between November 2023 and July 2024 for organising a **daily prayer for the country** in front of the steps of a parish church in Madrid, 200 metres from the headquarters of the Socialist Party.⁸⁶ One of the government bans on public prayer was overturned,⁸⁷ but the other two were upheld by the national courts and are pending before the ECtHR and the Spanish Constitutional Court respectively.⁸⁸



Restrictions on Religious Manifestations

Although the public dimension of religious freedom clearly protects the human right to **manifest one's religion or belief in public**, the idea that religion should be confined to the private sphere has led to some restrictions in this area.

Public Manifestations of Religion

In September 2023, the Swiss Federal Court ruled in favour of a parish that had been **banned from organising a Corpus Christi procession** by the canton of Geneva. The court found that the ban violated freedom of religion and conscience.⁸⁹



In February 2024, the Swiss Federal Court upheld a decision by the canton of Geneva to ban churches that do not "maintain a relationship with the state" from celebrating baptisms on Lake Geneva. Two churches were **banned from performing baptisms in the lake**, despite having a long tradition of doing so.⁹⁰



In September 2023, the French Council of State ruled that a **religious statue** in front of a church in Sables-d'Olonne had to be **removed**, arguing that a religious symbol in a public square would violate **France's 1905 law on secularism**.⁹¹



In August 2024, Paris police **unlawfully arrested six Christians** who were on a bus with the inscription "Stop attacks on Christians" in response to the parody of the Last Supper at the Paris Olympics opening ceremony.⁹²



Religious Symbols at the Workplace

In March 2023, the Swiss television station SRF **banned a presenter from wearing a cross necklace** during the program, arguing that this violates journalistic guidelines.⁹³

In February 2024, a taxi driver from Germany was **fined** for displaying a small **sticker with a Bible verse** on the rear window of his car. The city authorities claimed that the Bible verse constituted "religious advertising", which is prohibited for taxis, which are considered part of the public transport system.⁹⁴

Freedom of Religious Expression

International human rights bodies have repeatedly underlined the need to protect religious expression, which is protected under international human rights law.⁹⁵ Resolutions of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe have called on member states to ensure that “national legislation does not unduly limit religiously motivated speech”⁹⁶ so that religious believers can “make their opinion publicly known without being subjected to censorship.”⁹⁷

Despite state obligations to ensure freedom of religious expression, a growing number of people in Europe are being **targeted for peacefully expressing traditional religious beliefs**. This particularly concerns religious views on human nature, marriage or gender identity held for centuries by people of good faith, or critiques of political Islam.



Christians Prosecuted for Peaceful Religious Expressions

In Finland, member of parliament **Päivi Räsänen** and Lutheran **Bishop Juhana Pohjola** have been on trial since 2019, when Räsänen was **accused of “hate speech”** after tweeting a bible verse and questioning how the Lutheran Church could find it compatible with the bible to sponsor the Helsinki Pride. After being cleared of all charges by the Helsinki Court of Appeal, the case has now been taken to Finland’s Supreme Court.⁹⁸

In 2023, **Matthew Grech**, a Maltese Christian was **arrested after sharing his own personal faith story** in a TV interview. In the interview he mentioned that his sexual orientation and views on these issues had changed since he became a Christian. He was accused of violating Malta’s “Affirmation of Sexual Orientation Act” for which he faces up to five months in prison.⁹⁹ He had his 10th court hearing in October 2024.

In February 2024, a Spanish priest, **Father Custodio Ballester**, was summoned to court for an alleged “hate crime” after he **criticised political Islam** and the persecution of Christians in Islamic countries in an article published in 2016. If convicted, he faces up to three years in prison.¹⁰⁰



“Those who produce, elaborate, possess with the purpose of distributing, provide third parties with access to, distribute, disseminate or sell writings or any other type of material or media which by their **content are suitable** to encourage, promote, or incite **directly or indirectly** hatred, hostility, discrimination or violence against a group, a part of a group (...), shall be punished by a prison sentence of one to four years and a fine of six to twelve months.”

“A **prison sentence of six months to two years** and a fine of six to twelve months shall be imposed on those who harm the dignity of persons through actions that entail humiliation, **disregard or discredit of any of the groups** [members belong to an ethnicity, race or nation, national origin, gender, sexual orientation or identity, or due to gender, illness or disability] outlined in the preceding Section”

- Spain: Penal Code § 510 (1) and (2) (a)

In May 2023, a Christian teacher from the UK was **banned from teaching after he 'misgendered' a transgender pupil** and expressed his personal religious views on sexual ethics in a television interview. *"Just because misgendering a transgender pupil might not be unlawful does not mean that it is appropriate conduct for a teacher,"* stated the judge who dismissed Sutcliff's High Court appeal.¹⁰¹

In the UK, several street preachers got **interrogated¹⁰² and arrested for publicly reading and quoting from the bible** for allegedly causing "alarm or distress" to listeners in breach of public order laws. In January 2024, one street preacher was awarded compensation for his unlawful detention.¹⁰³



Conscientious Objections

Freedom of conscience enjoys “**absolute protection**” under international human rights law, underlining the special status of the right to live in accordance with one’s conscience, including the right to be free from external coercion by the state.¹⁰⁴

Conscientious objection is an essential element of freedom of conscience which entails the “*possibility to actually shape their lives in accordance with their conscience-based moral and/or religious position.*”¹⁰⁵ The European Court of Human Rights has increasingly recognised in its jurisprudence that religiously motivated conscientious objection to military service falls within the scope of freedom of religion.¹⁰⁶

Conscientious Objection to Military Service

In 2023, three Protestant Christians were **sentenced to prison** in Ukraine for **conscientious objection to military service** on religious grounds. Vitaly Alekseenko was sentenced to one year in prison for conscientious objection. The court rejected his appeal.¹⁰⁷



Conscientious Objection for Medical Personnel

In the medical field, Christians who have **conscientious objections** to certain **procedures that end or harm human life** have also faced legal challenges as conscience rights are increasingly restricted in a number of European countries.

In **Spain**, conscientious objection to abortion is restricted. Since a reform of the abortion law in 2023, doctors are required to **register in a public registry** in order to exercise their right to freedom of conscience, which is conditional upon the availability of abortions.¹⁰⁸

This model has also been introduced for euthanasia. No institutional objection is permitted. This means that **Christian hospitals and retirement homes must guarantee euthanasia** for their patients, if requested.¹⁰⁹

In September 2023, the **German** government announced that the **performance of abortions** would become a **compulsory part of the medical curriculum**, including the *“knowledge required to perform and justify medical and surgical abortions”* as a **learning objective**.¹¹⁰

Several leading politicians and various Christian communities in Germany have expressed deep concern about this proposal, which would **completely exclude Christians with conscientious objections** to abortion from **any medical profession**.



*“When I trained to be a nurse, I was able to sign a form to say I would not take part in abortion. This is no longer an option for student nurses, and as such, **this profession would now have been shut to me**. I feel this is highly discriminatory against my Christian faith.”¹¹¹*

– Christian nurse, UK, retired

Parental Rights

The right to **educate one's children in accordance with one's religious and philosophical beliefs** is an integral part of the human right to religious freedom. According to the UN Human Rights Committee, religious freedom also includes the **establishment of religious schools**.¹¹² Both of these aspects are increasingly being challenged in Europe.

In October 2023, the hybrid Christian Dietrich Bonhoeffer International **School was forcibly closed** by the German authorities after nine years of operation with an award-winning educational model, following **Germany's tightening of restrictions on private schools**. The school is appealing to the European Court of Human Rights, arguing that Germany is violating national and international human rights law.¹¹³

In an ongoing court case in Switzerland, a couple's 16-year-old daughter was taken from her parents and **placed in a state home** because the **parents objected to their daughter's 'gender transition'**. According to the parents, doctors tried to give their daughter puberty-blocking drugs without their consent. The case has sent shockwaves around the world and raised serious concerns about the protection of Christians' parental rights.¹¹⁴



Religious Autonomy Rights

According to international human rights bodies, *“the practice and teaching of a religion or belief includes (...) the freedom [of religious groups] to **choose their religious leaders, priests and teachers, [and] the freedom to establish seminaries.**”*¹¹⁵

The State is therefore obliged to respect the **autonomy of religious groups**. This also includes the ability of individuals and groups to practise their religion or belief **regardless of the official status** of their respective religious groups.¹¹⁶ Unfortunately, these human rights obligations are not always respected in practice.

Bans and Discrimination against Churches

In December 2023, the **Russian** military-civilian administration in the occupied Zaporizhzhia oblast of Ukraine issued an order **banning** the activities of the **Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC)** and the **Knights of Columbus and Caritas** organisations, which provide social services in the occupied territory, claiming that they were illegally storing explosives and firearms in religious buildings.¹¹⁷

In August 2024, **Ukrainian** lawmakers passed a law **banning the Russian Orthodox Church**. The text targets the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC) of the Moscow Patriarchate and has raised concerns about the protection of religious freedom in Ukraine. The law requires the UOC to sever all ties with the Russian Orthodox Church or face a process leading to its dissolution.¹¹⁸

In **Belarus**, a new law on the activities of religious organisations came into force in July 2024. It requires all registered **religious communities to re-register** or be considered illegal and risk criminal or administrative penalties. The UN and various human rights organisations have warned of a “mass liquidation of various religious organisations”.¹¹⁹

In December 2023, the **French** government announced the **dissolution of Academia Christiana**, a traditional Catholic youth movement offering training courses and summer schools since 2013, claiming that the movement has “incited hatred and discrimination”. Academia Christiana has already announced that it will challenge the ban in court.¹²⁰

In June, **Italy’s** Supreme Court ruled in favour of the tax authorities who had **refused to grant the evangelical church Breccia di Roma tax exemption** under Italian law. They argued that the church’s premises lacked the “intrinsic characteristics” of a religious building. The church plans to appeal to the European Court of Human Rights.¹²¹



Interference with Religious Autonomy

In June 2024, two **Belgian prelates** were **convicted** and ordered to pay compensation by a Belgian court after they **refused to allow a woman** to enter a **diaconal training** programme. The court's decision thus disregarded the fact that only men can become deacons in the Catholic Church and that, under human rights law, religious freedom includes the freedom of religious institutions to decide on the training and ordination of clergy without state interference.¹²²

In April 2024, a **French secular civil court** ruled against the Vatican's internal canonical procedures in the case of a French **nun's dismissal from her order**. The Vatican responded in a written statement that such a ruling on "internal discipline and membership of a religious institute" would be a "serious violation of the fundamental rights of religious freedom and freedom of association of the Catholic faithful."¹²³

Religious Asylum

In a landmark ruling in February 2024, the European Court of Justice (**ECJ**) ruled that an asylum-seeker's **post-flight conversion to Christianity** should be recognised as a **ground for asylum** if the applicant can credibly demonstrate that he changed his religion out of "inner conviction".

The ECJ disagreed with the decision of the Austrian authorities to reject the asylum application of an Iranian who had converted to Christianity after entering Austria.¹²⁴

CONCLUSIONS

This report examines various challenges faced by Christians in contemporary European society and analyses the underlying violations of the right to religious freedom, ranging from social hostility and hate crimes to less visible issues such as discriminatory treatment and restrictions on religious freedom.

With regard to **anti-Christian hate crimes** in Europe, the research presented in this report shows that numbers have increased in Germany, Finland and the UK, and that France continues to have the highest number of anti-Christian hate incidents.

While most of these incidents were attacks on churches, there were also a number of physical attacks and threats against Christian believers. The situation of **Christian converts from Muslim background**, who are particularly vulnerable to violence if their Christian faith is discovered, remains a challenge that needs to be addressed by European governments to ensure the full exercise of religious freedom.

Christians also continue to face **discrimination** because of their Christian beliefs. Recent evidence has revealed widespread discrimination against Christians in the workplace and in various areas of society.

In particular, **traditional Christian beliefs**, such as the belief that God created human beings as male and female for each other, may be **labelled as 'discriminatory'** – even if the person has **never been found to have discriminated** against a colleague or client – and can lead to interrogation, suspension or even dismissal. As a British court has pointed out, employers need to be careful not to *“wrongly confuse the expression of religious views with the notion of discrimination”*.



The third part of this report identified **various direct and indirect restrictions on religious freedom** through different laws and practices. Because of the broad scope of freedom of religion in international human rights law – protecting, among other things, the freedom to express one’s beliefs in public, the freedom to conscientious objection, the freedom to manifest one’s belief in community with others and the freedom to educate one’s children in accordance with religious beliefs – violations can also take many different forms.

For example, **vague or subjective ‘hate speech’ laws** or ambiguously formulated public order bills that go beyond their scope by disproportionately restricting public speech to avoid “**distress**” or “**contempt**”, have created situations where Christians are **criminalised** for expressing non-violent content of **religious teachings**. These increasingly restrictive laws undermine the plurality of democratic Western societies by chilling free speech and stigmatising Christianity, making free discourse impossible.

The dangerous effect of overly broad ‘buffer zone’ laws became clear when a Christian was **convicted** by a British court for **praying silently in his own mind** in a British ‘buffer zone’.

With increasing secularisation leading to **growing religious illiteracy** among public leaders and the influence of secularist ethics, Christians in Europe continue to face restrictions on the exercise of their religious freedom, including the right to express religious views on various issues relating to human nature and human relationships. Public awareness and government action are therefore needed more than ever.

By **raising awareness** and providing data as well as a thorough human rights analysis about these developments, OIDAC Europe hopes to contribute to the **safeguarding of religious freedom** of Christians and all believers across Europe. As freedom of thought, conscience, and religion is a cornerstone for free and democratic societies, we hope that states will not compromise on the protection of these fundamental rights, and thus ensure an open and peaceful climate in our societies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this report, OIDAC has formulated the following recommendations to various governmental and civil bodies.

Recommendations to Governments of European Countries:

- Improve communication with religious groups and civil society organisations when drafting legislation that could directly or indirectly infringe upon the freedom of religion of Christians.
- Safeguard freedom of religion, expression, assembly and conscientious objection for Christians and avoid vague wording in legislation that could lead to the criminalisation of peaceful expression of religious views in public.
- Collect disaggregated data with the specific aim of monitoring intolerance and discrimination against Christians and take appropriate soft measures in response to this phenomenon.
- Improve religious literacy among public officials and state media to ensure fair representation of religious views in media communication and awareness of religious freedom rights whenever state policies affect the lives of Christians.

Recommendations to International Human Rights Institutions:

- Report on intolerance and discrimination against Christians and recommend appropriate action to member states.
- Examine the national and OSCE-ODIHR reports and recommendations on combating hate crimes as well as indirect discrimination against Christians.
- Raise awareness about intolerance and discrimination against Christians and encourage the media and public figures/institutions not to spread defamatory or misleading information about Christians.

Recommendations to the European Union:

- Create the position of an *EU Coordinator combating anti-Christian hatred*, with similar competences and financial resources as the existing two EU Coordinators on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life, and on combating anti-Muslim hatred.
- Refrain from adopting 'non-discrimination' or 'hate speech' legislation that lacks clear definitions and thus significantly limits freedom of expression, association, and religion.
- Review EU legislation to eliminate direct or indirect discrimination against Christians.

Recommendations to journalists, opinion leaders, artists, and other members of society:

- Report and raise awareness about anti-Christian hate crimes in a nuanced way that encourages constructive action.
- Avoid engaging in misrepresentation and negative stereotyping of Christians and be aware of your responsibility to cultivate a tolerant public discourse.
- When reporting or writing about Christians, apply the same standards as those applied to other religious groups or minorities.

Recommendations to Christian churches and individuals:

- Educate yourself and other Christians about their rights. Confront any undue restrictions on the free exercise of faith.
- Raise awareness among Christians of what secular intolerance entails and how it can lead to self-censorship among Christians. Equip Christians to continue to share their faith freely.
- Engage in public discourse in a respectful and informed manner, contributing to the dialogue between religion and secular society and building bridges between different groups.

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