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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Joint Message of OSCE CiO's Personal Representatives on Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief**

VIENNA, 22 August 2023 - On this International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief, we express our concern at the alarming number of violent incidents and hate-motivated attacks based on religion or belief that occur throughout the OSCE region. Antisemitic conspiracy theories, hate speech directed at Muslims, racist discourse, and incitement targeting Christians and members of other religions or belief are rife on and off social media.

Instead of opening hearts to our common humanity, we are deeply troubled by instances of religious teachings, ideas or beliefs being instrumentalized for political purposes. This is particularly true when religious communities are lending support or allowing themselves to be instrumentalized for policies and measures that seek to limit the rights of women, migrants and refugees, as well as other vulnerable groups and minorities, in the name of social cohesion, national identity or cultural security.

Thus, on this day of commemoration, we encourage all participating States to strengthen their efforts to protect the freedom of religion or belief for all their residents and ensure that it is guaranteed through comprehensive legislation and implementation. These measures should foster inclusion and build resilience against violence and other abuses based on OSCE commitments.

It is equally true that all members of society share in the responsibility to reject any form of intolerance, discrimination, hatred and violence against Jews, Christians, Muslims, and members of other religions or beliefs, and to promote peaceful, just, and inclusive societies. Religious or belief community activists and civil society organizations are valued partners in these efforts and deserve government recognition and support.

As the Personal Representatives of the Chairperson-in-Office for tolerance issues, together with ODIHR, we stand ready to assist governments in their efforts to advance these goals.

**Rabbi Andrew Baker**, Personal Representative on Combating Anti-Semitism

**Professor Regina Polak**, Personal Representative on Combating Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination, also focusing on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians and Members of Other Religions

For PDF attachments or links to sources of further information, please visit:

<https://www.osce.org/tolerance-and-nondiscrimination/549877>