



Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians

Hate Crimes, Exclusion, Marginalization, Denial of Rights

Massimo Introvigne
OSCE – Vienna, May 18, 2015

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CiO Representatives to promote tolerance

Personal Representatives of the Chairperson-in-Office to promote greater tolerance and combat racism, xenophobia and discrimination

Rabbi Andrew Baker
Personal Representative on Combating Anti-Semitism

Rabbi Andrew Baker is director of International Jewish Affairs at the American Jewish Committee (AJC), which he joined in 1979. A leading expert on anti-Semitism in Europe, he travels extensively to strengthen relations between the AJC and Jewish communities worldwide. Throughout most of the 1990s, as director of European Affairs, Rabbi Baker promoted tolerance in the emerging democracies of Central and Eastern Europe. He is active in Holocaust restitution issues and in 2003 was awarded the Officer's Cross of the Order of Merit by Germany for his work in German-Jewish relations.



Ambassador Adil Akhmetov
Personal Representative on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims

Following a decision by the Chairperson-in-Office, Ambassador Adil Akhmetov of Kazakhstan was appointed as Personal Representative on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims in April 2009. Ambassador Akhmetov is Secretary of the Committee on International Relations, Defence and Security, and a Member of the Senate of the Parliament of Kazakhstan. His previous positions include First Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, Chairman of the Committee on Education of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Healthcare, and Envoy Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Kazakhstan to the UK.



Massimo Introvigne
Personal Representative on Combating Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination, also focusing on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians and Members of Other Religions

Massimo Introvigne was born in Rome in 1955. A sociologist of religion, he has lectured in several universities both in Italy and abroad, and is the author of more than sixty books and more than one hundred articles in academic





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Links

- Documents and resources related to the Personal Representatives, available on the Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Information System (TANDIS)

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- In 2011, I served as Representative of the OSCE (under the Lithuanian presidency) for combating racism, xenophobia, and intolerance and discrimination against Christians and members of other religions

The Rome Conference (2011)



- On September 12, 2011, OSCE organized in Rome a conference on «Hate Incidents and Crimes against Christians»
- It was a successful and hopeful event, with a very significant media coverage in Italy and internationally

The Rome Model

- The Rome Conference discussed inter alia what was later called the «Rome Model», predicting a slippery slope:

Intolerance



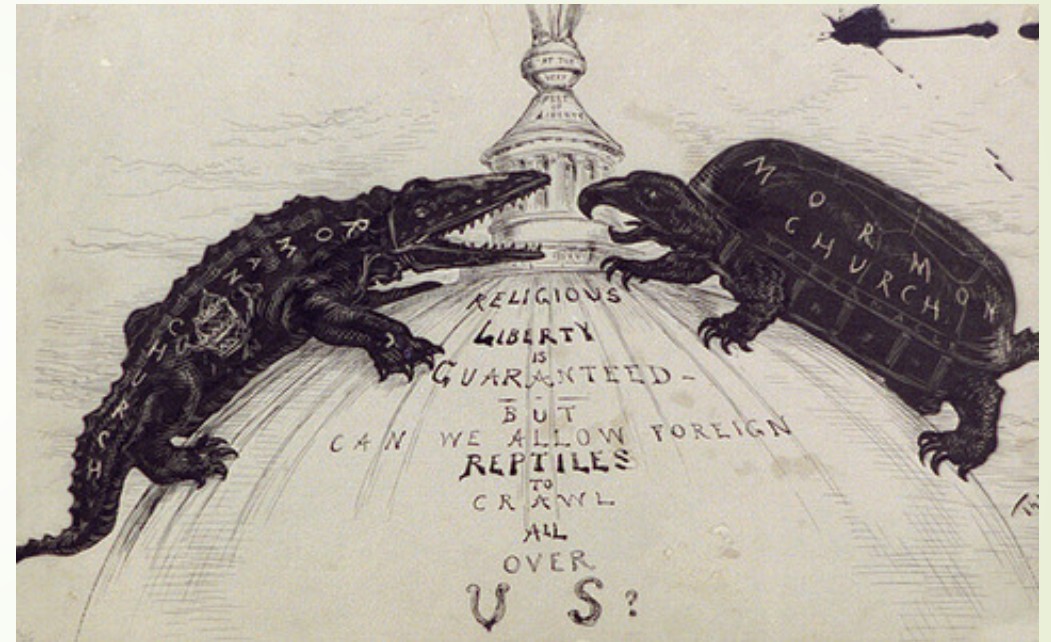
Discrimination



Hate Crimes

1. Intolerance

- The Rome Model used the example of hate crimes against Christians, but is valid for all cases where a «spiral of intolerance» is at work
- Intolerance is a cultural phenomenon: a group is ridiculed through stereotypes, depicted as malignant, evil, an obstacle to happiness and progress



Anti-Catholic and anti-Mormon cartoon by the famous cartoonist Thomas Nast (1840-1902)

Intolerant Art



- Obviously, artistic freedom is important. In certain cases, however, the arts may become an instrument of intolerance (e.g. Nazi artists depicting the Jews as evil)
- Where are the limits? Some Christians felt offended by the American artist Andres Serrano's *Piss Christ* (1987, left: the crucifix is submerged by the artist's own urine). Others accepted it as legitimate contemporary art

Bergoglio vs Ferrari



- In Argentina, a conflict arose in 2004 between postmodernist artist León Ferrari (1920-2013, above) and Buenos Aires' cardinal Bergoglio, the present Pope. He called Ferrari's works «a shame» and «blasphemy», and supported a court action to prevent the exhibition of some of them. Little doubt remained, on the other hand, that Ferrari was one of the leading Argentinian artists of his generation

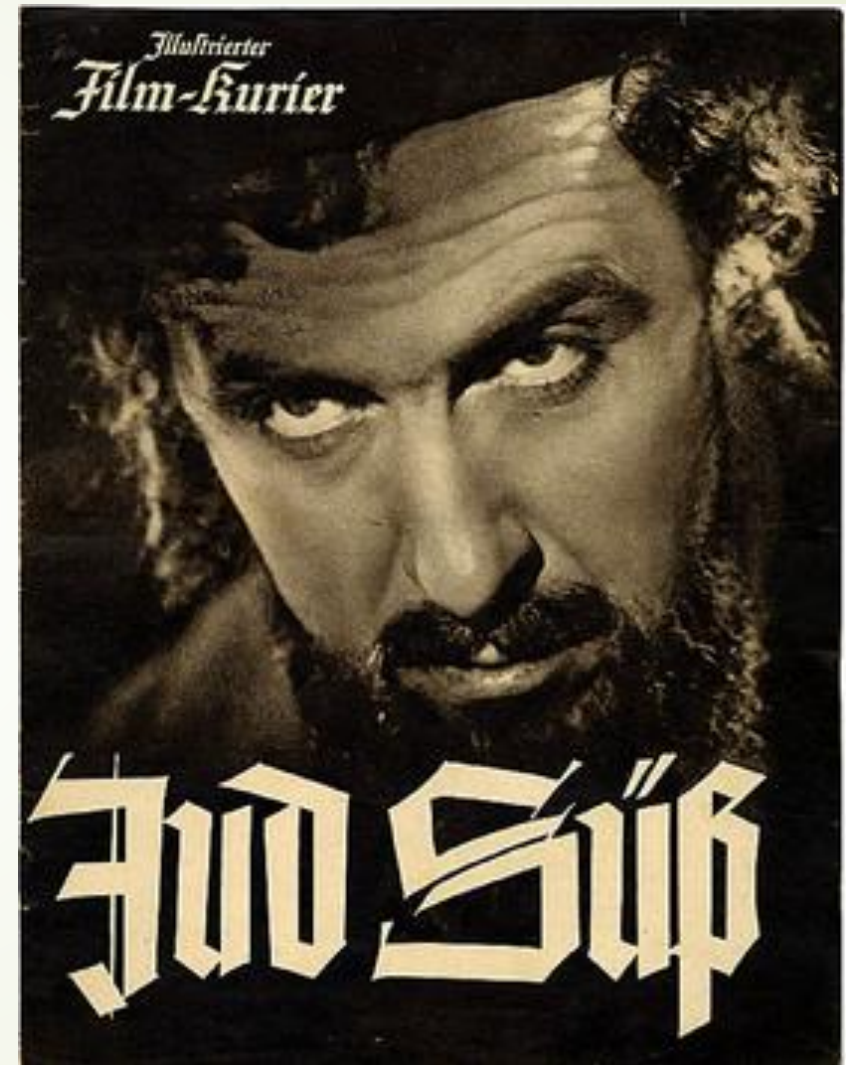


«Je suis Charlie»?

- All these cases were overshadowed by the *Charlie Hebdo* controversy and the tragic 2015 terrorist attacks. There can be no justification for terrorism and assassinations. However, the question whether some of the *Charlie Hebdo* cartoons were themselves intolerant remains

Süß the Jew (1940)

- We all cherish freedom of expression and freedom of the arts. However, there is a serious question whether art can become itself part of campaigns for intolerance
- An egregious example is the Nazi movie *Jud Süß* (1940). It was a professional movie, whose only aim was, however, to promote intolerance against the Jews



2. Discrimination



- In the Rome Model, intolerance is soon followed by discrimination, a legal process. If a group or organization is evil, we need laws against it
- In fact, in several Western countries there are laws restricting the freedom of at least some religious groups

«Cults»



- Today, religious liberty is put at test by the presence of hundreds of small, unpopular and «strange» groups, a fruit of postmodern religious pluralism and the collapse of grand, unifying religious narratives
- Scholars call them «new religious movements» but the media prefer to label them with the derogatory word «cults». Many so called «cults» are, in fact, direct or indirect offshoots of Christianity

Anti-Cult Campaigns



- After some (very real, and sometimes tragic) incidents involving some religious groups, in several European countries anti-cult movements and rallies were organized, and official action against «cults» was taken. While some measures were justified by the criminal actions of certain «cults», there was also the risk of discriminating against dozens of small religious groups, «bizarre» and unpopular but not violent nor criminal

Moral Panics



- The case of cults illustrates the sociological notion of «moral panic», defined by South African sociologist Stanley Cohen (1942-2013, left)
- Moral panics start from real (i.e. not imaginary) problems connected with some groups
- However, the prevalence of the problem is exaggerated through folk statistics, and negative actions by some individuals are attributed to the whole group

Real Problems

- Some «cults» do commit crimes. In 1994-1997, mass suicides and homicides of a group called Order of the Solar Temple killed 74 in Switzerland, France, and Quebec. These and other similar tragedies explain the social concern about «cults»
- Moral panics do not invent problems. But they amplify them through generalizations, and criticism appropriate for one or more particular groups is generalized against all «bizarre» religious minorities



Discrimination: not only «cults»



- «Cults» are not the only religious groups based directly or indirectly in Christianity complaining that they are discriminated in Europe. Evangelical Christians frequently bring cases of alleged discrimination to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR)
- In *Eweida* (2013), ECHR allowed Ms Nadia Eweia (left) to wear a small cross at a British Airways check-in counter – but in the same day the Court said in *Chaplin* (2013) that similar crosses are not allowed in public hospitals

Conscientious Objection

- Conscientious objection remains a very controversial area. In *Ladele* (2013), ECHR concluded that conscientious objection by a British Christian municipal registrar, Lilian Ladele (right), against the celebration of same-sex civil unions was not allowed (an appeal was not admitted)



Flowers, Cakes, and Evangelicals



- Cases like *Ladele* are similar, but not identical, to well-known U.S. cases, including *Arlene's Flowers* (2015), where Evangelical photographers, florists, or bakers refused to provide services connected with same-sex marriages. While these were owners of *private* businesses, Ms. *Ladele* was a public servant

Interference in a Religion's Internal Affairs



- In the case of *Sindicatul* (2012), ECHR tried to compel the Romanian Orthodox Church to authorize the legal incorporation of an union of Orthodox priests independent from the bishops
- Several religious bodies and the Holy See protested, claiming that the decision implied an interference in the internal affairs of a religion. In 2013, the *Sindicatul* decision was overturned on appeal

Registration and Discrimination



- According to studies by sociologist James T. Richardson and others, in at least a third of OSCE participating states provisions calling for registration of religious groups have a discriminatory effect against small or unpopular groups, many of them Christian
- While a legitimate concern about really dangerous «cults» and radical or violent groups originally motivated these provisions, there is a real risk that they also discriminate against legitimate and non-violent religious movements and churches

3. Hate Crimes

- The third stage of the spiral of intolerance leads from discrimination to persecution and hate crimes. If discrimination fails to suppress the evil group or organization, it is not surprising that radicals may decide to take the law in their own hands and resort to actual violence



«Burn Your Church»



- In Italy, the Fascist regime passed laws against the Pentecostals, whose religion was regarded as «a threat to racial purity». Both arrests and hate crimes against Pentecostals followed
- «“Go against racial purity...”. And these laws were sanctioned by baptized people! Some of those who made this law and some of those who persecuted, denounced Pentecostal brothers for being “exuberant”, almost “crazy”, who tarnished the race, some were Catholics.... I am the Pastor of Catholics: I ask your forgiveness for this! » (Pope Francis, Visit to the Pentecostal Church of the Reconciliation, Caserta, July 28, 2014)

The Purple Triangles



- Notwithstanding an initial attempt, similar to what other religions did, to come to terms with the Nazi regime, in the end 11,300 Jehovah's Witnesses were sent to concentration camps, where 1,490 died
- Unlike Jews or Romas, targeted for ethnical reasons, Jehovah's Witnesses were allowed to return home from the camps by simply renouncing their faith. But only a handful of them accepted the offer

Hate Crimes against Christians



- Hate crimes against Christians do not occur only in Africa or Asia. The independent Vienna Observatory on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians documented hundreds of cases: churches vandalized, statues destroyed or decapitated (Malaga, Spain, 2013: left), priests and even bishops attacked

Femen



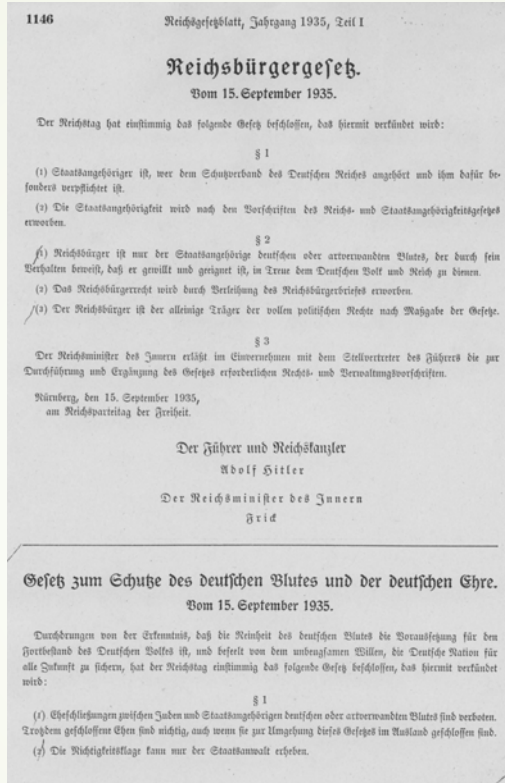
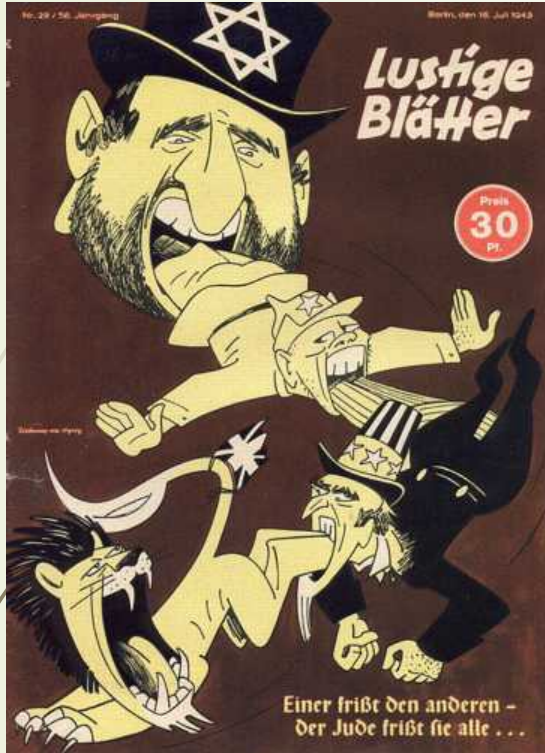
- A controversial case involves the Femen, a feminist movement founded in Ukraine in 2008 and very critical of Christianity. It is known for attacks in Catholic churches (including Notre Dame in Paris, 2013) and personalities (cardinal Rouco Varela of Spain, 2014, above), and for destroying religious symbols (Kiev, 2012: destruction of the cross in memory of Stalin's victims)

Legitimate Protests?



- While many Christians (and others: left) believe that Femen are violating their religious liberty, others defend their protests as legitimate
- These cases, again, show how delicate is the balance between different rights: freedom of religion, free speech, freedom to demonstrate and protest

The Rome Model: not only for Christians



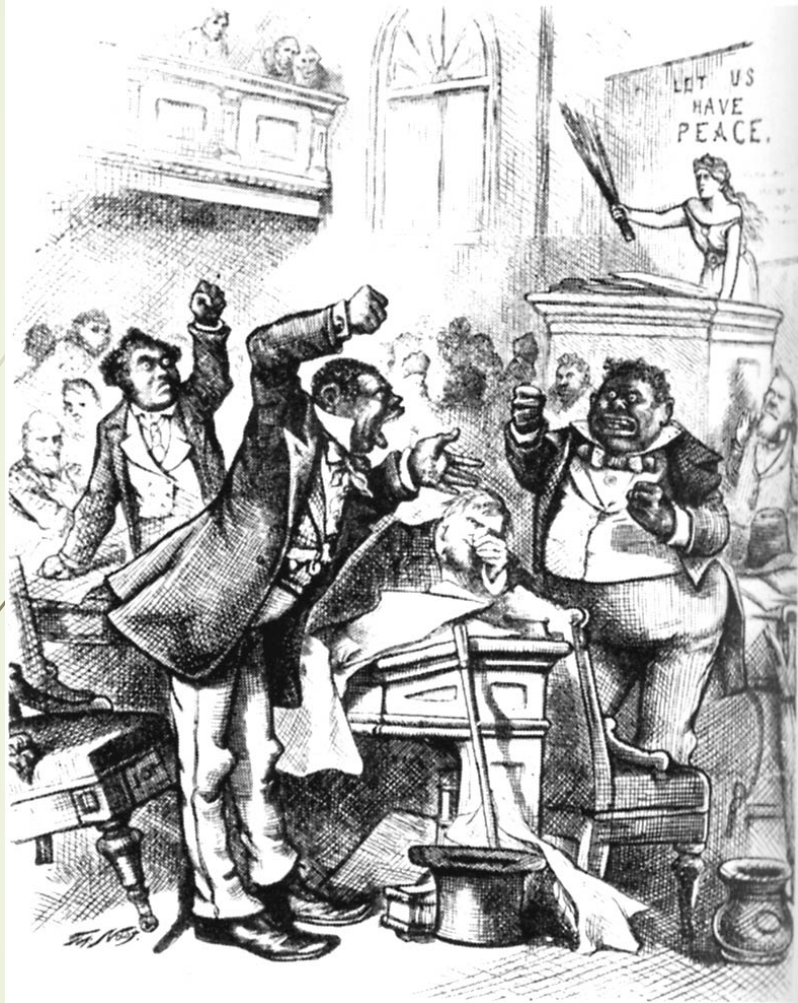
- The Rome model – intolerance → discrimination → hate crimes – applies to many groups
- Jews in Nazi Germany were first attacked through books and caricatures, then discriminated by the laws: and in the end, Auschwitz came

Intolerance against Roma and Sinti

- Combating discrimination against Roma and Sinti minorities was a key part of my 2011 OSCE mandate
- In many countries, they are first subject to intolerance through stereotypes («they are all thieves»), then targeted by discriminatory laws (special passports, problems in obtaining documents), and very often become victims of hate crimes



Racism



Intolerance: African American politicians ridiculed in *Harper's Weekly*, March 14, 1874

- It is important to note that anti-Christian hate cannot be isolated from a more general paradigm of intolerance. Racism, too, starts from stereotypes (left), then discriminates more or less subtly and in the end leads to hate crimes
- In Europe, immigrant Christian religious groups – from Africa, the Philippines, Korea – are often discriminated twice, both as ethnically «foreign» religions and as suspicious «cults»

Anti-Christian Intolerance: What to Do?



Statue smashed during the «Occupy Rome» rally,
October 15, 2011

- Hate crimes against Christians are often under-reported. Better co-operation between Christian communities, police, government, and ODIHR is needed in order to raise awareness and prevent this very serious phenomenon
- I also believe that inter-religious dialogue – and cultural dialogue, also involving humanists and non-believers – is a key to combating and preventing hate crimes against Christians and members of others religion

United We Stand



- Inter-religious dialogue counters the common stereotype that religions are at the roots of most problem of hate crimes and violence. While certainly not foreign to violence, religions may in fact also be part of the solution

«Dialogue of Blood»



- In some countries, all religions where persecuted by a totalitarian regime (portraits of the martyrs in Albania, left). Persecutions taught religions to coexist through a «dialogue of blood»

Different Models



Great Mosque of Rome

- In order to promote coexistence and prevent hate crimes, do we really need to deny that in certain countries one particular religion is uniquely linked to the nation's history?
- Not necessarily. In Italy, the Constitution recognizes the unique historical role of the Catholic Church, while offering the possibility of co-operating with the state to other religions, and freedom to all religions that respect the law

Dialogue in Context



- Dialogue and prevention of hate crimes should take into account each country's history and traditions. And avoid two extremes: fundamentalism, where one religion discriminates against minorities and non-believers, and militant secularism, where a climate of anti-religious hostility leads to intolerance against all religions

Faith and Reason

- Pope John Paul II (1920-2005) wrote that faith and reason are like two wings, and both are necessary. If they are reduced to only one wing, no matter what it is, planes cannot fly and crash, in more than one sense
- The dialogue between faith and reason, different religions, believers and non believers, is a key to preventing and combating hate crimes



Preventing Hate Crimes through Dialogue



- For further information please contact Dr Massimo Introvigne at maxintrovigne@gmail.com

Image: *A Converted British Family Sheltering a Christian Missionary from the Persecution of the Druids*, by William Holman Hunt (1827-1910), one of the first paintings of the British Pre-Raphaelite school