

# International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence based on Religion or Belief: declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union



On the International Day commemorating the victims of acts of violence based on religion or belief, we pay tribute to those who have lost their lives, who are attacked, threatened or persecuted due to their religion or belief.

Across the world, far too many are discriminated for the very essence of who they are, or for what they believe or do not believe in. Persecution targets those who manifest their religion or belief through worship and education, or those changing or leaving their religions or beliefs.

Attacks on individuals based on their religion or belief, as well as violence perpetrated under the pretext on a religious doctrine, prescription and practice, are unacceptable.

With the COVID-19 pandemic we see conspiracy theories and scapegoating of religious and belief communities, contributing to the surge of public advocacy of religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence. These are often early warning signs of violent attacks and other forms of human rights violations and abuses. At the same time, religious actors play a fundamental role in providing relief and social services, contributing to the global fight against the pandemic.

Our commitment is guided by the implementation of the EU Guidelines on Freedom of Religion or Belief. We strive to address any form of persecution and discrimination of individuals through the EU's commitment to multilateralism and engagement in UN human rights fora and UN-led initiatives.

Over the past ten years, through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), the EU has financed projects related to freedom of religion or belief worth more than €22 million in all regions of the world, including among others, actions to counter hate speech and foster inter-community and inter-faith dialogue.

The European Union will continue to work at home and abroad to combat discrimination and hate speech on grounds of religion or belief, as well as to fight impunity and strengthen accountability.