

Historic gathering of global Christian leaders urges churches and governments to address growing concern for persecution of Christians

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An historic consultation of church leaders, drawn from 56 nations, to focus on intensifying "discrimination, persecution and violence" against Christian communities around the world has called on churches globally to pray, support and be in solidarity with those suffering persecution due to their faith. The consultation, themed "Discrimination, Persecution, Martyrdom: Following Christ Together", took place from 1-5 November in Tirana, Albania.



In a two pronged response the leaders:

- offered "repentance" for times when churches had "persecuted each other and other religious communities in history"; and,
- urged churches "to urgently strengthen the solidarity of all Christians" in the face of discrimination, persecution and martyrdom in the 21st century.

In a greeting from the Vatican, Pope Francis said, "I think with great sadness of the escalating discrimination, and persecution against Christians in the Middle East, Africa and Asia and elsewhere throughout the world.

"In various parts of the world, the witness to Christ, even to the shedding of blood, has become a shared experience of Catholics, Orthodox, Anglicans, Protestants, Evangelicals and Pentecostals," he said.

The consultation also called on governments to "respect and protect the freedom of religion and belief of all people as a fundamental human right."

In a public message from the consultation participants called on:

- Christians to pray for those who are discriminated against and persecuted;
- Christian organisations at regional, national and local levels from all traditions to learn, pray and work together for the persecuted;
- Churches to engage in dialogue and co-operation with other faith communities, and be watchful and fearless in the face of discrimination and persecution.

The historic gathering was the first time in modern history that every stream of global Christianity had joined together to listen and learn from Christians who experience discrimination, persecution and violence.

The consultation was an initiative of the Global Christian Forum and supported by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (Vatican), the World Evangelical Alliance, the Pentecostal World Fellowship, and the World Council of Churches. It was held in Tirana, Albania, 2-4 November.

Full text of Consultation Message (in English, Spanish, French), images, stories and video footage
About the Global Christian Forum

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The World Council of Churches promotes Christian unity in faith, witness and service for a just and peaceful world. An ecumenical fellowship of churches founded in 1948, today the WCC brings together 345 Protestant, Orthodox, Anglican and other churches representing more than 550 million Christians in over 120 countries, and works cooperatively with the Roman Catholic Church. The WCC general secretary is the Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, from the [Lutheran] Church of Norway.

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