

Safeguarding of places of worship

Towards a management proposal

Executive summary

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This report produced by Fundación Pluralismo y Convivencia aims at applying in the Spanish context the *United Nations Plan of Action to Safeguard Religious Sites: In Unity and Solidarity for Safe and Peaceful Worship* which was issued by the United Nations following the Christchurch mosques attacks in New Zealand.

The aim of the UN Plan of Action is to raise awareness as widely as possible among the international community and public opinion about the serious threat that the increase in attacks targeting places of worship poses for international peace and security. To this end, it makes several recommendations to Member States, religious leaders, the media, the private sector, and civil society. Specifically, the Plan of Action distinguishes between prevention, preparedness, and response measures, and group them according to their potential audiences: the United Nations itself, States, religious leaders, civil society, and the media. Preventive measures, which are the most relevant for the purposes of this report, include the following (i) producing a map of religious sites around the world, which will provide an interactive online tool to capture the spirituality of religious sites and thereby contribute to fostering respect and understanding of their profound significance for individuals and communities on all continents; (ii) support for the implementation of the UN Strategy and Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence That Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes; (iii) engagement with religious leaders

and communities to promote mutual respect and understanding through interfaith activities; iv) promote educational initiatives that highlight the role of religious sites in uniting and identifying people, with a particular focus on educational activities at the local level involving youth, women and communities around religious sites; v) ensure that children have access to curricula that promote tolerance and mutual understanding, in line with the values and learning objectives of Global Citizenship Education; and iv) include women in decision-making and consider policies and programmes that engage and target women and young people, especially those who may be vulnerable to radicalization.

Although In Spain only isolated, low-intensity attacks on places of worship have been reported-so far, it is important to be aware of the need to identify and, if necessary, reduce them. The cases that do occur entail mainly material damage and graffiti that express rejection of places of worship of certain faiths (mosques, synagogues, Catholic churches...). However, we believe that these acts should not be underestimated, as they are signs of the existence of a seed of intolerance that must be fought in order to prevent it from turning into acts of hatred or violence. It is necessary to work on prevention to avoid such behaviour from arising and growing.

The report is structured around six basic questions: why and for what purpose should places of worship be protected; what should they be



protected from; what should they be protected against; for whom and by whom; and how can they be protected. Each of these questions is intended to answer essential questions such as: the basis and legal nature of protection; the causes or origin of attacks; the content of protection in its material (places of worship) and subjective dimensions (individual rights); and the mechanisms and instruments of protection and guarantee. The report has therefore been structured into four chapters dealing with the rationale and nature of the protection, causes or origin of attacks, applicable Spanish legislation and institutional framework and prevention and management mechanisms and instruments. Finally, it proposes a series of measures, as part of a possible work plan, with the aim of protecting and safeguarding places of worship and assembly, and the people who use them, from acts of hatred, intolerance and violence, providing society with the tools and resilience to turn adversity into positive results, in order to promote greater and more complete social cohesion in societies that, like Spain's, are increasingly open and plural.

1. Legal basis

As far as the legal basis is concerned, four areas of law can be differentiated, since they contain the necessary rules that justify not only protection and defense, but also prevention and promotion, especially when these places become the object of attacks and violence.

The first area concerns international humanitarian law, i.e. the rules that protect and preserve the dignity of persons in the event of armed conflict, both international and internal. The rules relating to the protection of cultural property in cases of armed conflict follow two different paths: on the one hand, they are part of the process of reaffirming the development of international humanitarian law and, on the other, through the

codification of rules relating to culture, mainly undertaken by UNESCO (BÁDENES, 2005: 61). Similarly, a correct consideration of what the attack and destruction of religious buildings represents assumes that after the disappearance of the material, there is also the human being himself, the person, whose spiritual dimension is what is destroyed (cf. ICC: Mahdi case and ICTY: Blaskic, Plavšić and Kordić and Čerkez cases). Specifically, acts committed against this type of property are considered to fall within the category of "war crimes" (Article 8(2)(e)(ii), (iii) and (iv) ECPI); a provision which served as the legal basis for the ICC's judgment in the Al Mahdi case to convict Mr Ahmad Al Faqi Al Mahdi to nine years' imprisonment as a co-perpetrator of the willful destruction of buildings dedicated to religion (specifically, nine mausoleums and a mosque, all located in the city of Timbuktu, Mali) in a situation of non-international armed conflict (cf. ESCOBAR, 2021, and SAN MARTÍN, 2016).

The second area lies in the possible configuration of many of these spiritual or religious sites as part of the artistic and cultural heritage, and therefore in the legal norms that protect this heritage at the international, national and state levels. It is at this level that the activity developed within UNESCO acquires relevance, especially with regards to the preservation, dissemination and promotion of heritage and culture, in particular the protection of the cultural and natural heritage of peoples in general. To understand the enormous amount of work carried out, suffice to mention the following conventions: Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954); Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (1970); Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972); Convention for the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage (2001); Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003); and Convention



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on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005).

And in this same work of legal codification, we must mention the Council of Europe, which has developed an important intergovernmental work programme that has had a transcendental development in the field of the protection and enhancement of European cultural heritage. These include the European Cultural Convention (1954), the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (1985), the European Convention for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (1992), the Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (2005) and the Council of Europe Convention on Offences related to Cultural Property (2017).

Thus, a legal system is created to serve the cultural heritage and its protection, which – as it could not be otherwise – includes the protection of heritage related to the religious sphere.

The third area relates to terrorism and the fight against violent radicalization, as places of worship have become a target for terrorists. In this context, the activities of both the UN and the EU need to be highlighted. With regard to the United Nations, the adoption of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (2006), in which places of worship are included as particularly vulnerable spaces among other centers and facilities (Pillar II of the Strategy) and therefore included in the Global Programme for the Protection of Vulnerable Targets, where two actions are mentioned: the elaboration of the document entitled *The Protection of Critical Infrastructure against Terrorist Attacks: Compendium of Good Practices*, which provides the basis for the protection of critical or vulnerable structures against terrorist attacks, and the above-mentioned United Nations Plan of Action to Safeguard Religious Sites.

At the level of the European Union, legal instruments such as the Council Common Positions of 27 December 2001 on combating terrorism and on the application of specific measures to combat terrorism, as last amended by Common Position 2009/468/CFSP; Framework Decision 2002/475/JHA on combating terrorism, as amended by Decision 2008/919/JHA; Council Regulation 2580/2001, also updated by Regulation 501/2009; the adoption of a Counter-Terrorism Strategy based on four fundamental pillars: Prevent, Protect, Pursue and Respond; the Counter-Terrorism Directive; and Directive 2008/114/EC of 8 December 2008 on the identification and designation of European Critical Infrastructures and the assessment of the need to improve their protection: Prevent, Protect, Pursue and Respond; the Counter-Terrorism Directive; and Directive 2008/114/EC of 8 December 2008 on the identification and designation of European Critical Infrastructures and the assessment of the need to improve their protection.

Finally, the fourth area relates to international and national human rights law in general and freedom of conscience and religion in particular since the establishment and protection of places of worship is part of the content of the fundamental right to freedom of religion or belief. In this regard, the important activity of the United Nations in this field can be seen in two general areas: the elimination of intolerance and discrimination, on the one hand, and the fight against defamation of religions, on the other. In the first area, the aforementioned Plan of Action to Safeguard Religious Sites is worth mentioning, once again, in response to intolerance and hate speech on religious grounds, as well as to the violent attacks that these places suffer. This is in addition to the guarantee of the fundamental right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion (Articles 18 UDHR, 18 ICCPR and 6 1981 Declaration). Meanwhile, at the European regional level,



two standards stand out: the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (Article 9) and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (Article 10). In addition, as the report itself emphasizes, there is the very important work of the ECHR.

All this analysis allows us to affirm, in conclusion, that attacks on religious institutions or places of worship are inevitably linked to the exercise of the individual's right to freedom of religion, which in these cases creates a "link" between international humanitarian law and human rights.

2. Legal nature

As to the legal nature of places of worship, the report draws attention to the diversity of solutions that have been and are being given in this regard, on the understanding that they must be derived from both the normative and doctrinal points of view. To this end, three positions can be distinguished: a) places of worship as "asset"; b) places of worship as a "right"; and c) places of worship as an element of public security.

Places of worship as assets can have a "cultural" value and/or a "religious" nature. As religious assets, they refer to establishments where religious acts are performed, the scope of which exceeds the sphere of the State, although it has effects and is protected by the State system. This gives rise to the concept of *res sacrae*, according to which sacred objects are those that meet the following two requirements: i) their destination for worship and ii) their dedication or liturgical blessing (cc. 1188, 1190, 1205, 1208, 1223, 1224, 1226, 12229 and 1235 CDC). On the basis of these norms, a place of worship is defined as a physical space dedicated primarily and permanently to the functions of worship or spiritual assistance, including those of training (art. 2.1 Laws 24, 25 and 26/1992). The concept of a place of worship is thus chosen to coincide

with that of a temple or building normally used for prayer and is therefore far from other expressions such as "sacred place". Places of worship as cultural asset, on the other hand, implies that their main purpose is no other than being a cultural interest; artistic, archaeological or a historical good. They are therefore goods that are qualified or considered as such by a society because of their cultural or commemorative value (RIEGL, A, 1987: 24). Places of worship, as religious cultural goods, are, in the words of PAPPALARDO, "a living memory of the ecclesial tradition, a tangible and concrete means of preserving the memory of the ways and means of practicing religion". The implementation of preventive conservation strategies and criteria implies considering their character as heritage in use. A use linked to rites and traditions with a broad popular following, which include elements of immemorial heritage that also require special protection in terms of conservation requirements (cf. Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954) and Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972)).

In terms of places of worship as a right, and more specifically as part of the fundamental right to freedom of religion or belief, this implies the recognition and guarantee of the right to establish and maintain places of worship, to have free and unhindered access to them and to assemble without disturbance, including by public authorities (ECHR: *Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses of Gldani et al. v. Georgia and Boychev v. Bulgaria*). The exercise of this right requires States to refrain from interference, on the assumption of non-interference, in the exercise of religious practices, as well as regarding the establishment or opening of places of worship (ECtHR: *Manoussakis Serif v. Greece and Sciato-Mykhaylivska Parafiya v. Ukraine*), which does not preclude its limitation as long as it is compatible with the principles of proportionality, legitimate aim and necessity in a democratic society (Article 9(3) ECHR and ECtHR:



Jehovah's Witnesses of Moscow and others v. Russia; Religious Community of Jehovah's Witnesses of the Ternivsky District of Kryvyi Rih v. Ukraine;; and Religious Community of Jehovah's Witnesses v. Azerbaijan).

Finally, regarding places of worship as an element of security, a double configuration can be differentiated: the first as a positive guarantee and the second as a legal duty; both configurations project directly onto each of the elements mentioned above, i.e. prevention as a positive guarantee and security as a legal duty. In this respect, public security, using the terminology inherited from Anglo-Saxon concepts, makes it possible to distinguish between "safety" and "security". While the term "security" refers to activities related to citizens security performed by security professionals (government security forces and agencies and private security), the first term, "safety", refers to the physical security of facilities and enclosures and activities performed by civil protection professionals. This implies understanding public security as an essential part of the development of human rights, as a fundamental element for consolidating the system of freedoms and guaranteeing full respect for the exercise, protection and promotion of these rights in a democratic State governed by the rule of law.

3. Causes of attacks

One of the most important questions addressed in this report concerns the causes and motives behind attacks on places of worship. Only by knowing and understanding the reasons for these attacks can measures be taken, if not to prevent them from taking place, then to ensure that they have the least possible consequences, and that the perpetrators do not achieve their aims and objectives. In this respect, there is no single cause and no single context. The analysis of causes in the report has been carried

out on the basis of gradations from the highest to the lowest levels of violence: the first level concerns situations that have led to the breakdown of state structures and thus to the existence of social conflicts that lead to actual armed conflicts, whether internal or international in nature; the second level refers to situations of violent radicalism and thus to actions that lead to terrorism; the third level analyses acts related to hate speech, while the last involves activities related to intolerance and discrimination, so that at the end of this section intolerance and discrimination are seen as the first of the situations that we must combat, and it is at this first level that the least invasive measures to people's fundamental rights must be adopted and taken, while regulations, good practices and structures that promote tolerance and respect for differences can be promoted.

Attacks on places of worship in armed conflicts – as well as terrorist attacks – are carried out by combatants and, if necessary, by terrorists to destroy or terrorize the opponent. An attack on a holy site or a place of worship is therefore an attack not only on the government in question, but also on other governments. In other words, ideology and worldview also motivate attacks on "soft targets" that cause mass casualties. For this reason, such attacks are considered war crimes under international law (Article 8(2)(e)(ii), (iii) and (iv) ECPI), as is clear from Convention I (Article 46), Convention II (Article 47), Convention III (Article 13(3)) and Convention IV (Article 33(3)) (see PIGNATELLI AND MECA, 2000).

Another cause of attacks on places of worship identified in this report is hate speech. The most comprehensive attempt at the universal level in this regard was the adoption of the Rabat Plan of Action, a set of recommendations compiled in the course of several expert-level workshops organised by OHCHR in Rabat, Morocco, in 2012. It sets out six points as a "threshold test" for assessing whether a particular hate speech violates



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international law (see Factsheet on Hate Speech), and which culminated in the adoption of the UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech (2019).

At the regional level, the work carried out within the OSCE is noteworthy, both at the conceptual and monitoring levels. At the conceptual level, the work done has been of utmost importance in providing the following definition of hate crime: “A hate crime can be defined as (A) any criminal offence, including offences against persons or property, where the victim, location or target of the offence is selected because of their actual or perceived association with, sympathy for, membership of, support for or membership of a group as defined in Part B. (B) A group is based on a common characteristic shared by its members, such as their actual or perceived “race”, national or ethnic origin, language, colour, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation or any other similar factor.” On the level of knowledge and protection, special mention is made of its annual report on hate speech (cf. 2021 Hate Crimes Report).

Finally, the root causes of attacks on places of worship are activities or acts of intolerance and discrimination based on faith or religion, which have increased worldwide in recent years (see: 2023 World Religious Freedom Report - Executive Summary). In this regard, it suffices to point out how sacred or spiritual places have become part of the content of intolerance or discrimination, in most cases through demonstrations against their opening in a given municipality or city. About the nature of the actions, the report highlights that they range from “simple” graffiti, vandalism and damage to the façades of places of worship (graffiti with Nazi symbols on the façades of synagogues or Jewish houses (see Report on Anti-Semitism in Spain during 2019), as well as in mosques (see Special Report 2019.

Incidents and Islamophobia) and churches, etc.), to violent attacks on places of worship (see Report on Anti-Semitism in Spain during 2019: p. 8), due to the presence of symbolism that is contrary to or against the beliefs professed by the religious group in question (pigs’ heads in front of mosques, etc.), as well as what are known as “discriminatory laws” (arbitrary authorizations, contradictory regulations, permits that do not arrive, moratoria, urban redevelopment and constant and meticulous inspections, capacity and parking requirements, are some of the problems faced by religious representatives who see their churches sealed, banned or relegated to industrial estates outside the city centre).

4. Spanish regulations, institutional framework and management tools for places of worship in Spain

4.1. Spanish legislation

The fundamental right to freedom of thought, religion and worship is guaranteed by Article 16 of the Spanish Constitution and has been developed by Organic Law 7/1980 of 5 July 1980 on Religious Freedom, which establishes its basis in the aforementioned legal provisions (Articles 2.1 and 2 of the LOLR) and its legal nature as an essential content of the aforementioned fundamental right (Article 53.2 of the Spanish Constitution). However, since Spanish law does not contain a definition of a place of worship, this concept remains in the hands of agreements law¹ or, where appropriate, of confessionary rights.

From the point of view of the covenant law, “the places of worship of the Churches belonging to

1. Agreements law refers to the Agreements signed between the State and the representation of Muslims, Jewish and Evangelical communities.



FEREDE² are those buildings or premises that are permanently and exclusively dedicated to the functions of worship or religious assistance, when this is certified by the respective Church with the agreement of the Permanent Commission of FEREDE” (art. 2.1 of Law 24/1992). At the same time, the same concept of “place of worship” can be found in the case of the communities belonging to the FCJE³ and the CIE⁴, although the FCJE Agreement includes among its functions that of training (art. 2.1 Law 25/1992); while the CIE Agreement, in addition to including the function of formation, refers to the habitual practice of prayer instead of the function of worship (art. 2.1 Law 26/1992). From the strict point of view of canon law, “sacred places are those destined for divine worship or for the burial of the faithful by means of the dedication or blessing prescribed in the liturgical books” (can. 1205 in conjunction with can. 1210), while “church means a sacred building destined for divine worship, which the faithful have the right to enter for the celebration of divine worship, especially in public” (can. 1214).

This category should also include cemeteries of a religious nature (art. 2.6 of Law 25/1992 and 2.5 of Law 26/1992), bearing in mind that these are places where attacks and manifestations of hatred and intolerance take place, and where it is necessary to extend the material scope and protection, both in terms of regulations and the rest of the measures included in a national workplan.

Although there are measures in Spanish criminal law to protect against the acts that lead to the most serious attacks, the report also highlights the difficulties that exist in the effective protection of these types of sites or places of worship, especially in the area of prevention and security.

4.2. The institutional framework

The new reality in Spain requires that the various levels of the Administration (central, autonomous and local) be aware of and adopt measures that genuinely and effectively guarantee the exercise of the right to freedom of religion, as a means not only to promote a better process of normalization, but also of inclusion and social cohesion. However, in the field of religion, unlike in other areas, there has been no process of decentralization, neither in terms of implementation, nor in terms of management. Moreover, the relationship between the State and religion has remained virtually unchanged since the Transition period, although the changes that have taken place cannot be ignored.

At the institutional level, it is important to mention the bodies linked to the central state administration, and in particular the Sub-Directorate General for Religious Freedom of the Ministry of the Presidency, Relations with Parliament and Democratic Memory, which is responsible for the protection and promotion of religious freedom and the corresponding government relations with religious denominations. Along with this unit, the Advisory Commission on Religious Freedom (art. 8 LOLR), advises the administration on the application of religious freedom in Spain. Also the Fundación Pluralismo y Convivencia, a public body created by the Council of Ministers on 15 October 2004, whose main function is to promote the necessary conditions for the effective exercise of the right to religious freedom in Spain, both through the management of financial aid and the development of its own projects. In addition to the above-mentioned bodies, reference is also made to three other entities which are linked to the regional and local spheres: on the one hand, the *Direcció General*

2. Federation of Evangelical Religious Entities of Spain (FEREDE).

3. Federation of Jewish Communities of Spain (FCJE).

4. Islamic Commission of Spain (CIE).



d'Afers religiosos, which is part of the Presidency Council of *Generalitat de Catalunya*, and the Directorate General for Human Rights, Victims and Diversity, which is part of the Vice-council for Human Rights, Memory and Cooperation, within the Department of Equality, Justice and Social Policies of the Basque Government; and the *Oficina d'Afers Religiosos* of the Barcelona City Council (Office for Religious Affairs of the City Council of Barcelona).

4.3. Management mechanisms and instruments

The plans or strategies that have been developed and that have an impact on this matter are acknowledged in the report taking into account the causes of attacks on places of worship previously mentioned. Thus, four main groups of management mechanisms and instruments are distinguished, namely: i) security, ii) hate speech, iii) intolerance, and iv) human rights and protection of cultural heritage.

With regards to public security, four instruments are referred to: (i) the National Security Strategy (2021); (ii) the Comprehensive National Security Culture Plan (2021); (iii) the Anti-Terrorism Prevention and Protection Plan (2015); and (iv) the National Strategic Plan to Prevent and Combat Violent Radicalisation (2020). Concerning hate speech, three instruments are reported: (i) the Second Action Plan to Combat Hate Crimes (2022); (ii) the Protocol to Combat Hate Speech Online (2021); and (iii) the Guidelines on Combating Hate Speech on the Internet through Human Rights Education (2019). In terms of intolerance and discrimination, two action plans are highlighted, namely: (i) the National Plan for the Implementation of the European Strategy to Combat Anti-Semitism 2023-2030 (2023); and (ii) the Strategic Framework for Citizenship and Inclusion, against Xenophobia and Racism (2023). Finally, with regards to human rights (which include freedom of conscience, religion and worship) and

the protection of cultural heritage, the following instruments are of particular importance: (i) the Second National Plan for Human Rights (2023); (ii) the Plan for Cathedrals (2009); and (iii) the Plan for Monasteries, Abbeys and Convents (2004). All of these provide measures and actions that can serve as a basis or example for the implementation of a future work plan on places of worship.

5. Recommendations for a work plan

In terms of recommendations, a proposal is made for the implementation of a national work plan aimed at protecting sites and places of worship, as well as the people who resort to them to exercise their beliefs. In that sense, it is of the utmost importance that the different public administrations (central, autonomous and local), religious actors (churches, denominations and religious communities), and their religious leaders and personnel, as well as civil society actors, participate and cooperate in identifying the different ways to mitigate the existing risks and threats while at the same time valuing the opportunities and strengths that places of worship represent for full and effective social cohesion in an open society such as Spain.

The report states that the work plan should be based on the fundamental axiom that the religious plurality that exists in Spanish society should not become a factor of conflict and confrontation, but, on the contrary, should be seen and respected as a factor for better living together and social cohesion. Places of worship are places of encounter and identity, but also of fraternity and openness for dialogue and mutual understanding, without forgetting the cultural and historical value that many of these places have for societies in general and for Spanish society in particular.



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The work plan is divided into 7 lines, or areas of action, for each of which specific actions are proposed.

The FIRST line of action deals with the legal development of the right to freedom of conscience and religion in general, and the right to establish places of worship in particular. It involves taking into account the need to adapt the legal framework of this fundamental right to the changes in Spanish society, including the existing gaps in Spanish law in this area, which have been highlighted throughout the report. More specifically, issues such as the concept of place of worship itself, the requirements or conditions for its public activity and exercise, as well as the minimum requirements that guarantee the safety and health of the worshippers themselves and of third parties.

Measures such as the following are suggested: 1) Drafting of a State Law on Places of Worship, including fundamental issues such as the concept of a place of worship, whether or not it is a communal facility, or any other issue related to the principle of equality in the exercise of the fundamental right to freedom of religion and worship (art. 149.1.1 CE); and 2) Development of training activities to raise awareness of the content and scope of this State Law on Places of Worship, both among persons in charge of religious entities and places of worship, and among the staff of the urban planning departments of local authorities.

The SECOND line of action aims to improve the mechanisms for preventing and protecting places of worship and the people who use them from attacks and/or manifestations of hatred and intolerance and/or violent extremism, including the possibility of being considered as soft or even critical infrastructures.

Measures in this area include 3) Developing training and awareness-raising actions for those responsible of religious entities and places of

worship on hate crimes and discrimination, and on the procedures for filing complaints and the map of available resources for victim assistance. 4) Promoting training and awareness-raising of security forces in the fight against hate crimes motivated by religion in general and against attacks and manifestations of intolerance against places of worship and the people who gathering worship places in particular; 5) Encourage the establishment of contacts between the leaders of religious denominations and places of worship and the security forces to ensure fluid cooperation and better support for victims; and 6) Consider places of worship, along with other particularly vulnerable centers and institutions (cemeteries and tombs), as possible targets of attack in existing plans and strategies to prevent and combat violent radicalization.

The THIRD line of action is aimed at the Autonomous Regions and the corresponding management of the needs arising from the effective exercise of religious freedom in general and with regard to the protection of places and centers of worship in particular.

Within this area, the following measures are included 7) Creation of permanent spaces for interaction and dialogue between the different denominations present in the respective territories and the Regional Governments; 8) Incorporate guidelines, criteria and standards into regional and urban-planning legislation to guarantee the exercise of the fundamental right to establish places of worship on an equal footing; 9) Include religious diversity in the continuing training of teachers; and 10) Facilitate implementation and approval by the Autonomous Regions, within complementary or extra-curricular activities, of specific educational programs that promote respect for diversity of beliefs and convictions.

The FOURTH line of action proposed strengthens the action of local governments in achieving a real and effective implementation and exercise



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of the right of freedom of religion and freedom of worship in general, and in safeguarding and protecting sites and places of worship in particular.

With regard to the local level, the following measures are proposed 11) Encourage the creation of permanent spaces for dialogue and consultation between representatives of religious communities and local authorities; 12) Provide local authorities with a guide containing recommendations for the application of the regulations on places of worship in accordance with the specific circumstances of the municipalities; 13) Strengthen the “Municipalities for Tolerance” programme, working with and helping local governments to manage religious diversity in an inclusive and pluralistic manner, with special emphasis on the establishment and operation of places of worship; 14) Fund the development of municipal programmes and initiatives in collaboration with religious entities aimed at improving among the general population the knowledge and recognition of the diversity of beliefs existing in local environments and the historical and cultural value of places of worship: open house activities and school visits to places of worship, exhibitions, reviews of significant dates and celebrations, etc.; 15) Encourage the development of policies related to the right to a dignified burial without discrimination on religious grounds, including consideration of religious burial rites in the management of cemeteries and crematoria; 16) Provide training and resources to local police forces as key agents for the protection of places of worship, people who come to them, free expression of beliefs and coexistence; and 17) Encourage the establishment of contacts between representatives of religious communities and those responsible for places of worship and the local police forces to promote fluid cooperation in preventing and protecting religious communities and their places of worship from acts of hatred and intolerance.

The FIFTH line of action concerns education, and the importance it acquires when it comes to prevention in general, and awareness-raising in particular. Working in schools on issues such as diversity, pluralism, tolerance, respect and/or equality becomes a growing need in open and secular societies such as Spain's. Within this area actions such as the following can be identified 19) The development of specific educational programmes, contents and resources that promote respect for the diversity of beliefs and convictions, as well as the development of socio-emotional and behavioral skills that can contribute to peaceful coexistence and tolerance, fostering critical thinking, dialogue and respect for the fundamental rights and freedoms of others; and 20) Promote educational initiatives that highlight the role of religious sites and places in uniting and identifying people, with particular emphasis on educational activities at the local level, involving youth, women and communities around religious sites and places.

The SIXTH line of action aims at strengthening efforts to create an informed society that is tolerant of the diversity of beliefs and convictions and that sees places of worship not as a threat but as an expression of religious freedom and the rich religious diversity of our society.

Actions in this area include 21) Extending the scope of the directory of places of worship of the Observatory of Religious Pluralism in Spain, as a tool for the visibility of these spaces as an expression of the rich diversity of beliefs in our society and the cultural and historical value of many of these places; 22) Increasing support for initiatives aimed at improving knowledge of the diversity of beliefs and convictions, dialogue, coexistence and the fight against intolerance and hate speech based on religion; 23) Encourage the leadership and participation of civil society and religious institutions in the promotion and



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development of these initiatives; 24) Promote the development of specific activities led by or targeting young people and women; and 25) Engage in activities that promote mutual respect and understanding among different faiths and between them and the rest of society.

The SEVENTH line of action concerns the media and social networks, which are essential not only for the proper dissemination of accurate information on issues related to religious and cultural diversity, but also for an informed and tolerant society.

In relation to this, the following actions are included 26) Supporting specialized training for journalists on religious diversity; 27) Carrying out

information and awareness-raising campaigns on religious minorities in Spain, with particular reference to their places of worship; 28) Collaborating with the media in cultural programming that includes religious themes and in carrying out awareness-raising campaigns on religious diversity and places of worship; 29) Develop a guide for the media and journalists to contribute to the fight against hate speech and intolerance based on religion or belief, with special reference to the vulnerable situation of places of worship; and 30) Include in the "Protocol to Combat Illegal Hate Speech Online" issues related to anti-Semitism, Christian phobia, Islamophobia and other forms of intolerance based on religion or belief, especially those related to the dissemination of attacks against places of worship.

