

Statement by the Holy Synod on the “anti-racist” Draft Bill

August 26, 2014

Today, Tuesday August 26, 2014, the Standing Holy Synod of the Church of Greece convened for its second session for the month of August chaired by His Beatitude Ieronymos, Archbishop of Athens and All Greece.

The Standing Holy Synod ratified the Minutes of the previous session. Today’s session involved the continuation of discussion that has arisen from the anti-racist draft law tabled in the Hellenic Parliament and from the temporary suspension of discussing it with a view to improving certain provisions.

The overall view of His Beatitude the President and the Archbishops, members of the Holy Synod, and their assessment of the objectives pursued by this draft law is that every effort is being made for protecting social peace and every person or group of persons residing in Greece and defined by reference to race, color, religion, descent, national origin.

The Orthodox Church of Greece has suffered deeply from persecutions by people of different faith and from preaching of hatred by religious entities of known sect propaganda using a myriad of illegal methods in an effort to tear Orthodox Christians from our Mother Church that preaches for centuries love, peace and cooperation among peoples without causing any inconvenience.

The Church of Greece has been helping and caring for thousands of legal and illegal immigrants for years regardless of their religious beliefs or their racial origin even nowadays in the midst of crisis. Moreover, the Church of Greece teaches not only tolerance to others, as intended by the draft law, but, even more importantly, acting out of genuine love. Additionally, it should be emphasized that since March 2011 the Holy Synod has been following the progress made on formulating the draft law and has submitted to the State a letter with detailed proposals for improving it. Those proposals have been accepted to the present draft law towards its rationalization with a view to prevent criminalizing freedom of expression.

The draft bill under discussion adopts inter alia (article 2) that whosoever deliberately and publicly deploras, demeans or maliciously refuses to accept the seriousness of crimes, genocides, war crimes against humanity, the Holocaust and crimes of Nazism through discriminatory conduct against a group of people in a manner that may incite violence or hatred or involves a threat or slander is subject to criminal prosecution. In this respect, the Holy Synod expressing the shared sense within Greek People and the need for principles of justice and equal respect of the historical memory of genocide victims proposes that, along with the atrocious Holocaust, specific mention should be laid down on the genocides committed against Greeks in Pontos and Christians in Minor Asia. We are expecting this

reference to be added in the draft law as we have been assured recently by the Minister of Justice.

The Hellenic Parliament legislates in Greece and for all Greeks in a fair, democratic and non-discriminating manner and this is what makes the aforementioned proposal valid and fair. The Church is offering its peaceful contribution and wishes for the improvement and success of this piece of legislation for the benefit of society.

Lastly, the Standing Holy Synod decided on current operational issues.

The Standing Holy Synod

Translated by Callis MITRAKA