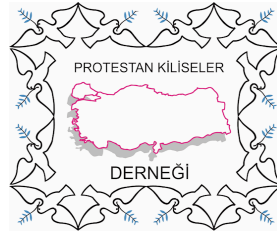


2025 Human Rights Violation Report

Prepared by
Association of Protestant Churches

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Introduction, Background and Summary

Introduction

We respectfully submit the Turkish Protestant Community's 2025 Human Rights Violation Report to the public. Such reports have been faithfully prepared for many years by the Association of Protestant Churches, and we are encouraged to see that they are taken seriously by the general public.

This report contains the following information:

- A summary of current historical and sociological information to assist those unfamiliar with Protestants in Türkiye
- The purpose of this report
- Summary information concerning the areas examined by the report
- More detailed information concerning the areas focused on by the report
- Recommendations

Background

Protestant churches do not have a hierarchical or centralized structure. Each church or group of churches is independent. However, church pastors began meeting together in the late 1980's for the purpose of unity, solidarity and partnership between Protestant churches. In the mid 1990's this unity gained structural momentum, so they formed "The Alliance of Protestant Churches", known as TeK (Representative Committee). Earlier laws relating to the formation of associations prevented TeK from being a representative body before official government bodies. As the result of a change in the Law of Associations, TeK decided to establish an association and the Association of Protestant Churches was formed on Jan 23, 2009. The Association of Protestant Churches continues to act as the representative and unifying body for a large part of the Protestant community in Türkiye.

Since 2007 the Association/Union of Protestant Churches has published these monitoring reports which set out the situation faced by the Protestant community. The Association of Protestant Churches attaches great importance to freedom of religion and belief, seeks to see these become a reality for everyone, everywhere, and works hard to achieve this . These annual monitoring reports serve to further this aim as they present the Protestant community's situation to public officials, civil society and the media.

The Protestant community in Türkiye is made up of approximately 217 churches/fellowships of various sizes, the majority of which are found in Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir.

144 of these Protestant fellowships have obtained legal entity status through the establishment of 21 religious foundations, 27 representative branches of religious foundations, 37 church associations and 59 representative branches linked to those associations. The remaining fellowships do not possess legal entity status.

Of the 217 Protestant fellowships, 11 worship in historical church buildings, 115 have rented facilities that are open to the public and 59 meet in premises they own. 32 fellowships meet together in their own homes for worship.

When compared with the previous report, the total number of churches has increased by 3, the number of religious foundations and associated representative branches is unchanged, church associations have increased by 1 while associated representative branches have reduced by 9. The number of churches worshipping in historical church buildings has reduced by 1, the number of churches with legal status has reduced by 8, but the number of home churches has increased by 10.

Summary

Freedom of religion and belief is one of the basic human rights listed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This freedom is legally protected in Türkiye through the Constitution of the Republic of Türkiye and through international human rights treaties that the country is party to as well as through national law. Whilst generally a legal structure exists in Türkiye related to freedom of religion and belief, the Protestant community continued to face some basic challenges in 2025 in spite of the existing legal protections. In the spirit of contributing to the development of freedom of belief in Türkiye, this report has been prepared to present some of the problems faced as well as positive developments relating to religious freedom that have been experienced in 2025 by the Protestant community. The situation in the year 2025 is briefly summarized below:

- Many foreign church leaders were deported, were denied entry to Türkiye or faced problems with getting their residence permits renewed.
- No progress was made in 2025 regarding the rights of Christians to train their own religious workers.
- Some churches who operate as an association had their facilities sealed after official audits, with the reasons given that they were running a club house or using the premises for worship. These churches became unable to carry out their regular activities.
- While students continue to be able to apply for an exemption from the Religious Culture and Moral Education Class, students and parents have suffered because it has been mandatory for them to choose optional lessons containing significant Islamic content, with applications for exemption being rejected.
- Protestant Christian individuals or institutions experienced hate crimes or associated physical attacks due solely to their faith
- The problem of hate speech continued, where hatred of Protestant Christian individuals or institutions due solely to their faith was expressed verbally or in writing with the aim of provoking hate in public opinion.
- Problems continued to be faced regarding requests to establish a place of worship, to continue using a facility for worship, or with applications to use existing church buildings. Rents have been subject to abnormal inflationary increases throughout the country; this problem is further exacerbated due to even higher rents being charged when it is known the proposed renter is a church. Some churches are facing the prospect of having to close because they cannot pay their rent.
- The trend for churches to gain legal status through the establishment of a religious foundation or association, or by becoming a representative branch of an already existing foundation or association slowed down.

- High levels of inflation resulted in all of society feeling the negative financial effects of reduced purchasing power; the Protestant community was deeply affected by this.
- Christian religious workers continued to be unrecognized as a profession by local authorities and official bodies.
- No progress was made towards solving the problem of the lack of a cemetery for Christian citizens. Christian citizens who die are buried in the “non-Muslim” section of a cemetery because there is no ground consecrated for Christians.

Hate Crimes and Hate Speech, Verbal and Physical Attacks

In 2025, hate speech and hate crimes continue. Below are some examples that have been reported to us:

- In December 2025 someone made a telephone call to the contact number of a church in Ankara. The caller first said they would like information about Christianity. Later in the call they made threats, with serious abusive language, towards the church official and the church. The situation was notified to the relevant Security Branch Directorate, but they took no action, saying that the official needed to lodge a complaint at the nearest police station. However, when this was done, the police station took no interest in this important matter. They simply took a written statement. The matter only became official when the victims opened their own court case for defamation.
- In the first 4 months of 2025, the fathers of some new Christians in Manisa received telephone. The caller claimed to be from the church and told them that their son or daughter was attending the church. However, the church had not made any such call. As a result of these calls, some new Christians ceased attending church.
- On May 1-2, Kayseri Church received many threatening telephone calls. On 2 May alone they were called 15 times. They notified the security authorities. It was then discovered that the same person had threatened churches in many different places in Türkiye (İstanbul, Yalova, Balıkesir, etc.) This individual told the churches he called that he would pour petrol on their buildings and set them alight, and he would kill their pastor. The security forces took a statement from this suspect and then released him.
- On 5 May, a female church member was horrifically murdered by her husband. One newspaper tried to link her funeral service which took place at a mosque to “missionary activities”, and published some posts about her by some Christians and churches with a commentary that was anti-Christian
- In Kars, while the 8-year-old child of a Christian family was talking with friends from the neighbourhood about religion, they told their friends that they were Christian. The conversation continued at school, and our child wished to distance themselves from the group as a result of the way the conversation was going and the actions of their friends. But a group of four, including some children from an older class, physically attacked the child, shouting “Allah exists”. Then they started the taunt, “You eat pig meat”. The family registered a request in the government’s CİMER system that it be investigated whether or

not the teacher had strayed from the official curriculum for the Religious Culture and Moral Education classes, and 2 inspectors were sent. Following an investigation the family were told that the teacher had conformed to the requirements of the curriculum. Because the family did not want the school directors or the families of the students who had attacked their child to suffer, they withdrew their complaint.

- On July 2 a suspicious individual came to a church in Kadıköy, İstanbul. While the church members were meeting in one room, this individual went from floor to floor, looking around. When the church's pastor challenged him, he said that he had been baptized and wanted to change his name. He asked the pastor to be his legal witness to this in court. He appeared to have an object similar to a weapon at his waist and was continually touching it. At that moment he saw some police at the door, said thank you and left the building quickly. The situation was notified to the security authorities.
- On the morning of October 9, Islamic publications were left at the door of a charitable laundromat for refugees operated by the Kayseri Church. Previous to this incident, the windows of the laundromat had been broken.
- On October 26, the Bible Bookshop in Şanlıurfa expanded and opened its top floor as a café. The official opening drew a crowd and was widely reported in social media. However, there were some ugly comments made on social media, particularly concerning the word Bible.
- False and defamatory posts were made on social media about a church in Iğdır. Two separate complaints were made by the church to the public prosecutor. Each of these was reviewed by the prosecutor, and it was decided to close the file. These social media posts affected the church's landlord and resulted in various difficulties being made for the church.
- A church in Gaziantep celebrated Easter in a café. The District Director of the Turkish Hearths nationalist organization linked this Easter celebration to missionary activities and claimed that the celebrations threatened public order because Easter fell on the same day as the anniversary of the Liberation of Gaziantep and the Night of Wishes. A local news site reported on this situation using extremely anti-Christian rhetoric.

Problems Regarding Places of Worship

The right to establish and maintain a place of worship is an important aspect of freedom of religion and belief. Because members of the Protestant community are mostly new Christians, they do not own religious buildings that are part of their cultural and religious heritage like traditional Christian communities have in Türkiye. There are very few historical church buildings which are available for use. Therefore, a large portion of the Protestant community tries to overcome the problem of finding a place to worship by establishing an association or religious foundation or gaining representative status with an existing association or religious foundation and then renting or purchasing a property such as a stand-alone building, shop or depot that has not traditionally been used for worship. A very small number of congregations have been able to build their own free-standing buildings. However, many of these premises do not have official status as a place of worship. Therefore, they are not officially recognized as a place of worship even though they are used in this way. These congregations cannot benefit from the advantages or the assistance given to an officially recognized place of worship such as free electricity and water as well as tax

exemptions. When they introduce themselves to the authorities as a church, they receive warnings that they are not legal and may be closed down or even taken to court. Several churches have been oppressed in this way; the situation faced by one of these is given below as an example of the experience churches in this area:

In 2025, a church association in Beylikdüzü was the victim of interference by the authorities which affected their freedom to worship and gather. In January 2025, the authorities carried out an inspection at the association's premises, examined documents belonging to the association and audited its activities. Following this inspection, an official notice was delivered to the association in May 2025, stating that there was some official paperwork missing, and also that the association was deemed to be "running an illegal social club". On May 25, 2025, approximately three weeks after the official notice had been received, a team from the Beylikdüzü District Governor's Office came with law enforcement officers to close and seal the premises, on the orders of the Ministry of the Interior İstanbul Province Directorate of Associations. The premises that were closed were the administrative center for the association as well as the place where regular worship activities took place and were not a location that is subject to obtaining permission to be a "social club". In spite of this they were officially sealed, meaning that most of the activities of the association were obstructed, and it was not possible to hold planned gatherings and worship services. Following the closing of the association's center, the church fellowship did not completely cease meeting for worship but continued to gather under limited circumstances. Worship services continued, sometimes in open spaces or small enclosed areas that had not been sealed off, but these could only accommodate small numbers and could not be open to visitors. Serious detriment to the regular life of a church is caused by lacking a place of worship with easy access. An appeal was made against the closure, but this was rejected; following this a court case was opened to try to overturn the decisions of the authorities. This legal process is ongoing. Although no physical violence was experienced during this period, the actions of the authorities were in contravention of the rights to gather and worship freely.

In addition, on May 16, an official of a church foundation in Çorum was asked by the Municipality whether the foundation's building was being used for worship or not. This situation made the church feel threatened. The various churches who have applied for their buildings to be recognised as places of worship have had these applications rejected.

The court cases opened by Kurtuluş Churches Association to be granted buildings to use in Van, Kırklareli and Ankara are ongoing.

The range of places of worship used by the Protestant community as at the end of 2025 is as follows:

The known number of Protestant congregations in all of Türkiye is 217. An analysis of their use of worship sites is:

- Congregations with their own stand-alone or detached building (in the name of an individual or legal entity) - 28.
- Congregations who worship in their own building that is not stand-alone or detached (in the name of an individual or a legal entity) - 31.
- Those who worship in a traditional historical church - 11.
- Those who worship in a rented facility - 115.
- Those who worship in a home - 32.

From these statistics, it is clear how important the issue of having a place of worship is for the Protestant community, and how insecure the current situation is due to the number of rental properties and home fellowships.

The steadily growing Protestant community continued to face a serious problem in 2025 regarding the issue of places to worship. In smaller communities where there has not been a Christian presence in the recent past or where there is no Christian place of worship, members of Protestant congregations are confronted with very visible, serious social pressure. Instead of public institutions adding to this pressure, it would better serve the state's basic responsibilities relating to human rights for these institutions to take the role of protector and ease the burden of these small Christian congregations

The Right to Propagate Religion

The details of various violations of the right to propagate religion that occurred in 2025 are to be found in the section entitled "Hate Crimes and Hate Speech, Verbal and Physical Attacks." In addition:

In October, the Eskişehir Church was distributing brochures. One church member was given a fine for doing this. The matter went to court, where the fine was ruled to be inappropriate and cancelled.

Problems Faced in Education and Compulsory Religious Classes

In 2025 the compulsory Religious Culture and Moral Education Class (DKAB) continued to be taught. Despite the fact that this lesson has been found to be in contravention of the right to freedom of religion and the requirements to provide a laic and scientific education by local courts and the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), with court rulings for this class to be removed, it continues to be taught. The content of the mandatory Religious Culture and Moral Education classes and the resources used in the classroom are currently far from being pluralistic. The sections relating to Christianity are presented from an Islamic perspective and do not represent the views of Christians themselves.

The Kurtuluş Church Association is in litigation to open a Bible course for Christians; the legal process is continuing.

In Kars, while the 8-year-old child of a Christian family was talking with friends from the neighbourhood about religion, they told their friends that they were Christian. The conversation continued at school, and our child wished to distance themselves from the group as a result of the way the conversation was going and the actions of their friends. But a group of four, including some children from an older class, physically attacked the child, shouting "Allah exists". Then they started the taunt, "You eat pig meat". The family registered a request in the government's CİMER system that it be investigated whether or not the teacher had strayed from the official curriculum for the Religious Culture and Moral Education classes, and 2 inspectors were sent. Following an investigation the family were told that the teacher had conformed to the requirements of the curriculum. Because the family did not want the school directors or the families of the students who had attacked their child to suffer, they withdrew their complaint.

The situation regarding the practice surrounding optional lessons, which we reported on for the first time last year, grew in seriousness in 2025. Violations of rights regarding optional religious classes are now widespread in school. Children whose religion is recorded on their identity card as Christian continue to be able to obtain exemption from the Religious Culture and Moral Education if they apply for it. For many years we have maintained that this exemption should be granted without the need for a specific application, but no steps have been taken in this area. Even in cases where a child has obtained exemption from the Religious Culture and Moral Education class, school directors have stated that it is a requirement for students to choose from optional classes to complete the school year, otherwise they will fail the year and be required to repeat it. These optional classes cover the Islamic faith. Parents have submitted written requests to their school board and to their district's Directorate of National Education, but to no avail. As a result, parents have been put in a difficult situation at home, and students at school, in fact many students have been marginalized and discriminated against by classmates. The situation is clearly in contravention of the principles of freedom of religion and conscience enshrined in the Constitution and international agreements that our country is a party to.

The Problem of Being Unable to Train Religious Leaders and Difficulties Faced by Foreign Protestants

In 2025, the Protestant community was still unable to provide training or run a seminary for its own religious leaders within the national education system of Türkiye. So, the Protestant community continues to raise up religious leaders by providing apprentice training within its own ranks. Some others study at theological colleges overseas, others are equipped with the necessary spiritual knowledge and skills through attending seminars and training programs within Türkiye. In recent years, although there has been a great increase in the number of national Protestant religious leaders, there are still not enough to fulfill the current need. So, some churches continue to look to foreign clergy to provide spiritual leadership. But, due to the application of N82 and G87 restrictive codes, which began in 2019 and has continued apace, meaning that foreign religious clergy and lay members of congregations are refused entry to Türkiye, or denied residence permits and visas so they have to leave the country, the Protestant congregations led by foreign religious leaders were left in serious difficulties situation and their problems are ongoing.

In 2025, despite the fact that the majority of congregations are led by local spiritual leaders there is still a need for foreign clergy.

In 2025, there have been further cases of foreign clergy or lay members of a congregation being deported, refused entry to Türkiye, or denied residence permits and visas. Many congregations have been left in difficulties and the need for more clergy continues to be a critical one. The following table contains statistics concerning those who received codes and who were therefore forced to leave the country, split by year and nationality:

The number of Protestants reported to us as having received an entry ban code:

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Total
USA	15	10	3		22	12	30	92

UK	5	1			1		1	8
South Korea	4	3	1		4	5	6	23
Germany	3	4	1		1	2	1	12
Other European	2	4	2		1	0	0	9
Latin America	2	3	0		0	0	3	8
Rest of the World	4	5	4	2	4	2	5	26
Total	35	30	11	2	33	21	46	178

The number of those affected (not receiving a code but those who need to leave Türkiye to keep the family together):

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Total
Coded individuals	35	30	11	2	33	21	46	178
Spouses	24	12	5	0	5	6	5	57
Children (under 18)	28	31	7	0	25	28	26	145
Toplam	87	73	23	2	63	55	77	380

As can be seen from these tables, the already small Protestant community is seriously threatened by this negative development. Most of these people have resided in our country for many years, living here with their families. These people have no criminal record, investigation or court documents concerning them. This situation has exposed a huge humanitarian problem. Having someone from a family receive an unexpected entry ban shatters family unity and leaves everyone in the family facing a chaotic situation.

The majority of these individuals received an N82 code (which links entry to Türkiye to a process of prior approval). When the authorities who issued these codes give their explanation to the court, they state that the N82 restriction is not an entry ban, it is simply a requirement to obtain prior approval. However, in practice, all of those who have been coded and subsequently applied for a visa have had those applications rejected. Although the N82 is not an entry ban de jure it is a de facto entry ban in Türkiye.

It had been believed that the N82 code was an entry ban valid for 5 years, however some who obtained the code 5 years ago attempted to re-enter Türkiye as a tourist and were turned back because they had a code on their record. We consider that the awarding of probable lifetime bans for those who have spent an important part of their lives in our country is both illegal and unconscionable.

A smaller number of those deported or banned from entry received the G87 code (people who are thought to pose a general security threat). In other countries this code is used for those who participate in armed attacks, terrorist activities or who are members of terrorist organizations. The fact that in our country this code is being applied, without any evidence, to members of the Protestant community who are focused on living their faith, who are opposed to violence and who do not have criminal records has grieved us deeply and caused us great harm. These people have been given entry bans for at least 5 years.

In a similar fashion, N82 codes have been given to foreign spouses married to Turkish citizens who are Christian, or their residence permits have not been renewed, citing being a threat to national

security or the peace of society. These cases have caused families to be split, or their living situations shattered when the whole family has been forced to leave the country.

In court cases opened to challenge this situation, the authorities have claimed that these people are pursuing activities to the detriment of Türkiye, have taken part in missionary activities and that some of them had attended our Family Conference (which our Association has held annually for twenty years) or other seminars and meetings that are similarly completely legal and transparent. Some of the court cases have reached a conclusion and a verdict was delivered against those receiving the code without any concrete reason, proof, information or document being given. A few cases have produced positive results. However, in these cases the administrators insisted on not implementing the court decisions to revoke the code or grant the visa/residence permit. Although such arbitrary practices within the bureaucracy destroyed people's hopes, their litigation process has started again. Where the coded person is a foreigner married to a Turkish citizen, they often win their court case and a renewed residence permit is granted, however a family who won their court case found that the authorities cancelled the foreign spouse's newly issued residence permit. Rejected cases have been appealed to the Constitutional Court. Some of those cases before the Constitutional Court have also resulted in negative decisions and application has been made to the European High Court of Human Rights. The legal process is still underway for most of the injured parties. Our hope is that these cases which have no legal standing and are in violation of human rights will find justice in the Constitutional Court.

The cases for a group of those who received N82 and G87 codes and were forced to leave Türkiye have been merged into one case by the European Court of Human Rights. However, a lot of cases are being delayed in the Constitutional Court. There is an extremely long wait for a legal decision, and the delay results in Christians who are coded being unable to apply to the European Court of Human Rights.

In June, the authorities rejected the long-term residence permit application of Michel Geske, the daughter of our brother Tilmann Geske who was killed in the Malatya Zirve Publishing House Murders in 2007, and she was given 10 days to leave the country. Although this was not an example of an N82 code, the treatment of Michel deeply saddened the Protestant community in Türkiye.

On February 12, 2026, the European Parliament took the formal decision to warn Türkiye concerning the practice of deporting foreign journalists and Christians in recent years. In summary, this report stated that the deportation of foreign journalists and foreign Christians, citing secret security reasons and without a fair trial, is both an infringement of human rights and the freedom of religion and expression. But the Foreign Ministry of Türkiye published a statement on 13 February refuting these accusations as baseless.

Our Association respects our country's sovereign rights, that is, the right to decide who can and cannot be within the country's borders, but at the same time we view this policy as a grave violation of rights and discriminatory since it is being applied solely because these people are Christian.

In addition, foreign members of the Protestant community live with the worry that they could be deported at any time. Rather than subject themselves and their families to this chaos and stress, some individuals or families have chosen not to participate in church meetings and activities or have left our country voluntarily. But because there are no accurate records kept concerning those who have left in this way we have not included data on these cases in this report.

Legal Entity / Right to Organize

The lack of Legal Entity is a problem for all religious groups in Türkiye, but especially for religious minorities. The Protestant community continues to try to solve this issue by establishing associations and religious foundations or becoming a representative office of an existing association or foundation.

As of 2025, members of the Protestant church community have established 21 religious foundations, 27 representative branches of foundations, 37 church associations and over 59 representative branches connected to these associations, giving legal entity status to 144 fellowships. The remaining fellowships do not possess any form of legal entity. The trend towards gaining legal entity continues, although the number of fellowships with legal entity reduced when compared with the previous year. However, associations and foundations are not accepted officially as a “church” or a “place of worship.” The problem of a religious congregation becoming a legal entity has not been completely solved. The present legal path does not allow for a congregation to obtain a legal identity as a “religious congregation.” This creates many difficulties for churches.

In addition, for small churches, the present path to “forming an association” appears complex and hard to implement. Furthermore, the cost of establishing a foundation is very high and the legal procedure is long, making it hard for small fellowships to gain legal entity status. In fact, with recent changes to legislation, the cost of establishing a foundation has significantly increased, meaning it is now almost impossible for churches to form new foundations. Small Protestant congregations try to resolve this problem through becoming a representative branch of an existing church association or religious foundation.

Obligatory Declaration of Faith

In 2025 we received no report of this right being violated. However, the requirement to declare one’s faith to be exempt from Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge classes, or even to prove one’s adherence to a faith, continues to be a violation of human rights. Decisions taken by the European High Court of Human Rights Court and local courts need to be implemented for this problem to be solved.

Media

One of the significant problems facing the Protestant community is the increase of hate speech due to widespread use of social media. We encounter hate speech filled with insult and profanity directed at official church social media accounts, church leaders, Christianity, Christian values and Christians in general; these often originate from the activity of social media groups that cultivate hatred against Christians and have targeted Christian websites and social media accounts. These posts contain hate speech related to the Christian faith, Christian values and things held sacred to Christians, and often include expressions that are abusive, insulting or cursing.

Some of the cases listed above demonstrate how hate speech against Christians in the media, particularly at the local level, results in cases of threats and action. Social media has become a platform for targeting, polarization, and every form of discrimination and is now the chief source of

misinformation. Hate speech easily spreads via this media. These types of activities directed at all Christian denominations and other minority groups creates concern in the Protestant community.

Dialogue

In 2025, the Protestant community representatives were not invited to participate in meetings of religious groups organized by the Government or by official organizations. This shows that in 2025 there is still an official tendency to discount or ignore the presence of the Turkish Protestant community. Unlike previous years, there was no close communication with municipalities and related local authority organizations.

The Protestant community continues to attach great importance to the development of relationships with all public institutions, especially the Government, Parliament and municipalities.

Recommendations

The practice of giving entry ban codes or not renewing residence permits applied to foreign members of the Protestant community to force them to leave the country must be abolished. This situation must come to an end. The current situation where people are victimized purely because of their religious faith and punished despite not been charged with any crime must cease. People who are deemed undesirable to remain in our country must be interacted with in an objective, lawful and equitably applied manner. There needs to be swift judgements issued in the cases of foreign church members whose appeals against their codes have been stuck for a long time in the Constitutional Court.

As set out in this report, because there is no legal path to form a church, churches solve the issue of legal entity by establishing an association or a foundation, or by becoming a representative branch of an existing association or foundation. However, because there is no specific provision for permission to worship in a building or an office, the authorities can act to close the association, foundation or representative branch on the basis that the space is used for worship. There have been examples of authorities deeming the activities to being akin to illegally operating a social club due to light refreshments being offered to church members before or after the services, officially closing the premises as a result. A solution must be found to these problems immediately. Protestant churches must have legal and official recognition and be free to carry out their activities without fear of being closed down.

The issue of establishing places of worship for the Protestant communities which do not possess historical church buildings has been a problem for years and has not been solved, violating the basic right of religious expression. Immediate steps need to be taken by national and local authorities in this matter. A way needs to be made for Christians be able to open places of worship. Municipalities, the Ministry of Culture, the Directorate General of Foundations and other government institutions that own church buildings but use them for other purposes should at the very least allow congregations to use the buildings for Sunday and religious holiday worship services. Where issues such as providing land for building places of worship are concerned, officials should be inclined to be helpful.

In the light of the stigmatization and social pressure faced by Christian families and students, the Ministry of Education is expected to proactively inform schools regarding the rights of non-Muslims in schools and classrooms, without waiting for families to complain. The Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge class should no longer be mandatory. Steps beyond wishful thinking should be taken for the development of a culture based on coexistence and respect for beliefs. Non-Muslim children need to be given exemption from the so-called optional Islamic religion classes that they are in practice required to take to graduate.

National and district government officials need to actively place on the public agenda and encourage the idea of a shared culture where understanding is shown to people of other religions and where all people are recognized as citizens of the Republic of Türkiye with equal rights. A key role falls to the Ministry of Education here.

In order to solve problems more easily and overcome prejudice, it would be helpful if the government or public institutions would enter into dialogue with our church community regarding their efforts on issues that concern the Protestant community as well as officially inviting representatives from the Protestant community to meetings. Experience in this area shows that when the channels of communication are open, many problems are quickly solved.

We continued to experience hate speech being directed at Christians in 2025. Perpetrators being released without penalty or punishment, despite complaints being registered by victims, causes serious concern and insecurity. An important step toward a solution for this would be updating present laws that are open to interpretation as well as passing new legislation that would include clear statements that are not open to interpretation regarding hate speech and hate crimes. Public broadcasting to raise awareness of the issue and educate the public concerning hate speech and hate crimes would create a paradigm shift in the education and cultural awareness of the public.

Within the framework of freedom of expression and freedom of the press, there needs to be an effective and rapid mechanism established for oversight regarding intolerance in the media, which can deal with visual and written publications containing hate speech, inciteful rhetoric and prejudice. Judicial authorities need to instigate official actions against hate crimes and speech without first requiring an official complaint to be filed. This is not just a critical issue for Protestant Christians, but for any disadvantaged group.

There is a need for more action to be taken by journalistic bodies and other civil society organizations to raise awareness among the members of the local media (journalists, columnists, etc.) of the problem of hate speech and to require formal education to create a sensitivity to this issue

Within the framework of human rights education, relevant public officials should be trained in freedom of religion and conscience issues

Respectfully submitted,
Association of Protestant Churches