



ORTHODOX PUBLIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

TRUTH LIVES IN LIGHT

December 9, 2020

The International Conference on Religious Diplomacy
Athens, Greece

Your Beatitude and Your Excellencies,
Your Eminences, and Esteemed Delegates
To the Second International Conference on Religious Diplomacy

On behalf of the newly formed, Orthodox Public Affairs Committee (OPAC), I extend to all of you our respects and greetings as you convene for this vital conference on behalf of freedom of conscience and religion. We congratulate the “Foreign Affairs Hellenic Edition,” the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, the Holy Archdiocese of Athens, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic for continuing this necessary and indeed salvific work, even in the midst of the global pandemic.

As a new organization dedicated to telling the narratives of those who have suffered for their freedom of conscience and faith, we are pleased to offer this salutation to all the participants who are joining in this noble effort. We were inspired, by the unfortunate and recent seizure of the Hagia Sophia and Her forced re-conversion, to come together in order to provide public advocacy for the global Orthodox Christian Church, and promote, support, defend and champion the worldwide Christian Church in the face of persecution, exclusion, and prejudice.

Your advocacy of “religious diplomacy is needed now more than ever, because diplomacy by its very nature encourages an honest assessment of divergent points of view, and promote problem-solving that takes into account the needs of minorities as well as majorities. Interreligious dialogue should be the vanguard that protects our world against the ravages of intolerance, fundamentalism and outright persecution.

OPAC exists in order to tell the stories of those from whom voice, presence, and faith would be stolen by those exercising overwhelming force, whether that force is social, judicial, or in the worst case, martial. Where we are able, we will speak as advocates and lobby for the proper attention of government and non-government actors in order to raise the voices of those who cannot be heard.

OPAC will continue a vigorous program of unmasking and disclosure of bad actors across all religious traditions as we become aware, as well as telling the stories of heroes of faith and conscience that might otherwise not be heard. Our motto is "Truth Lives in Light" and we firmly believe as the shadows of dishonest behavior are dispelled, it will be easier for those under the thumb of unfair and unjust systems to live in peace and security. Indeed, peace and security are the hallmarks of a successful employment of constructive diplomacy.

On behalf of OPAC, we commend your Interfaith initiative and we wish your deliberations success on every level, and by every metric. We look forward to synergies with you and your partners in the future to protect and defend sacred space, whether it be physical, intellectual, moral, or spiritual.

With respect and gratitude,

George Gigicos
Co-Founder and Chairman of OPAC