

On November 15, 2010, Dr. Elizabeth Prodromou, Vice Chair of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), delivered a speech in Brussels at the Conference on Religious Freedom in Russia, sponsored by Human Rights without Frontiers International, at the European Parliament.

The following is an excerpt from commissioner Prodromou's speech:

Russia remains on USCIRF's Watch List in 2010. Our concern about Russia revolves largely around the government's anti-extremism legislation as it pertains to religious groups. Now let's be clear. Russia faces legitimate, serious threats from groups which advocate or perpetrate violence in the name of religion. This is a major security concern, not just in Russia, but in other nations. There is a problem, however, with Russia's approach to the challenge. It defines extremism in such a way that religious groups that neither practice nor preach violence fall under that category. Moreover, Russian authorities apply anti-extremist laws in an overly broad and arbitrary manner. The result is a repeated and heavy-handed use of the law against religious adherents who pose no credible threat to security, and whose only "crime" is a failure to conform to mainstream ideas and beliefs. Make no mistake: This is a fundamental violation of human rights and religious freedom. As such, it requires vocal, resolute opposition by the United States and other nations.

[Click here to read the entire speech.](#)