

## **6th session of the Forum on Minority Issues**

### **III. Protection of the existence of and prevention of violence against religious minorities**

Fund for Support and Maintenance of Ecclesiastic Monuments

Madame chair, thank you very much

I am a Russian woman, Orthodox Christian, who has come to this forum to speak on behalf of the Christians of Syria. The fund I am representing is a non-governmental organisation. In Syria, we are working in spiritual programs and have been doing so for 10 years. In times of war now we are doing with a humanitarian project. In Syria today, there is a humanitarian disaster, the rights of the Christian in the Syrian Arab Republic as you know, protected by the constitutions, Christians have the right to participate fully in all levels of the state and public life. Since the first year of our communication and close work with Syrians, we have been able to see how tolerant this multiconfessional nation is. In the spring of 2011, it was still considered unseemly to ask of what faith a person was. We believe that we are now witnessing the fact that Christian churches are not prosecuted in Syria and not being destroyed by lawful power. Moreover, all religions were respected, this includes Muslim and Christian religions, which were released from their taxes at the municipal level, they do not pay for their gas or their electricity. But these are new times, these are times of war, the religions with the many churches and believers are now in mortal danger, this is clear in Damascus and it has been reported in the international media that religious fanatics who are in the majority made up of foreigners hired mercenaries are now threatening Christians and wishing to remove them from their traditional places of residences. Thousands of Christians were killed and the way in which they were killed is an extremely cynical hateful character. Many have been forced to move, during the night just last night there were shootings in Damascus and against peaceful residents were killed. Thank you very much and please pay attention to the (...)