



STATEMENT BY BÜRGERBEWEGUNG PAX EUROPA

OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting

[Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on the Rule of Law in the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights](#)

Session 2

Vienna, July 12, 2013

Reply and Clarification on Intervention made in Session 2

The representative of the Holy See reacted to our statement, asking for a clarification. It is our pleasure to do that.

First of all, we are keenly aware of the crimes committed in the past against freedom of conscience and religion. We have no desire to return to any similar form of repression.

To understand our intention, it is important to understand the context in which our comment was made, namely that of national security. This, in our opinion, remains a vital issue for each and every citizen and in case of a conflict, national security must have higher priority than religious practice.

There can be no doubt that each every citizen is free to hold any faith and religious belief he or she desires. However, just like traffic laws, the actual practice must remain subject to the law of the land. This is constitutionally sanctioned in Denmark, to give an example.

To be more specific, our precise concern these days are radical Islamist groups who do not respect secular law and seek to replace it with sharia law, and democracy with theocratic rule. This a legitimate democratic and constitutional concern.

Since sharia law, according to the European Court for Human Rights, is incompatible with fundamental principles of democracy and human rights, this should not be particularly controversial. We are seeing some worrisome developments, where public space is occupied and controlled by Islamic fundamentalists. This is corrosive to democracy as well as fundamental tenets of human rights.

BPE respects the opinion of the OSCE and the Holy See. However, we see a dynamic present. In order to reduce problems in the future, there seems no other solution than to relegate religion to the private sphere. Religion in general should play a less important role in the public sphere than it does now.

Finally, we wholeheartedly respect and embrace the Christian heritage that built and shaped Europe as we know it, forming the basis for universal human rights and democracy.