

**OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting
Promotion of Freedom of Expression:
Rights, Responsibilities and OSCE Commitments**
Vienna, 3-4 July 2014

Session II: The Responsibilities in the Framework of Freedom of Expression

Statement by Dr. Mattia F. Ferrero
Coordinator of the
Observatory for Religious Tolerance and Freedom
“Giuseppe Dossetti”
(Italy)

Yesterday several participants mentioned the possible clash between freedom of expression and the promotion of tolerance and non-discrimination, in particular of religious tolerance and non-discrimination.

Allowing certain expressions reinforces patterns of intolerance and discrimination, which in turn cause violence against certain religious communities, in the sense that there is a causal link between the use of such expressions and the resulting harm. In fact, violence do not suddenly arise. It is a tragic final act of a slippery road which starts with mockery and social intolerance, then passes through discrimination, also established by law, and from there it ends up with the overt violence.

If it is difficult to draw a legal limitation, anyway every person should be encouraged to exercise responsibly her or his freedom of expression, with due consideration for the believers' feelings. In particular the media have the responsibility to give a fair and accurate account of religious beliefs and to ensure that members of religious communities are given the chance to express their own views. At this end, the Representative on the Freedom of the Media and the ODIHR may develop specific guidelines for voluntary professional standards and self-regulation on countering religious intolerance and discrimination in the media. In the same way, political institutions of the participating States are required to adopt code of conduct or ethics for elected representatives preventing intolerant discourse.

A special attention should be paid to the Internet, and especially to the social networks, which play a big role in spreading disparagement of, or incitement against religions and religious communities as well as in showing irreverent treatment or provocative portrayal of religious symbols. Internet service providers and social networking services should be encouraged to adopt standard form contracts providing termination clauses and penalties in case of intolerant conducts of

people using their services.

All these measures will allow the public opinion to develop in a correct, mature way and it will foster a climate of mutual confidence and respect between religious communities as well as between believers and non-believers.

Dr. Mattia F. Ferrero

Coordinator

Observatory for Religious Freedom and Tolerance “Giuseppe Dossetti”

Corso Monforte, 2
I-20122 MILANO
ITALIA - ITALY

e-mail: mattia.ferrero@unicatt.it
Phone: +39-02-89452122
Fax: +39-02-89452125