

## **Antifa: A clear and present danger to Freedom of Assembly**

Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen.

I am Henrik Clausen, representing Wiener Akademikerbund. I am very pleased to be in Poland, the first country to defeat Communism. I recently visited the Solidarnosz museum in Gdansk, and was touched by seeing how many ordinary, decent citizen participated. Even today, Freedom of Assembly is alive and well here, where citizens routinely assemble for a wide variety of topics.

Unfortunately, this is no longer so West of Vienna, for several reasons. I will be specific about one of these threats, a leftwing extremist group called 'Antifa', short for 'Anti-fascists'. West of Vienna the authorities have been unable or unwilling to counter this challenge properly, in contrast to effective police action East of Vienna.

Antifa is a loosely-connected movement that pretends to target so-called 'fascists' or 'national socialists'. In reality, they attack Constitution-friendly and pro-democracy activists worried about the future of our secular societies, self-determination, equal rights of women and the introduction of Sharia law into our societies. Antifa maliciously misuses the OSCE guidelines' clause for counter-demonstrations to be visible to the main demonstrations, in order to provoke fights and violence.

This used to be mainly a European problem, attacking events about non-Muslim minorities, "For Freedom" demonstration in Denmark, balls in Vienna (imagine that!), and similar traditional expressions of free societies. But recently, Antifa has been more active in America, and in particular the events in Charlottesville show their destructive power.

Police inaction is a major part of the problem here. When police proactively protect properly registered peaceful assemblies, the attacks cease, and freedom is restored. When police neglects the duty to protect Freedom of Peaceful Assembly, this freedom withers. This must not happen.

To restore Freedom of Peaceful Assembly, Wiener Akademikerbund recommends:

- That OSCE pS' protect peaceful assemblies much more proactively.
- That authorities clearly identify the primary sources of violence.
- That extremist groups such as Antifa be investigated and dissolved under the law.

- And that the OSCE Guidelines be amended to remove the right of "counter-demonstrators" to be close to the demonstration they oppose.