



## Statement by Bürgerbewegung Pax Europa

### OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

#### Working Session 13 Tolerance and Non-Discrimination II

#### To the Austrian Delegation

Warsaw, September 30, 2014

BPE is gravely concerned about the threat emanating from the Islamic State (IS), which, according to Ednan Aslan, professor for Islamic pedagogy at the University of Vienna, “from a theological perspective, [is] 100% legitimate”<sup>1</sup>. IS has led a number of Austrian men and women to travel to Syria and Iraq in order to fight alongside IS. Following calls to violence on Facebook and other media outlets by these Austrian IS fighters, the Austrian government is planning the introduction of even stricter laws with regard to freedom of speech. An expert meeting with the ministers of interior, integration and justice has been set for mid-October in order to “combat hate speech and hatred.”

Austria has granted the Islamic faith the legal status of a recognized faith community (akin to that of the Catholic and Protestant Churches or the Jewish Faith Community). The Law on Islam of 1912 states that “Islam, its teachings and institutions and customs enjoy protection insofar as they are not in conflict with Austrian law.”<sup>2</sup> To this date, there has not been any inquiry into the teachings of Islam. The Austrian authorities have not received an official translation of the Koran; as a result, the authorities do not know what Islam teaches and whether its teachings are compatible with Austrian laws.

There are currently efforts to relaunch the Law on Islam. This is laudable, especially since the draft

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1 [http://diepresse.com/home/panorama/oesterreich/3875946/Aslan\\_Muslime-benotigen-Friedenskonzepte](http://diepresse.com/home/panorama/oesterreich/3875946/Aslan_Muslime-benotigen-Friedenskonzepte)

#### 2 Law on Islam 1912

Article 1: The adherents of Islam shall be granted recognition as a religious community in the kingdoms and crown-lands represented in the Imperial Council in the meaning of the Constitutional Law of 21 December, 1867... The religious community of the adherents of Islam according to the Hanafite rite shall... enjoy the same legal protection as is granted to other legally recognised religious communities. **The doctrines of Islam, its institutions and customs shall enjoy the same protection too, unless they are in contradiction to state law.**

includes a demand for the disclosure of Islamic teachings and beliefs in the German language (Koran and Hadith). However, BPE (in conjunction with the Wiener Akademikerbund) also demands the ban of any exercise of influence of foreign entities on any faith community in Austria, especially those entities from countries with limited or no freedom of religion. We believe the above to be essential for the upholding of the religious peace in Austria. Ednan Aslan says the following:

I have not noticed either the organizations or the community distancing themselves from political Islam and/or an Islamic state in the classical sense. If it is impossible to be free of the illusion of a highly idealized Islamic state, then there must always be the possibility of violent attempts to establish such a state. The religious community is of the opinion that sharia is not possible in Austria, because Muslims are not in the majority here. We must understand the implication of this remark. It implies that Muslims in Austria cannot live according to their own laws, but would like to.<sup>3</sup>

We support the efforts of the Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs, who has already called for the publication of an official German translation of the Koran. This translation must be made by an independent council, the members of which must affirm its authenticity by affidavit. The sovereignty of interpretation of the contents of belief – insofar as they concern the social order – must lie with authorities, because only the authorities are competent to uphold the religious peace on the federal level.

### **Recommendation to the Austrian Delegation**

- BPE recommends that Austria take seriously its OSCE commitments with respect to implementing the Law on Islam in Austria. We reaffirm the necessity that the Austrian authorities demand a certified German copy of the Koran and the Hadith to check whether Islamic teachings are indeed compatible with Austrian laws.
- BPE recommends that Austria actively obtain written affirmations from Islamic organizations that they do not currently, and will not in the future, seek to introduce Sharia law in the land.

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3 [http://diepresse.com/home/panorama/oesterreich/3875946/Aslan\\_Muslime-benotigen-Friedenskonzepte](http://diepresse.com/home/panorama/oesterreich/3875946/Aslan_Muslime-benotigen-Friedenskonzepte)