



Intervention by Bürgerbewegung Pax Europa

OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

Working Session 5 Freedom of Assembly and Association

Warsaw, September 21, 2016

Freedom of Association

According to the Annotated Agenda, one of the key OSCE commitments explicitly recognizes every person's right to associate. Moreover, a person's right and freedom of association may not be infringed “except in very limited circumstances, for example, in cases where they engage in criminal activities or concretely threaten the constitutional order, or the rights of others.”

Unfortunately, police in Bedfordshire, UK, attempted to ban the former leader of English Defence League, Tommy Robinson, from attending future England football matches for three years. Robinson was accused of potentially causing disorder or violence as a result of his “high presence on social media and previous criminal history of violent or disorderly behavior.” This despite the fact that Robinson had not been involved in any football-related violence for many years.

Fortunately, the judge, while disagreeing with Robinson's displays of criticism of ISIS (see newspaper article for more details¹), argued in favor of Robinson's right to freedom of expression and his right to associate with other football fans.

1 <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/ex-edl-leader-tommy-robinson-wins-football-ban-court-case-against-bedfordshire-police-1582177>

Recommendation:

- BPE calls on the United Kingdom to ensure that the banning of an individual's association with a group take place only in the aforementioned very limited instances. The banning due to a person's being a "perceived or feared" catalyst for disorder does not fall under the category of limiting this right due to "criminal activities."