

Diminishing intolerance and hate crimes by abolishing blasphemy

Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen. I am Henrik Clausen, speaking on behalf of Wiener Akademikerbund.

On today's topic of "Hate crimes", let me first express our puzzlement that there seems to be a desire to see more incidents reported. Traditionally, we prefer to see declines in the number of crimes rather than increases.

Then, I am happy to report that Denmark has made a substantial step towards reducing "hate crimes". Earlier this year, a Dane posted to the internet a video of a quran being burned. That was initially considered a "hate crime" against Muslims, and the person was charged under the rarely-used Danish blasphemy law.

Pro-freedom activists and lawyers pointed out that there really wasn't any crime committed, and that the charge of blasphemy was an uneven application of the law. After an intense public debate, the Danish blasphemy law was repealed this summer, and the charges mentioned were dropped. Only one party still asserted that Gods should be protected by the Law.

The specific concern that had kept the blasphemy law on the books was that repealing it might potentially lead to more terrorist attacks against Danish targets. This has not been the case, and there are no indications that the threat of terrorism has increased after repeal.

Also Norway and the Netherlands have recently repealed their laws against blasphemy, and like in Denmark, this has not led to increased terrorism. It is the opinion of Wiener Akademikerbund that this increase in liberty diminishes tensions and thereby reduces the number of "hate crimes".

Wiener Akademikerbund therefore recommends that all OSCE participating States fully repeal all laws against blasphemy.

