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TO: The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe: 2010 Review Conference Warsaw
FROM: The Rev. Mario Bergner, Redeemed Lives, Inc. USA
REGARDING: Intolerance and Discrimination Against Christian Academicians and Clerics Threaten the Freedom of Conscience to Apply the Sexual Morality of their Faith Traditions to Homosexuality
DATE: October 1, 2010

Working Session 2: Fundamental Freedoms I: Freedom of Thought, Conscience, Religion or Belief.

Central Recommendation: Participating States of the OSCE should draft legislation to safeguard the free speech of Christian academicians and clerics so that they may teach the sexual morality of their faith traditions without being subject to false accusations of hate speech so they may empower Christian believers to practice the sexual morality of their Christian conscience.

Christian clerics and academicians are being discriminated against, treated in an intolerant manner and falsely accused of harassment for articulating the moral worldview of their faith traditions when specifically applied to homosexuality. I would draw your attention to two such examples and conclude with one significant application.

First, In May 2010, Professor Kenneth Howell of the University of Illinois located at Urbana-Champaign was accused of hate speech because in a course on the Introduction to Catholicism he explained how natural moral law can be applied to judge the morality of actions. Upholding the teachings of his faith, the Roman Catholic Church, he explained how moral law is applied to sexual activity between members of the same-sex. Professor Howell sent an email to clarify the application of moral law to homosexuality to all in his class so as not to offend anyone who did not hold this conviction. The email he sent was circulated outside his class list, and when a student who was not in the class accused Professor Howell of hate speech, he was immediately relieved of his teaching duties. Ann Mester, associate dean for the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, explained in the wake of the firing that the university was 'entitled' to dismiss Prof. Howell because the emails he sent 'violate university standards of inclusivity.' In dismissing Prof. Howell, the University of Illinois expressed a solidifying public opinion that a critical view of homosexual behavior is indefensible. Prof. Howell, after hiring a Lawyer, was reinstated. (*Prof. Howell's plight was published in the October 2010 issue of First Things, a publication of the Institution on Religion and Public Life, 35 East 21 Street, Sixth Floor, New York, NY 10010.*)

Second, in 2009, the Reverend Thomas Yap, Christian Chaplain at the University of Colchester in the United Kingdom was accused of harassment for offering within the confines of the Chaplaincy Library books and multi-media materials on the issue of same-sex attractions from a Christian worldview. There were no specific publicity or fanfare about the provision of the books except within the Chaplaincy membership nor were they displayed outside the Chaplaincy area. Within a week, the Equality and Diversity Unit of the University contacted him in person and demanded that all such materials be removed because they were deemed as harassment following one complaint. He was accused of putting out "offensive display; offensive in the eyes of the complainant". In addition, he was threatened that any speech or teaching that he gave within the University about unwanted same-sex attractions will be deemed as harassment resulting in staff disciplinary action if he contravened harassment legislation. The Rev. Yap had to hire a Barrister to protect his right to free speech. The case is still on file, and could at any time be reactivated. (*The Rev. Yap's plight was presented last year (2009) as an Intervention at the OSCE/ODIHR meeting in Warsaw and can be accessed on the OSCE website by typing Redeemed Lives UK in the search function.*)

Finally, the protection of Christian academicians and clerics to teach the sexual morality of their faith traditions is key to safe guarding the freedoms of Christian men and women with unwanted sexual desires to seek the self-emancipation their Christian conscience desires. Such people include Christians with sexual addictions for whom freedom means living free of internet pornography, Christians with compulsive sexual behaviours for whom freedom is fidelity in marriage, and Christians, like myself, with unwanted same sex attractions for whom freedom is the self emancipation that comes through effective pastoral care or psychological treatment for homosexuality. Such freedom came to me twenty-six years ago when I left homosexual practices behind me, sought pastoral care and psychological treatment and then went on to marry and have beautiful wife and five children.