

Working session 6: **The need to refuse Sharia**

Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen. I am Henrik Clausen, speaking on behalf of Wiener Akademikerbund in Austria. We work for peace, non-aggression and the inalienable rights of everyone.

We work here to promote tolerance and mutual understanding, and allow for diversity to flourish. Let me focus on one problem, namely the introduction of non-democratic law into our societies, which has serious consequences for women and minorities.

First, let me point out that I am addressing law only, not groups or individuals based on their beliefs. The freedom to believe is inalienable and fundamental to a free society. The practice of law, however, is a different matter.

As the European Court of Human Rights decided in their February 2003 verdict, Sharia Law is incompatible with fundamental principles of democracy and human rights.

Sharia Law mandates discrimination based on religion and belief. It has an Apartheid-style system for minorities, commands capital punishment in many cases, including for apostasy, Anti-Semitism and other tenets incompatible with human rights.

Thus, rejecting Sharia Law is essential to countering intolerance and discrimination.

It is natural for everyone defending human rights to object to any introduction of Sharia into our societies. Organisations that promote Sharia work against democracy and fundamental freedoms, and must be under surveillance by the state, or closed.

This includes the so-called “Sharia Councils” operating in Britain and other OSCE member states. Deceptively named ‘councils’, these are in fact Sharia courts, because they are perceived in Islamic communities to uphold and enforce Islamic law.

Wiener Akademikerbund recommends:

- That OSCE and the member states explicitly declare the introduction of Sharia Law undesired.
- That organisations promoting Sharia be categorized as political, not religious.
- That enforcing law incompatible with democracy and human rights be criminalized.