

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

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13 September 2018

OSCE Human Dimension Meeting – Warsaw, Poland, September 13, 2018.

WORKING SESSION 7

“Fundamental freedoms I, including freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief”

Statement of Francesco Di Lillo, Director

European Union Office of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints^{1 2}

Madame Moderator,

The right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion is far-reaching and profound.³ It cannot be inherited, because it is at the very core of our humanity. One does not apply for it, nor it is granted by any authority, as it belongs to everyone by birth. However, it can and must be protected.

Freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) shapes the way we live. It is not a standalone right or set of principles. The link between FoRB and other human rights and fundamental freedoms has been broadly acknowledged. FoRB cannot exist without freedom of expression,

¹ The European Union Office of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Brussels works with and fosters dialogue among EU stakeholders, including opinion leaders, academics, religious and political leaders engaged in freedom of religion or belief, humanitarian assistance, volunteerism and youth. It is also a member of the European Platform on Religious Intolerance and Discrimination (EPRID), a network of civil society organisations, including religious and non-religious associations, that aims to contribute to the collective promotion and protection of the right to freedom of religion or belief in the world as defined by Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

² The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is a Christian faith with a worldwide membership of over 16 million, the majority of which reside outside the United States. Its publications are published in 188 languages. The Church provides relief and development projects for humanitarian purposes in 189 countries.

³ CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.4

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of association and assembly, as well as other rights which, together, are the requirements for healthy, free and democratic societies. Religious freedom is as much a duty as it is a right, as much an obligation to give as a privilege to receive. This mutual obligation is the great test of a peaceful society.⁴

On behalf of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I would like to share the following recommendations:

- that the OSCE participating States promote the creation of national human rights institutes, or reinforce existing ones, providing adequate resources and training on religious literacy and FoRB for government officials and civil servants; To this effect, the importance of partnerships and collaborations with civil society organizations and churches cannot be overstated;
- that the OSCE participating States encourage interfaith and interreligious dialogue among churches and faith-based groups; Similarly, set up regular government-sponsored platforms where religious leaders and civil society can share their privileged view of society and their unique contributions;
- that the OSCE participating States consider hosting regional conferences on the topic of FoRB following the example of the Ministerial to Advance International Religious Freedom recently hosted by the United States;
- that leaders of the OSCE participating States, churches, philosophical and non-religious organizations set high standards in promoting a responsible and respectful public discourse, based on mutual respect and willingness to learn from one another.

Thank you.

⁴ "What religious freedom requires," <https://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/what-religious-freedom-requires>