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OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

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Working Session 10

Freedom of Thought, Conscience, Religion or Belief

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Apostasy and its Consequences

With the number of immigrants professing the Muslim faith rising sharply in the OSCE region, there is growing concern about the manifestations of intolerance for changing one's religion from Islam to another religion or none at all.

Islamic Law is very clear about the consequences of leaving the Islamic faith:

When a person has reached puberty and is sane voluntarily apostatizes from Islam, he deserves to be killed.¹

However, CSCE Vienna 1989 as well as Copenhagen 1990 reiterated

- the need to “ foster a climate of mutual tolerance and respect between believers of different communities as well as between believers and non-believers.” (Vienna 1989 (16.2))
- that participating States recognize that the exercise of the above-mentioned rights relating to the freedom of religion or belief may be subjected only to such limitations as are provided by law and consistent with their obligations under international law and with their international commitments. (Vienna 1989 (17))
- that participating States reaffirm that everyone will have the right to freedom of thought,

¹ See *'Umdat al-salik wa 'uddat al-nasik*, or *The reliance of the traveller and tools of the worshipper*, commonly referred to as *Reliance of the Traveller* when cited in English, by Ahmad ibn Naqib al-Misri. The Revised Edition (published 1991, revised 1994) is “The Classic Manual of Islamic Sacred Law 'Umdat al-Salik (d. 769/1368) in Arabic with Facing English Text, Commentary, and Appendices”, edited and translated by Nuh Ha Mim Keller, amana publications in Beltsville, Maryland, USA. Page 595.

conscience and religion. This right includes freedom to change one's religion or belief [...] (Copenhagen 1990 (9.4)).

The current situation of ex-Muslims in Europe is dire. Many have been forced into hiding, fearing for their lives after the issuance of death fatwas for their conversion or apostasy; others have lost family and friends as a result of their leaving the Islamic faith. One case in point is a Bangladeshi man and his wife who is currently imprisoned in the United Kingdom after claiming asylum and being detained after officially renouncing Islam. Their asylum application was denied and they are now awaiting deportation to Bangladesh, where they will be killed according to Islamic Law for apostatizing.²

ODIHR recognizes the “problems [that] encompass infringements of the right to change, adopt and renounce a religion or belief, as well as limitations to the right to manifest one's religion or belief” throughout the OSCE region.

BPE calls on participating States to protect apostates, supporting their right to change their belief without the threat of death.

BPE reminds participating States of their commitments with respect to changing of one's religion without repercussions.

2 <http://www.faithfreedom.org/articles/persecution-by-islam/apostates-of-islam-ignored-and-persecuted-even-in-the-west/>