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Europski parlament Parlamento europeo Eiropas Parlaments Europos Parlamentas Europai Parliament
Parlament Ewropew Europees Parlement Parliament Europejski Parlamento Europeu Parlamentul European
Európsky parlament Evropský parlament Euroopan parlamentti Europaparlamentet

Mr Mogens Lyketoft
Speaker of Parliament
Christiansborg
Folketinget, Christiansborg
1240 København
Denmark

MODTAGES
LEDELSESSEKRETARIATET

Dato 1/7-15 Kl.

Brussels, 08/06/15

Dear Mr President,

Dear Mr Lyketoft,

The past months have shown a massive rise of persecutions on religious grounds in many parts of the world. Despite the fact that freedom of religion is a human right, around 75% of the world population live in countries where the freedom of religion is in danger. This is a situation we cannot accept. A large number of Members of the European Parliament have set up a common declaration as a sign against persecution and oppression on the grounds of religion or belief. Deputies from all 28 Member States of the European Union signed this declaration. Therefore, there are supporters of this initiative in your country, too.

Attached to this letter you will find our declaration together with the request to spread this call for signatures in your parliament amongst your deputies. We are convinced that the right on freedom of belief must be addressed in all international relations - in treaties, negotiations, and both formal and informal meetings. We hope for support from members of your parliament.

Stand up against the persecution of humans for reasons of belief or non-belief and join our declaration.

Your support for this declaration can be expressed by a simple message to one of our offices. Furthermore, we would be very delighted if you could transmit our request to other elected bodies on other political levels within your country.

Yours sincerely,

Rainer Wieland MEP
Vice President of the
European Parliament
ASP 14 E 102
Rue Wiertz 60
B-1047 Brussels
Tel +32-2-28-47545
Fax +32-2-28-49545
rainer.wieland@ep.europa.eu

Arne Lietz MEP
Committees of Foreign Affairs,
Development, and Human Rights
ASP 12G146
Rue Wiertz 60
B-1047 Brussels
Tel +32-2-28-47296
Fax +32-2-28-49296
arne.lietz@ep.europa.eu

Members of the European Parliament in defence of freedom of religion and belief as a human right

An appeal for concerted action to stop persecution of religious minorities around the world

Universal human rights include the right to freedom of religion and belief. It was included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 and is further enshrined in various national constitutions and international agreements. Freedom of thought, conscience and religion are all distinct rights protected by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union adopted in the year 2000. Anyone is thereby free publicly to profess their religion or world view, as well as to change them or indeed profess no religion at all.

Recent years have seen a rise in the number of people persecuted for their religious beliefs. This can be seen most starkly in the violent conflicts in Syria and Iraq, where Yazidis, Christians, Shias and moderate Sunnis are being killed and forced to flee at the hands of terrorists belonging to the so-called "Islamic State". There are also the attacks by the Salafist Boko Haram militia in Nigeria, discrimination against Tibetan Buddhists and Muslim Uighurs in China, and the repeated waves of persecution of Coptic Orthodox Christians in Egypt. No less than three-quarters of the world's population live in countries where freedom to practise religion is under threat. Most vulnerable are religious minorities facing state repression or social hostilities.

Over the last few years the European Union has stepped up its efforts to promote freedom of religion and belief worldwide. In June 2013 EU foreign ministers adopted guidelines on freedom of religion and belief with particular emphasis on protection from violence, religious hatred and discrimination. The European Parliament has for several years been calling for better protection for freedom of religion and freedom of conscience.

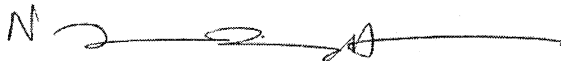
On the basis of this and other resolutions we, Members of the European Parliament adhering to various faiths and philosophies of life, shall build on the work already done by continuing to insist on ever better protection for freedom of religion and belief, including the right to change religion or profess no religion at all, as a human right. The right to freedom of religion and belief applies to all religions equally. All forms of religious persecution must be stamped out. Freedom to practise religion must not be a marginal right to be ditched in extremis. Every country is responsible for ensuring that the right to freedom of religion and belief is guaranteed for all the people on its territory.



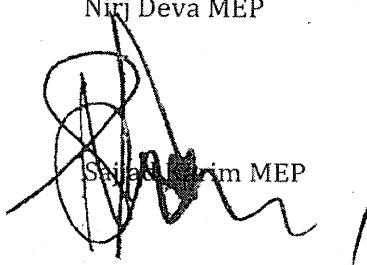
Arne Lietz MEP



Reinhard Bütikofer MEP



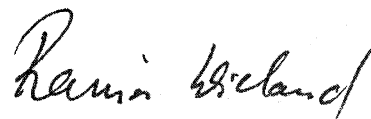
Nirj Deva MEP



Swire MEP



Pavel Svoboda MEP



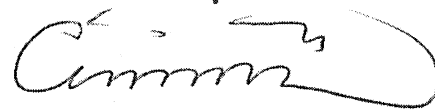
Rainer Wieland MEP
Vice-President



Udo Bullmann MEP



Michael Gahler MEP



Cecilia Wikström MEP