

IUMS Statement on the Swiss Minarets Ban



Praise be to Allah, and peace and blessings be upon Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) and upon his family, Companions and all those who follow his guidance.

The International Union for Muslim Scholars (IUMS) has received with shock and surprise the results of the Swiss referendum on the proposed amendment to Article 72 of the Swiss Constitution, to include a new clause banning the building of minarets. As the results of the referendum show that 57.4% of voters approved of the amendment, it reveals a clear contradiction between the Swiss peoples' flaunting and boasting of democracy and religious freedom, and the racist and "Islamophobic" content of this referendum, which contradicts with all human rights constitutions and conventions, religious freedoms, and cultural diversity. Today, they ban minarets, and tomorrow they may ban the mosques themselves! What could prevent it as long as the racist right wing movement that is intolerant towards foreigners is leading this campaign! It is well known for all that minarets only constitute a signpost for the places of worship and that they have no other significance, whether political or otherwise. Rather, they represent a beautiful architectural symbol that is a witness to the country's tolerance and cultural and religious diversity.

Indeed, those who drew up such a resolution among narrow-minded right wing extremists have taken advantage of the nurtured fear from Muslims by warning of the alleged expansion of their religious demands in the Swiss state, and went as far as claiming that Muslims work for 'Minarets today, and the application of Shari'ah tomorrow!' Well, this is sheer delusion and a flight of fancy. If most Muslim countries themselves do not apply Shari'ah, how can a sound minded person believe that people in Europe, who are mostly non-Muslims, would apply Shari'ah?

And though the current parliament and government did not approve of holding the referendum in the first place, and the church bishops opposed it, still the result of the referendum is disappointing for the Muslim minority living among the Swiss society who represent a bright example in their moral and humanitarian dealings through their

integration, co-existence and openness towards all members of the Swiss society. Besides, such a result has thwarted all the expectations of Muslim minorities living in the West in general, and stirred their apprehension of such moves that could possibly be adopted by similar right-wing parties in other countries. Those right-wing parties, in turn, could follow similar steps as a means of applying more restrictions against Muslims in any European country, and exploit the Islamophobic environment that has intensified due to incessant instigation by the media machine that distorts the image of Islam and Muslims and portrays them in other than their true nature.

Likewise, this result has frustrated the expectations of all Muslims around the world, and we think it will lead to substantial revisions and raise questions about the feasibility of dialogue and rapprochement between Muslims and non-Muslims in the Islamic world in general, and especially in the West, since the status of some Muslim religious symbols and places of worship in this cultural environment have become susceptible to debates, laws and referendums every now and then! So, what is then the point of holding dialogue, if it enhances the stance of extremist elements among Muslims who say that the West with whom you call us to dialogue and cooperate hates you and chases you away!

Building on this painful reality and also on our responsibility towards these Muslim minorities, the IUMS maintains the following:

1- The result of this referendum, even though it represents the view of the majority of Swiss voters, reflects a new pattern of hostility towards Islam and Muslims in this country, in particular, and in Europe, in general. In fact, the extremist right wing party in The Netherlands declared within less than 24 hours of the referendum their approval and endorsement of the results, and announced their determination to hold a similar referendum for banning minarets in The Netherlands. This, then, is an evil practice that has intensified hatred and racial prejudice against Muslims.

2- In spite of the opposition of the Swiss government to this referendum, they are required to assume full responsibility for the consequences that could entail it, mainly the aggravation of the phenomenon of hatred towards Islam and Muslims in Switzerland. Indeed, they are required to take all necessary measures to prevent the spread of this phenomenon, which is manifested through the media campaign that preceded this referendum.

3- Undoubtedly, the result of this referendum will help extremists on both sides raise their voices in support of enmity, violence and terrorism, and this would have negative impact on the moderates on both sides who call for peaceful coexistence, mutual respect and positive integration of Muslim minorities into their European environment.

4- The IUMS calls on the Muslim minority in Switzerland to remain calm, to avoid agitation and to follow peaceful civilized and legal means in response to this matter. One of the top priorities is cooperation with local and international organizations that declared their opposition to this referendum and its consequences on the grounds of its contradiction with basic human rights, including the right to freely establish places of worship in the way people deem suitable and to practice religious rituals. It is therefore important that the Muslim minority works with these organizations for raising a complaint before Swiss and European courts and before the European Court of Human Rights to challenge the legality of this referendum.

5- The IUMS calls upon Muslims all over the world to express their rejection of this racist Islamophobic referendum in peaceful ways, such as sending protest messages to Swiss embassies in all countries in order to show their opposition to this provocative act, which is a sign of ignorance of the reality of Islam as a universal religion that teaches love, mercy, and mutual acquaintance among nations and peoples. This position could also be expressed through interviews and demonstrations in front of Swiss embassies in different countries.

6- The IUMS requests that the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), on the occasion of this referendum, launches an international campaign in countries that have Muslim minorities, especially in the West, to explain the dangerous impact of this referendum on the future of coexistence between Muslims and non-Muslims in other societies, and to expose the double standards and contradictions in the western discourse that grants western citizens the freedom of expression to curse the Prophet of Islam and mock religious sanctuaries, while in the meantime deny freedom of expression in the form of a structural symbol that neither harms nor involves transgression against anyone!

7- We would like to seize the opportunity and address this message to all wise and judicious people in the West, rather in the whole world, among politicians, intellectuals, priests and monks, telling them that moving towards racial discrimination and inflicting harm on Muslims and restricting their freedom through enacting laws that are unjust to them would never be of interest to any of us, Muslims and non-Muslims. Rather, it would blow on the embers of enmity and feud in the world. The interest of all parties is in mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and propagation of the culture of love and tolerance.

The IUMS also affirms that the Muslim minority in Switzerland should deal with the Swiss society from the perspective that they are part and parcel of it, to maintain their loyalty and sincerity to the homeland where they live, to work hard and honestly for the progress of that homeland, and to pay no regard to those who instigate and feed the flame of hatred. Rather, they should invite them with wisdom and argue with them in a way that is better, and they should never despair of persuading them of their point of view. And if anyone does wrong to them, they should pardon them as Almighty Allah (Exalted be He) says, (Repel (Evil) with what is better: Then will he between whom and thee was hatred become as it were thy friend and intimate!) (Fussilat 41:34).

All praise is due to Allah.

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