

Joint declaration on the freedom of religion and the right to conversion (2007)

Introduction

Since 1993 important processes of interfaith dialogue have taken place between the Islamic Council of Norway and the Church of Norway Council on Ecumenical and International Relations. In this dialogue work, freedom of religion is a core issue.

This ongoing dialogue is based on the fundamental values of mutual respect and trust. Its purpose is to prevent conflicts and to create space for understanding between Muslims and Christians as they relate to each other and to Norwegian society in general. A particular task has been to challenge prejudices and stereotypes in their conceptions of each other and to combat islamophobia and discrimination of the Muslim minority in Norway.

In Norway there are few conversions from Christianity to Islam or vice versa. Nevertheless the two bodies underline that there should be no doubt that freedom of religion, with the right to conversion, is a fully acknowledged principle, reflected in attitudes and accepted in practice, both by the Islamic Council of Norway and the Church of Norway Council on Ecumenical and International Relations.

Joint Declaration

The Islamic Council of Norway and the Church of Norway Council on Ecumenical and International Relations jointly declare that everyone is free to adopt the religious faith of their choice. We denounce, and are committed to counteracting all violence, discrimination and harassment inflicted in reaction to a person's conversion, or desire to convert, from one religion to another, be it in Norway or abroad.

We interpret our religious traditions such that everyone has the right to freely choose their religious belief and faith community, and to practice their religion publicly as well as privately.

Missionary activity and information to others about our faith must be done according to ethically accepted standards, that is, without the use of any form of force or manipulation. If freedom of religion is to be upheld, all conversion must happen freely.

As religious communities we experience joy within our respective contexts whenever a person wishes to share our faith and join our religious community. Therefore we also respect a person's right to convert to a different religion than our own.

Oslo, 22nd of August 2007

Shoaib Sultan, General Secretary Islamic Council of Norway

Olav Fykse Tveit, General Secretary Church of Norway Council on Ecumenical and International Relations