

Say NO to violence! (2009)

Joint Statement on Violence in the Family and in Close Relationships,
by the Islamic Council of Norway and the Church of Norway Council on Ecumenical and
International Relations

Introduction

Since 1993 a Contact Group between Islamic Council of Norway and Council on Ecumenical and International Relations of Church of Norway has met to discuss various issues concerning religion and society. The group works for greater understanding between Christians and Muslims and seeks to further the contribution of these religions to the community at large.

For a long time the Contact Group has discussed issues concerning gender and equality. The dialogue has shown that both Christians and Muslims regard human integrity and freedom from violence as fundamental starting points for approaching these issues.

Nevertheless, violence in families and in close relationships is a serious social problem in Norwegian society. Suffice to say that one out of four women is exposed to violence in the family and in close relationships. Therefore, in our capacity as religious communities, we want to contribute positively to the struggle against the violence in family and in close relationships, both by our attitudes and our actions.

Statement:

Violence in families and in close relationships is a major social problem in Norway, which occurs at all levels of society and within all religious and cultural communities. It affects both sexes, especially women. Examples of this violence can be intimidation, deprivation of liberty, infringement upon integrity, physical assault, sexual harassment and even rape and murder. Doubtlessly, violence of this kind represents brutal abuses of basic human rights and has destructive consequences for individuals and society.

Violence in families and in close relationships also affects children. Children are either direct victims of physical and non-physical violence or have to suffer its horrors indirectly by being witnesses to violence towards others.

Violence in families and in close relationships is a criminal act which goes against our religious teachings and the human rights. This applies both in Norway and globally.

As Christians and Muslims, we believe that man and woman are created equal, and that none of them has a right to exercise violence against the other. In unambiguous terms we especially denounce violence against women since women are most exposed to domestic violence. We believe that both of our religions can provide sources of inspiration and counsel that can lead to a better life filled with love and mutual respect. We believe that the home should be a safe and pleasant place for children to grow up – without violence. Last but not the least; we strongly condemn any misuse of the teachings of our religions in order to legitimize violence in the family or in close relationships.

Since our human and religious values encourage us to adopt positive principles and ethical responsibility within society we, as Christians and Muslims in Norway, will prevent and resist all shapes and shades of violence in families and in close relationships.

We:

1. encourage our respective congregations/communities to counteract violence in the family and in close relationships and clearly express a position of no tolerance in this area,
2. encourage politicians to put the problem on their agenda and to work for effective political action and no tolerance of violence in the family and in close relationships,
3. appeal to the Norwegian society in general to address this as a common problem and to take part in the struggle against violence in the family and in close relationships.

Oslo, 9th of November 2009

Shoaib M. Sultan, General Secretary, Islamic Council of Norway

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