



Wednesday, 28th October 2009

No laws creating exceptions! No to the ban on minarets!

The umbrella organisations of Swiss Jews reaffirm their rejection of the minaret referendum

The SIG, the Swiss Federation of Jewish Communities and the PLJS, the Platform of Liberal Jews in Switzerland reaffirm their rejection of the referendum against the construction of minarets. They are speaking out firmly in favour of equal treatment and justice and against laws of any type which are intended to apply specifically to certain religious communities.

The referendum infringes religious freedom, a concept enshrined in the constitution. This freedom also covers the right of faith communities to build their places of worship subject to current building legislation.

The referendum also poses a threat to peaceful relations between the religions and inhibits the integration endeavours of Muslims in Switzerland.

As one of the oldest minorities in Switzerland, the Jewish community is now established and integrated in Swiss society. But precisely because the Jewish community has first hand experience of discrimination, it is committed to active opposition to discrimination and to action in favour of religious freedom and peaceful relations between the religions. This commitment is part and parcel of the Jewish tradition.

However, neither the SIG nor the PLJS close their eyes to the risk of extreme religious positions. They take seriously the fears of the population that extremist ideas could be disseminated in Switzerland. But banning minarets is no solution – it only creates in Muslims in Switzerland a sense of alienation and discrimination.

Peaceful co-existence is founded on the messages expressed in churches, mosques and synagogues, not on what they look like from the outside. The only real response to all forms of extremism is reinforcement of the principles underpinning the rule of law.

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