



EU Transparency Register

ID number: 015146319708-20

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OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights  
Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2016

Working session 12: Fundamental freedoms I (continued),  
including freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief

## Freedom of Thought, Conscience, Religion or Belief

### STATEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN FEDERATION FOR FREEDOM OF BELIEF (FOB) about Freedom of Belief in Italy : Problems & Perspectives

Tuesday, 27 September 2016

I am Alessandro Amicarelli a London based lawyer specializing in human rights and freedom of belief and I am the present spokesman of the European Federation for Freedom of Belief (FOB) that I represent today as I did last year.

FOB is a secular and independent-by-any-faith association incorporated in Italy and registered as a lobbying group in Bruxelles and Strasbourg since December 2014.

We advocate for the human rights and specifically for the freedom of belief of all people in the European continent, whether they belong to traditional or new religious groups, philosophical or spiritual schools of thought and even non believers, atheists and unconcerned in line with the European legislations.

Today I will briefly address three main points :

1. SAS Squadra Anti Sette or Anti Cult Squad;
2. So called Anti Mosque or Anti Minority Religions Law in Lombardy and other regions;
3. State funded and subsided NGOs;

Brief Analysis of the three topics :

#### **1. SAS Squadra Anti Sette or Anti Cult Squad**

Last year we asked the Italian Government to provide clear facts and figures about this unit of the Italian Police.

The Government replied straightaway that SAS does exist to protect people from Satanic cults.



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Few days later all information about SAS has been removed from the Ministry of Interiors website, then we now think SAS is working in a even more informal and less official way.

Many times the SAS has only acted against some minority groups and no report is available at all.

We renew our request to the Government to provide clear information about the activities carried out by SAS and about the cost-benefit ratio.

## **2. So called Anti Mosque or Anti Minority Religions Law in Lombardy and other regions**

Last year we reported about the anti mosque bill passed in Lombardy and adopted in other regions at a later time.

Such legislation is aimed at preventing the Muslim communities to have any worship places or to build new ones. The legislation does affect in fact all minority groups not only the Muslim community.

FOB has launched an online petition that has been very successful and it has been brought to the Parliament. Few days later the Government has challenged such legislation filing an appeal with the Constitutional Court and we are waiting to know the outcomes.

In the meantime the same legislation has either been proposed or adopted by other regional authorities. FOB will keep advocating for the deletion of all of these anti-minority legislations.

## **3. State funded and subsided anti cult NGOs**

There are a number of so called anti cult NGOs that receive funds and subsidies by governments. The most notorious one is the French FECRIS which, as far as we know, receives 90% of its annual funds by the French government that is particularly known for the anti religious legislations adopted over the last decades.

Such groups are de facto government bodies, not NGOs at all, and for this should be revoked such status at level of International organizations where they present themselves as NGOs and advocate and act against minority groups and against proper NGOs.

In the months to come FOB will make the voice of minority groups louder also in this regard.

FOB in fact does exist to make the content of the FORB (Freedom of Religion and Belief) Guidelines adopted by the EU Council alive and implemented and enforced across Europe.



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Following the FORB Guidelines is the only route to positively achieve peace among the European populations.

Three of the main goals and working strategies set out in the FORB Guidelines are :

Firstly to eradicate the harsh violence with which groups that self identify themselves as religious as well as States and State bodies and NGOs, carry out activities against religious or spiritual groups whether they are minority groups or not and individuals belonging to such groups.

Secondly Freedom of Religion and Belief has to be guaranteed to all people whether religious or non religious, even atheists and unconcerned. Also the European Court of Human Rights has emphasized this point repeatedly.

FOB's action is in this direction.

Third principle is that the governments, state the FORB Guidelines, do cooperate with the civil society.

As a lobbying group FOB is here for this reason.

We cooperate with State bodies and MPs at national and European level in order for these FORB Guidelines be fully implemented all over Europe guaranteeing equal rights to all people.

Today once again we invite the Italian and all other governments to respect the human rights of all minority groups, whether religious or not, and the individuals belonging to such groups in compliance with their International obligations as member of International Organizations.

Thank you!

**Alessandro Amicarelli, spokesman**

on behalf of FOB,

*European Federation for Freedom of Belief*