



**Intervention at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)
Organization for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)
Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM) 2018**

**Working Session 10: Fundamental Freedoms, Including Freedom of Expression
Clare M. Lopez, Vice President for Research and Analysis
Center for Security Policy, Washington, D.C.
Monday 17 September 2018**

Free Speech Under Fire, Part 1

Free Speech is the front line of defense of a free people. The freedom to speak one's beliefs, convictions, and opinions is the foundation of a free society. Without that ability, unconstrained by censorship, fear of reprisal, government, laws, or even societal conventions, a people must succumb to self-censorship, lies, and tyranny – and no longer be a free people.

The Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe Final Act from Helsinki in 1975 states very clearly:

The participating States will respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief...in conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights...

Then, in Paris in 1990, the Charter of Paris for a New Europe once again affirms the right of every individual to "freedom of expression." Following in 1999, the OSCE Istanbul Document likewise committed to "fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law" and reaffirmed

...the importance of...the free flow of information as well as the public's access to information...

And finally, at the OSCE Summit meeting of December 2010 in Astana, Kazakhstan, the Commemorative Declaration, representing all 56 participating states of the OSCE, reaffirmed its commitment to all of these earlier OSCE documents, including specifically

Respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law

Thus, it is most concerning when the OSCE itself through ODIHR and the Human Dimension Meeting 2018 seeks to impose censorship and speech regulation through a Speech Code on participating members of Civic Society regarding speech that someone, somewhere, somehow, sometime might find "offensive." Indeed, what is free speech for, if not the right to offend? After all, free speech that is accepted & lauded by all needs no defense; but it is precisely that speech which is no incitement to violence, but merely the belief or opinion or even statement of fact by

the speaker, that needs and most deserves the protections of freedom speech. A priori – or prior restraint – curbs on freedom of speech have no place at the OSCE, ODIHR or this HDIM meeting.

Unfortunately, today we see speech codes, speech laws, and speech restraint clamping a hold on Western Civilization by individual nation states, globalized legal systems like shariah, and even international organizations like this one or the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which made formal its members' withdrawal from the UN Universal Declaration on Human Rights with the Cairo Declaration of 1990. This is tyranny and it is liberty-crushing.

We express our confidence in the OSCE, ODIHR and this HDIM 2018 meeting that all here today and following these proceedings online, will reject any measures that suppress the universal human right to freedom of belief, expression, and speech.

The Center for Security Policy urges the OSCE, ODIHR, and this HDIM 2018 meeting to reaffirm their own long-asserted commitment to freedom of speech, unconstrained by capricious submission to suppression of free, honest, open expression of our sincerely held beliefs, opinions, and positions on the issues of such importance before us today.

Thank you.

##