

Lingua Franca

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## Statement on Religious Freedom from WSCF Europe Lingua Franca

As a diverse community of European Christian youth, we gather with a variety of visions but share the following common convictions:

Supporting the definition of religious freedom, as defined in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we believe that it is our responsibility to work for the religious freedom and equality of all humans to choose, practice, and share their faith. We stand in solidarity with those who are struggling for religious freedom and with all vulnerable groups.

Recognising that religious freedom is a human right, and as such is inalienable, we must respect the rights of those we do not agree with. We affirm the rights of minority religious groups – though we may be in the majority today, tomorrow we may be in the minority somewhere else or even at home. Our belief and hope is that the more we ensure the rights of others, the more our own rights will be ensured.

Faith should not be used as a political tool of manipulation. Although people of faith have the responsibility to be engaged in politics and society, we condemn political manipulation of churches by governments and political parties.

Religious freedom must be respected at all levels of society, in governments, courts, civil society, churches and schools. Hate speech fuels discrimination and violence, and it permeates politics, the church and the media and should be identified and condemned. We have a responsibility to educate and raise awareness about religious freedom – intolerance is often caused by lack of education and knowledge on these issues.

We have the responsibility to be aware of the situation of religious freedom in our homes, communities, nations, and world and we must not be silent when we become aware of violations.

We must continually work for religious freedom. Throughout our societies, in Europe and beyond, the freedom of many groups and individuals are violated. We want to raise specific attention to the situation in Belarus, where the instrument of law is used as a tool of oppression against churches, minority religious groups, and generally against all who are struggling for their human rights.

These rights and responsibilities apply to all and tolerance should be promoted in levels of life. Diversity is our wealth. We are called to action, in government and non-governmental organisations, in our churches, universities, and societies. We challenge our churches, communities, and nations to join us in our commitment to work for religious freedom.

May the God of freedom and truth, Christ who was persecuted, and the liberating Holy Spirit inspire the growth of religious freedom and tolerance in our world.

WSCF Europe  
Lingua Franca Seminar  
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