

Declaration on the Celebration of Dissent 2022

Tuesday 30 August 2022, by [Participants to Celebrating Dissent 2022](#) (Date first published: 21 August 2022).

Presentation

Celebrating Dissent 2022 is a two-day conference held in Cologne, Germany on August 20-21, 2022. It is the largest and most prominent gathering of ex-Muslims, freethinkers, and intellectuals championing freedom of thought, since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Organized by “Freethought Lebanon” and the “Council of Ex-Muslims of Britain”, this conference announced the participation of nearly 50 speakers and artists from 30 countries worldwide, to celebrate freethought and dissent through talks, poetry, film, music, and comedy.

Countless atheists, non-believers and ex-Muslims continue to face persecution around the world. These include threats of social exclusion, economic discrimination, physical and emotional abuse, legal oppression, gender-based violence, and even death.

Despite this, every criticism of Islam is considered ‘Islamophobia’ by some on the regressive Left, whilst every refugee or Muslim is portrayed as a threat by the far-Right.

Supporting ex-Muslims, however, is a human rights issue. A defense of freedom of conscience and expression, includes the right to be free from and criticize Islam and the religious-Right. Also, xenophobia and anti-Muslim bigotry dehumanizes and endangers all those deemed ‘other,’ including ex-Muslims.

More than ever, it is paramount to highlight and strengthen individuals and organizations that protect the rights of Islam’s non-believers, challenge apostasy and blasphemy laws and confront xenophobia. Like the religious-Right, secularists must network and coordinate efforts globally to bring about change.

<https://cd2022.freethoughtlebanon.net/>

The declaration

As atheists, ex-Muslims and freethinkers we stand for a world in which all human beings enjoy freedom of expression and conscience, and freedom from fear and want *.

We claim our freedom from religion, from superstition.

We claim our freedom to love and live as we choose, to creativity and to enjoy the benefits of scientific and human progress.

We affirm our right to act with reason and conscience.

Apostasy and blasphemy are fundamental rights protected by freedom of religion or belief and freedom of expression and are grounded in the universality of rights which apply to all human beings everywhere.

Our freedoms depend on our rights to atheism, apostasy and blasphemy; on the right to be free from religion and to criticize Islam and any other religion.

We reject apostasy, blasphemy and religious laws as grave violations of rights and call for their immediate abolition.

We reject the religious-Right of all stripes. The rule of theocrats is the end of and antithesis to democratic politics, free thought and expression and basic rights, particularly of women and ethnic, sexual and religious minorities.

We reject and condemn xenophobia, bigotry and racism against non-believers and believers.

We reject cancel culture, self-righteous intolerance and a patronizing defence of 'hurt sensibilities' that aim to silence blasphemers and suppress rational discourse.

We reject the criminalization of the right to asylum and claim the right to protection for those of us fleeing persecution. Asylum is a human right recognized in international and national laws. Governments are duty bound to protect those fleeing persecution.

We affirm that freedom of expression (as long as it is not inciting violence) is a bedrock of human rights and progress. It is a necessity, particularly for those challenging the powerful, sacred and taboo.

We affirm that the struggle taking place in the world today is not a clash of civilizations but a clash between theocrats on the one hand and secularists on the other.

We want to live in a world where believers and non-believers are respected as human beings but where beliefs can be challenged and even mocked without fear. A world where doubt and dissent are seen as integral to the human quest for truth rather than expressions to be censored and silenced under the guise of hurt sentiments or 'Islamophobia'.

We want to live in a world where secularism or laïcité, the separation of religion from the state, law, education and public policy, is considered a fundamental principle and human right, integral to the fulfilment of our freedoms.

We claim for ourselves a world where no one is shunned, exiled, imprisoned, torture or killed for their conscience.

We claim, for ourselves a world where blasphemy, apostasy and dissent are celebrated.

** Echoing the words of the preamble to the UDHR [1] "Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people". The UDHR does not mention God or any divinity.*

Resolution adopted by the participants

August 21, 2022, Cologne, Germany

P.S.

• SIAWI. Monday 29 August 2022:
<http://siawi.org/spip.php?article29384>

Source: Celebrating Dissent 2022

Footnotes

[1] [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)