

## **Human Rights Without Frontiers: 30 years of fighting totalitarianism**

**EU Today (18.07.2018) - <https://bit.ly/2uCzliW> - On 20 June, Human Rights Without Frontiers (HRWF) held a reception in Brussels to celebrate its 30 years of existence. Dozens of partners, collaborators, former staff, and volunteers who had contributed to its growth over the last three decades were in attendance, writes Willy Fautré, founder and executive director of Human Rights Without Frontiers.**

In 1988, the year which marked the 40th anniversary of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a group of Brussels-based human rights activists launched HRWF, with a lot of faith and no funding. At that time, there were no mobile telephones, internet, or social media... It was another world. One of the initial main objectives of the organisation was to highlight political and religious persecution in European Communist countries and to help human rights defenders in the Soviet Bloc.

In June 1988, they published the first issue of a magazine in French named "Droits de l'Homme sans Frontières". At that time, Western Europe was under constant threat of Soviet nuclear attack. Unsurprisingly, the first magazine issue covered a summit between Reagan and Gorbachev in Moscow. On that occasion, Reagan had invited 100 Soviet dissidents to the US embassy in the Soviet capital, an unthinkable move after 70 years of communism in the USSR. Also unthinkable at that time was the idea that 18 months later the Iron Curtain would unexpectedly fall and Communist totalitarianism would collapse.

In subsequent issues, the magazine dealt with the apartheid regime in South Africa, Pinochet's dictatorship in Chile, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the genocide in Rwanda, religious persecution in China, and many other human rights issues around the world.

Throughout its 30 years of existence, HRWF has adapted itself to a fast-changing world, to the expansion of the European Union, and to the development of new communication technologies. HRWF now distributes a well-known daily newsletters to more than 10,000 recipients, which serves as an early alert tool meant to sensitize members of the European Parliament, EU member states, think tanks, journalists, and embassies in Brussels, Geneva, New York and Washington to pressing human rights news. HRWF organizes conferences at the European Parliament and regularly advocates human rights in academic seminars, at the UN in Geneva, and at the OSCE.

In the 21st century, the world is now facing new threats, new forms of warfare, and new forms of totalitarianism. One of them is Islamic totalitarianism, an ideology that first wants to radically change the existing nature of Muslim-majority states into some form of a theocratic regime dominated by a radical and retrograde form of Islam. This ideology seeks to change the structures of pluralistic civil societies into societies to be ruled with an iron hand by one religious worldview imported from the Arabic peninsula.

Islamic totalitarianism wants daily life and the behaviours of each individual to be dominated by one religious worldview, as did the late Communist ideology with the political philosophy of Marx and Engels.

Islamic totalitarianism, mainly but not exclusively embodied by ISIS, is a political ideology which instrumentalises the Quran to create an alternative and challenging system of political governance. It is definitely not a religion. Its siren song divides and fragments Muslim

communities around the world, and the primary 'collateral victims' of its fight for power are Muslims themselves, who in many countries adhere to a historically peaceful Islam. Christians in Muslim-majority countries are a second category of 'collateral victims'. EU member states are also targeted, suffering from terrorist attacks and the radicalization of young Muslims.

The Islamic totalitarian virus spreads gender segregation and discrimination, the division of society into new social castes, hate speech, anti-Semitism, and many other 'social diseases'. It is infecting the software of the ummah and is trying to infect humankind. Antidotes need to be administered and vaccinations have to be discovered, a challenge to the political researchers and engineers of the defense and security of the EU and of human rights.

Combating Islamic totalitarianism with ideas, with words and in practice is not only legitimate but it is obligatory, it is a duty for the EU and human rights organizations for it is a fight for human dignity, equality, and human rights for all.

By Willy Fautré, founder and executive director of Human Rights Without Frontiers

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