

Intervention: Working Session 10 on the 5th Oct 2009, Toleration and non-discrimination II, Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

To: The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe

From: The Reverend Thomas Yap, Redeemed Lives UK

Topic: The misuse of harassment and discrimination legislation against Christians in the issue of changing unwanted same-sex attractions.

I work as a fully authorised University Christian Chaplain at a British University in the United Kingdom. In this year 2009, following requests from Christian users of the Chaplaincy, I provided books and multi-media materials on the issue of same-sex attractions as an extension of my Christian ministry. All books and materials were housed within the Chaplaincy library area and included titles such as "Coming out of Homosexuality" by Lori Rentzel, "Setting Love in Order" by Mario Bergner, "Out of Egypt: Beyond Lesbianism" by Jeannette Howard and "You don't have to be Gay" by Jeff Konrad. There were no specific publicity or fanfare about the provision of the books except within the Chaplaincy membership nor were they displayed outside the Chaplaincy area.

Within a week, the Equality and Diversity Unit of the University contacted me in person and demanded that all such materials be removed because they were deemed as harassment following one complaint. I was accused of putting out "offensive display; offensive in the eyes of the complainant". In addition, I was threatened that any speech or teaching that I gave within the University about unwanted same-sex attractions will be deemed as harassment and that I may be subjected to staff disciplinary action if I contravened harassment legislation.

Effectively, I was banned from expressing my age-old orthodox Christian belief about life transformation from unwanted same-sex attractions. Also, I was intimidated from offering pastoral care through using Christian books relating to changing of unwanted same-sex attractions. Lastly, my hands are tied from making professional referrals to reparative therapy from unwanted same-sex attractions for those who seek them. The case is still "On File" and I may be subject to further investigation by the Equality and Diversity Unit pending any further complaint.

In the light of this, I want to humbly make three recommendations:

1. The OSCE should draft policies for participating States to protect the availability, display and promulgation of Christian books and any media that upholds the traditional orthodox Christian belief on same-sex attractions including the possibility of changing unwanted same-sex attractions. This means such books and media must be exempt from harassment, discrimination or hate speech legislation.
2. The OSCE participating States must address the clarity of the meaning of Equality and Diversity as a working policy - which is about making accessible different viewpoints and not conformity to one viewpoint. Applied to my case, Equality does not mean that everyone has to conform to the viewpoint that acceptance of same-sex attractions is the only acceptable outcome.
3. The OSCE should make recommendations to all participating States that all professional Christian workers including clergy, counsellors, psychotherapists, psychologists and pastoral carers who uphold traditional orthodox Christian beliefs in their place of work be exempt from harassment and discrimination laws in relation to the issue of changing unwanted same-sex attractions. This includes referrals to reparative therapy as part of their work and ministry.