

**Intervention at the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe  
(OSCE)**

**Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM) 2017**

**Warsaw, Poland September 14th, 2017**

**WORKING SESSION 6: Fundamental Freedoms, Including Freedom of  
Thought, Conscience, Religion, or Belief**

**Clare M. Lopez, Vice President for Research & Analysis  
Center for Security Policy, WDC**

America's Founding Fathers understood that tyranny takes hold when men allow governments or religious systems to usurp the rights of the individual unto themselves

For this reason, they enshrined freedoms of belief, conscience & speech in 1st Amendment of our Constitution

These principles & these freedoms are Judeo-Christian-based, first articulated among the brilliant thinkers of the Enlightenment in Europe - although their roots trace back to Athens, Rome & Jerusalem

They derive from the revolutionary idea that the individual is the key pillar of society - not the clan, or tribe, or a religious belief system

The individual human being is entitled to these rights & freedoms because the laws of nature - which are knowable thru human reason - endow each & every person – men women equally - w/human dignity & the right to live free

Freedom of speech is among the most essential of our human liberties & one that gives voice & meaning to all the others – especially freedom of conscience & belief

Islam doesn't have such beliefs or freedoms - there's no such thing as 'freedom of speech' or belief articulated in Islamic Law (shariah)

Instead there is the "Law of Slander" - which defines 'slander' as anything that a Muslim would dislike - including the truth

Slander under shariah can carry the death penalty – indeed the Sira & hadiths tell us that some of the first assassinations ordered by Muhammad were precisely against poets for writing verses that he found insulting – apostasy from Islam likewise is a capital crime

I refer to the Council of Europe report from October 2016 on the 'Compatibility of Sharia law with the European Convention on Human Rights: can States Parties to the Convention be signatories of the 'Cairo Declaration'?

And I suggest the answer is 'No.' A government or system that defines itself as liberal, Western & democratic does not impose restrictions on free speech to shield itself from criticism – much less impose a death penalty for belief or lack of belief

We of Western Civilization dignify the individual by permitting all speech, no matter how we dislike it, if it is not explicitly inciting to immediate violence – and all beliefs or lack of belief

And so I recommend for the ODIHR 2017: Let us leave here today, renewed & inspired to reject liberty-crushing concepts like 'hate speech' & death penalties for religious beliefs or rejection of belief & instead committed to defend freedoms of belief, conscience & speech & all the principles of liberty we hold so dear