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**RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN SWEDEN**

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## RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN SWEDEN

### Introduction.

1. The European Centre for Law and Justice (ECLJ) is an international, non-governmental organisation dedicated to promoting and protecting human rights around the world. The ECLJ also holds Special Consultative Status before the United Nations Economic and Social Council<sup>1</sup>. The purpose of this report is to raise concerns for the 2014 Universal Periodic Review (UPR) regarding circumstances in the Kingdom of Sweden [hereinafter Sweden] that have significant potential to limit Sweden's ability to safeguard human rights. These circumstances primarily arise from Sweden's inability or unwillingness to protect its citizens in certain Swedish cities.

### **As a Party to Many Significant Human Rights Treaties, Sweden Should Continue to Advance Human Rights Protections for All its Citizens.**

2. Sweden is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)<sup>2</sup>, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)<sup>3</sup>, and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)<sup>4</sup>. As a party to these treaties, Sweden has agreed to prohibit by law any “advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination”<sup>5</sup>, to “promote universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and freedoms”<sup>6</sup>, and to “condemn racial discrimination and undertake to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating racial discrimination in all its forms and promoting understanding among all races”<sup>7</sup>. Unfortunately, in some instances, Sweden has been unable or unwilling to protect citizens in certain segments of its cities<sup>8</sup>. This is particularly concerning given a rise in racial and religious intolerance within Sweden<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>NGO Branch, U.N. Dep't of Econ. & Soc. Affairs, Consultative Status for the European Centre for Law and Justice (2007), <http://esango.un.org/civilsociety/> (accessed by searching “European Centre for Law and Justice” in the iCSO Database).

<sup>2</sup>*Status of Treaties, Ch. IV Human Rights, 4. ICCPR Status*, UNITED NATIONS TREATY COLLECTION, (16 Apr. 2014, 5:02 PM), [http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg\\_no=IV-4&chapter=4&lang=en](http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-4&chapter=4&lang=en).

<sup>3</sup>*Status of Treaties, Ch. IV Human Rights, 3. ICESCR Status*, UNITED NATIONS TREATY COLLECTION, (16 Apr. 2014, 5:02 PM), [http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg\\_no=IV-3&chapter=4&lang=en](http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-3&chapter=4&lang=en).

<sup>4</sup>*Status of Treaties, Ch. IV Human Rights, 2. ICERD Status*, UNITED NATIONS TREATY COLLECTION, (16 Apr. 2014, 5:02 PM), [http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg\\_no=IV-2&chapter=4&lang=en](http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-2&chapter=4&lang=en).

<sup>5</sup>International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights art. 20, 16 Dec. 1966, 999 U.N.T.S. 171 [hereinafter ICCPR], available at <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CCPR.aspx>.

<sup>6</sup>International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights pmb., 3 Jan. 1976, 993 U.N.T.S. 3, available at <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CESCR.aspx>.

<sup>7</sup>International Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Racial Discrimination art. 2, 4 Jan. 1969, 660 U.N.T.S. 165 [hereinafter ICERD], available at <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CERD.aspx>.

<sup>8</sup>*Infra* ¶ 3.

<sup>9</sup>*Infra* ¶ 5.

Sweden's Ability to Enforce Human Rights Treaties is Dependent Upon its Ability to Maintain Sovereignty over its Cities and Protect its Citizens Therein.

3. While Sweden is a party to the treaties listed above, it will not be able to enforce these treaties if there are sections of its cities in which government officials are unable or unwilling to enter due to security threats. One 2011 report notes that, with the rise of radical Islam in Swedish cities, Muslim extremists are “stepping up the creation of ‘no-go’” zones, areas that are off-limits to non-Muslims<sup>10</sup>. There are “large swaths” of at least one city over which the Swedish government is losing control. In Malmö, “[f]ire and emergency workers . . . refuse to enter Malmö’s mostly Muslim Rosengård district without police escorts”<sup>11</sup>. The report describes how such areas effectively become “microstates governed by Islamic Sharia law”<sup>12</sup>. These “no-go” zones are implemented to “provide Muslim immigrants in the West—particularly, energetic young Muslims . . . —with cultural, psychological, and even physical insulation from Western mores, traditions, and institutions.”<sup>13</sup> For example, in Great Britain “a Muslim group called Muslims Against the Crusades has launched a campaign to turn twelve British cities into independent Islamic states”<sup>14</sup>. If such a campaign were to successfully develop in Sweden, the government would lose sovereign authority over parts of its country and be unable to protect the human rights it has pledged in its treaties.

4. In other Swedish cities, violence by Muslims continues to proliferate. In Gothenburg, Muslim youths have bombed police cars, thrown stones at patrol officers, set cars on fire, and attacked emergency services<sup>15</sup>. In 2013, Muslim youth rioted for days setting hundreds of cars and dozens of buildings on fire in Stockholm’s Husby suburb<sup>16</sup>. It is imperative that the Working Group on the UPR urge Sweden to maintain control over its cities so that it can effectively protect its citizens and their rights.

With reports and allegations that anti-Semitism is on the rise, Sweden must remain committed to eliminating all forms of racial discrimination and ensure human rights of all its citizens are respected.

5. With recent reports indicating that anti-Semitism is on the rise across the globe<sup>17</sup> and within Sweden<sup>18</sup>, the Swedish government must remain dedicated to eliminating all forms of

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<sup>10</sup>Soeren Kern, *European ‘No-Go’ Zones for Non-Muslims Proliferating: “Occupation Without Tanks or Soldiers”*, GATESTONE INSTITUTE (22 Aug. 2011, 5:00 AM), <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/2367/european-muslim-no-go-zones>.

<sup>11</sup>*Id.*

<sup>12</sup>*Id.*

<sup>13</sup>Andrew C. McCarthy, *Islam’s Parallel Emirate in the U.K.*, NATIONAL REVIEW ONLINE (25 May 2013, 4:10 PM), <http://www.nationalreview.com/corner/349337/islams-parallel-emirate-uk>.

<sup>14</sup>Kern, *supra* note 10.

<sup>15</sup>*Id.*

<sup>16</sup>Jerome R. Corsi, *‘Youth Rioting’ in Sweden? It’s the Muslims, Stupid*, WND FAITH (25 May, 2013, 7:59 PM), <http://www.wnd.com/2013/05/youth-rioting-in-sweden-its-the-muslims-stupid/>.

<sup>17</sup>Zack Beauchamp, *It’s Not Just Kansas City: Anti-Semitic Violence is on the Rise Globally*, VOX (14 Apr. 2014, 2:30 PM), <http://www.vox.com/2014/4/14/5613278/kansas-city-anti-semitism>.

racial and religious intolerance. As a signatory to the ICCPR, Sweden has pledged to prohibit any advocacy of religious hatred.<sup>19</sup> While Sweden is sometimes praised as a champion of human rights<sup>20</sup>, in one year alone the number of hate crimes doubled in the Swedish city of Malmö and its police noted “far more probably went unreported”<sup>21</sup>. In response to the increased incidences of anti-Semitism, the Simon Wiesenthal Center, a global Jewish human rights organisation, issued a travel advisory that urged “extreme caution” for Jews who visit southern Sweden<sup>22</sup>. In 2008, a Jewish community center was the target of an arson attack; in 2009, a Jewish burial chapel was attacked three times and set on fire<sup>23</sup>. As the number of anti-Semitic hate crimes continued to escalate, in 2012, Moshe Kantor, the President of the European Jewish Congress declared that Sweden had become the “new center of Antisemitism”<sup>24</sup>. In December 2013, people marching in a rally against racism were attacked by neo-Nazis with fireworks, glass, bottles, and sticks, resulting in several injuries and the police detaining 26 neo-Nazis<sup>25</sup>. More recently in March 2014, a school in central Stockholm was defaced with graffiti including phrases such as “Jewish swine”, “disgusting Jews”, and swastikas<sup>26</sup>. While Marcus Freiberg, a spokesman for Swedish Prime Minister Reinfeld, noted that Sweden “invests 4,000,000 Kroner annually” to protect the Jewish community<sup>27</sup>, the rise in anti-Semitic behavior is troubling. The Working Group on the 2014 UPR must urge Sweden to not only protect the Jewish community but work to eradicate anti-Semitism.

### Conclusion.

6. While Sweden is a signatory to many important human rights treaties, in order to enforce these treaties, Sweden must maintain sovereignty and control over its cities. The Working Group on the UPR should insist that Sweden regain control over the sections of its cities known as “no-go” zones. With the ability to monitor and protect citizens in these areas, Sweden can continue to safeguard human rights. During the 2010 UPR, no less than seven countries raised concerns regarding racially motivated crimes in Sweden<sup>28</sup>, yet the situation continues to worsen. The

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<sup>18</sup>Nick Meo, *Jews Leave Swedish City After Sharp Rise in Anti-Semitic Hate Crimes*, TELEGRAPH (21 Feb. 2014, 7:30 AM), <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/sweden/7278532/Jews-leave-Swedish-city-after-sharp-rise-in-anti-Semitic-hate-crimes.html>.

<sup>19</sup>ICCPR, *supra* note 5.

<sup>20</sup>Joseph Straw, *Holder Lauds Sweden as “Champion of Human Rights” in Europe Swing*, N.Y. DAILY NEWS (4 Feb. 2014, 3:45 PM), <http://www.nydailynews.com/blogs/dc/holder-lauds-sweden-champion-human-rights-europe-swing-blog-entry-1.1706080>.

<sup>21</sup>Meo, *supra* note 18.

<sup>22</sup>*Simon Wiesenthal Center to Issue Travel Advisory for Sweden*, SIMON WIESENTHAL CENTER (14 Dec. 2010), [http://www.wiesenthal.com/site/apps/nlnet/content2.aspx?c=lsKWLbPJLnF&b=4441467&ct=8971903#.U1V\\_JPldWck](http://www.wiesenthal.com/site/apps/nlnet/content2.aspx?c=lsKWLbPJLnF&b=4441467&ct=8971903#.U1V_JPldWck).

<sup>23</sup>Peter Vinthagen Simpson, *Jewish Burial Chapel Attacked in Malmö*, THE LOCAL (13 Jan. 2009, 11:05 AM), <http://www.thelocal.se/20090113/16882>.

<sup>24</sup>*Sweden - the New Center of Antisemitism*, COORDINATION FORUM FOR COUNTERING ANTISEMITISM (1 Jan. 2012), <http://antisemitism.org.il/article/69658/sweden-new-center-antisemitism>.

<sup>25</sup>*Thousands Rally Against Racism, Nazism in Stockholm*, JERUSALEM POST (22 Dec. 2013), <http://www.jpost.com/International/Thousands-rally-against-racism-Nazism-in-Stockholm-335800>.

<sup>26</sup>*Swedish School Vandalized with Nazi Graffiti*, JERUSALEM POST (10 Mar. 2014), <http://www.jpost.com/Jewish-World/Jewish-News/Swedish-school-vandalized-with-Nazi-graffiti-344894>.

<sup>27</sup>*Sweden - the New Center of Antisemitism*, *supra* note 24.

<sup>28</sup>Rep. of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, Human Rights Council, 15th sess., 16 June 2010, ¶¶ 25–27, 37, 43, 47, 52 U.N. DOC. A/HRC/15/11.

Working Group should raise this concern again and insist that Sweden continue to develop programs that will help curb the rise in anti-Semitism.