



International Humanist and Ethical Union

42nd Session of the UN Human Rights Council (9th – 27th September 2019)

Universal Periodic Review: Norway

Speaker: Ina Nygård Mossin

I am a representative of the Norwegian Humanist Association and deliver this statement on behalf of my organisation and Humanists International.

We would firstly like to warmly welcome, since its last review, Norway's abolishment of the anti-blasphemy provision of its Criminal Code, on 29th May 2015.

Blasphemy laws protect ideas, not people, and in so doing threaten the very underpinnings of the human rights framework. By repealing the anti-blasphemy provision, Norway provides an example of good practice we urge other states to replicate.

However, we would like to call the attention of Norway and that of the Council to some remaining problems pertaining to the constitutional protection of freedom of religion or belief in Norway. Articles 2, 4 and 16 of the Constitution emphasise the state's Christian values, demand that the king shall adhere to the Lutheran faith and places the Church of Norway in a privileged position.

Amidst rising diversity, and in an increasingly polarized political climate, we are worried that these provisions send a signal of exclusion, and may lead to discrimination, or undermine the long-standing tradition of equal treatment. We request the government of Norway to amend these articles and to include the right to freedom of religion or belief into the human rights chapter of the Constitution, to bring it in line with international and European human rights law.

Lastly, we take this opportunity to bring up our concern that atheist asylum seekers from countries where apostasy is punishable by death have recently been denied asylum in Norway. We strongly encourage Norway to ensure equal treatment of all minorities, including the non-religious, and base all asylum decisions on updated knowledge.

Thank you for your attention.