

Press Release

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Concern about referendum on minarets

Statement by Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Thorbjørn Jagland

Strasbourg, 30.11.2009 - "Bearing in mind that it is a fundamental right of democratic States to debate and vote on issues of importance to their societies, the referendum held yesterday on the construction of new minarets in Switzerland raises concerns as to whether fundamental rights of individuals, protected by international treaties, should be subject to popular votes.

The ban on the construction of new minarets is linked to issues such as freedom of expression, freedom of religion and prohibition of discrimination guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights. Therefore it would be up to the European Court of Human Rights to decide, should an application be submitted to the Court, whether the prohibition of building new minarets is compatible with the Convention."

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