

IDAHOBIT 2016 DECLARATION

In our countries too many times homosexual men and women, bisexuals and transgender people (LGBT) are the victims of violence, both in subtle and very outspoken ways. They are called names, made fun of, abused and even assaulted. They sometimes cannot feel safe in their own homes. In many places it is dangerous for them to be who they are and come out.

On the occasion of the International Day against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia, as religious leaders, theologians, and lay people of Europe, we therefore declare the following:

- We do not all think exactly alike about sexual orientation and gender diversity, but we do all believe that every human being has been created in the image of God. This transcends all our markers of identity: age, gender identities and expressions, sexualities, race, ethnicity, language, abilities or religion. We therefore have to treat each other with dignity: respectfully, peacefully and with love. All violence against LGBT people is an expression of evil.
- We state that physical and verbal abuse on any grounds should not be supported or legitimised in the name of "God", "cultural traditions", "religious norms" or "family values": none of God's children should have to live in fear. Anyone using violence against another human being denies the calling of Jesus Christ to all of us to love God and to love our neighbour.
- We encourage religious leaders and people of faith to refrain from all words or actions that might support violence against LGBT people and to create, within their communities, safe spaces for encounter, consultation and dialogue.
- We recognise that there are times in our own faith communities when the dignity of LGBT people is sometimes violated. We regret this deeply.
- We promise to do everything that lies in our power to eradicate misunderstanding and fight against any hatred or violence against LGBT people, in all of our local, national and international contacts with civil society and other churches and church bodies.

