



## Thinking secularization through to the end!

The Freethinkers Switzerland take note with concern of increasing efforts and demands for state recognition of further religious communities. Instead of recognising other religious communities out of arbitrariness and misunderstood tolerance, secularisation must be thought out and carried out in all cantons of Switzerland. In the interest of an open and free society, state and church must finally be unbundled and consistently separated.

The Freethinkers are concerned about demands for state recognition of other religious communities and firmly reject them for the following reasons:

- The Swiss population is becoming increasingly secular. A clear majority of Swiss people today have a distanced relationship with religions. The national churches are losing members; already today the population group of nonreligious people is growing fastest. Against this background, there is no justification for recognising other religious communities under public law.
- State recognition does not benefit people, but primarily officials and organisations. But even if one wants to achieve exactly this, it is unclear which association should take over this function, because no existing umbrella association represents the majority of Muslims in Switzerland today. In addition, members of the Muslim faith in Switzerland usually live just as far away from religion as members of the Christian national churches.<sup>1</sup>
- The state recognition of other religious communities is intended, among other things, to force them to make a clear commitment to the values that apply in Switzerland. In any case, democracy, human dignity, gender equality and human rights are universal in our understanding of the rule of law and must therefore be developed throughout society. A state recognition to demand the acceptance of this canon of values from certain religious communities is therefore not necessary. The fact is that as long as religious communities recognise common fundamental values such as human rights in particular, they may develop completely freely in Switzerland within the framework of freedom of expression and assembly. Communities that do not share this basic consensus, on the other hand, cannot be tamed by recognising their more liberal forms, but are cases for state protection and the police.
- The relationship between the state and existing national churches is nowadays often strongly intertwined and there is a blatant lack of transparency with regard to state-oriented subsidies. For example, no distinction is made between expenditure for cults and social expenditure. Recognition of other communities would only exacerbate these problems.
- Religious communities need neither state privileges nor their own legal form in order to function. There is no reason why religious communities should be treated better than other civil society forces (NGOs, parties, associations).
- A modern state is committed to religious neutrality and must treat all religious communities equally as long as a religion does not pose a threat to the open society. Recognition of additional - selected - religious communities would not mean equality, but additional

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<sup>1</sup>According to the Federal Statistical Office ([source](#)), around 45% of all Muslims in Switzerland never visit a mosque; another 30% do so no more than five times a year.

discrimination against non-recognized religious communities. Equal treatment can only be achieved through the consistent separation of state and church.

The Freethinkers Switzerland therefore firmly reject the recognition of other religious communities. Instead, the relationship between state and church - that is between the individual cantons and the national churches.

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