

Human Rights Council - 28th session

(3rd March – 27th March 2015)

Clustered interactive dialogue with the Special Representative on Freedom of Religion or Belief Heiner Bielefeldt

10 March 2015

Statement by Ireland

Ireland aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the EU. We welcome the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief and thank him for his report.

Ireland is deeply concerned that freedom of religion and belief is in peril in many places worldwide, with members of minority religious communities, including those of Christian, Muslim and Baha'i faith, subjected to appalling violence, discrimination, and harassment. Ireland condemns these acts and calls on all States to act swiftly to stop acts of violence committed in the name of religion against individuals, groups and places of worship.

The situation is particularly difficult, of course, in areas where the authority of the state has effectively collapsed. Ireland shares the Special Rapporteur's outrage and disgust at the savage attacks on religious communities by extremist militant groups, including Boko Haram and ISIS. The brutal killings of Christians and Muslims in North Africa and the Middle East are monstrous acts beyond comprehension, which must be condemned in the strongest possible terms. They are an ugly insult to the peaceful religions they violate every day and represent a vicious attack on the values of tolerance and pluralism which underpin freedom of religion or belief.

Ireland notes with appreciation the comments by the Special Rapporteur on the role of civil society in advancing freedom of religion.

Does the Special Rapporteur see a role for civil society to collaborate with States in confronting the extremist groups that threaten religious communities and to tackle the extremist ideologies at grass-roots level?