



PRESS RELEASE

Brussels, 29 November 2010

Swiss deportation referendum: What would the EU look like if it were adopting similar measures for Swiss citizens residing in the EU?

The European Network Against Racism (ENAR) is seriously concerned by the recent referendum in Switzerland in favour of the automatic deportation of foreigners convicted of certain criminal offences, including minor offences. This vote is the result of a xenophobic and discriminatory campaign launched by the populist Swiss People's Party, making dangerous amalgams between immigration and criminality. This rhetoric and the expulsions risk reinforcing prejudice and discriminatory perceptions against immigrants, and more generally against Swiss ethnic minority citizens perceived as foreigners.

When adopted, this measure will in fact amount to a double penalty by deporting foreign nationals after they have served a prison sentence in Switzerland, without even a right of appeal, thus leading to the creation of second-class categories of persons. It is a clear breach of the fundamental human rights principle of equality before the law. In addition, it is not clear where the limit will be set: 1st, 2nd, 3rd or even 4th generation immigrants?

Following the vote in favour of banning the building of Islamic minarets, this new referendum is obviously part of a deliberate policy by the Swiss People's Party of moving forward step by step by referendum, instead of pushing through a series of reactionary laws which would provoke opposition. The ensuing environment is alarming and shows the tragic plummeting of moral values for which Switzerland used to be renowned within the Human Rights chorus.

ENAR President Mohammed Aziz said: "The Swiss People's Party is exploiting feelings of fear among the Swiss population by launching its xenophobic campaigns. It is a reflection of tendencies happening elsewhere in Europe as well, following decades of populist discourse linking immigration and criminality. We need to ring alarm bells and reverse the trend towards extremist rhetoric in Switzerland and across Europe. It is time to recognise the daily contribution made by migrants to Europe's economic, social, cultural and political life, as well as the importance of equality and diversity to a vibrant society and economy."

The European Network Against Racism (ENAR) is a network of NGOs working to combat racism in all EU member states and represents more than 700 NGOs spread around the European Union. ENAR aims to fight racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, to promote equality of treatment between EU citizens and third country nationals, and to link local/regional/national and European initiatives.

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