



PRESS RELEASE: 13 January 2017

For immediate release

Desecration of religious buildings violates religious freedom

Religious Freedom is for all. And the dignity of all must be respected and their right to peacefully exercise their religious convictions or none, free from social hostility or harassment, must be protected, even if one does not share their truth claims.

There is no justification whatsoever for provocations, defacement of religious symbols or violence on religious or anti-religious grounds.

Therefore The Evangelical Alliance in South Africa, together with Freedom of Religion South Africa and the International Institute for Religious Freedom, welcome and join in the prompt condemnation by religious and political leaders of the recent defacement of two mosques in Cape Town, one in Simon's Town and one in Kalk Bay, and want to put the matter in the wider perspective of freedom of religion and belief.

The South African Charter for Religious Rights and Freedoms, which was signed by representatives of most major and many smaller religious groups in South Africa (including ourselves) in 2010, states: "Every person has the right to religious dignity, which includes not to be victimised, ridiculed or slandered on the ground of their faith, religion, convictions or religious activities. No person may advocate hatred that is based on religion, and that constitutes incitement to violence or to cause physical harm."

The acts committed against the two said mosques were linked in the press to recent debates on Facebook, with one person calling for the burning of mosques. We wish to reiterate that gross religious intolerance, threats of violence and calls to criminal activity are unacceptable, and are also in fact unlawful. Our Constitution explicitly prohibits incitement of violence, as well as the advocacy of hatred based on religion and that constitutes incitement to harm. Those who make themselves guilty of such acts, may be brought before the Equality Courts or even be prosecuted in terms of the criminal law.

We would like to encourage all people to continue to build relationships of respect and trust with people of different religions so as to facilitate deeper mutual understanding, reconciliation and cooperation for the common good.

ISSUED BY:

Rev. Moss Ntlha

General Secretary

The Evangelical Alliance of South Africa (TEASA)

&

Adv. N L Badenhorst

Legal Counsel

Freedom of Religion South Africa (FOR SA)

&

Prof. Dr. Christof Sauer

International Institute for Religious Freedom (IIRF)

For enquiries, contact:

Rev. Moss Ntlha

Gen. Sec. TEASA

Tel: 082 809 8533

E-mail: moss@teasa.org.za

Alternatively:

Adv. NL Badenhorst

Legal Counsel, FOR SA

Tel: 084 860 1943

E-mail: legal@forsa.org.za