

MANIFEST ON SECULARISM

Recalling:

-Â Â the awareness that a secular society is a legacy of the modern age that reaffirms secular values as a necessary precondition of maintaining and strengthening a democratic order based on the respect for human rights;

-Â Â the insight into an increasingly aggressive interference of religious communities, most of all the Serbian Orthodox Church, into affairs of the state, for which the state bears most of the responsibility;

-Â Â a growing clericalisation of society;

-Â Â the fact that abolishing the division between the state religious communities endangers basic human rights of all citizens, women and men, believers and non-believers;

The Coalition for a Secular State proposes the Manifest on Secularism

Who are we?

The Coalition for a Secular State was initiated in beginning of 2006 by a group of nongovernmental organisations in response to the Law on Churches and Religious Communities.

The Coalition consists of civil society activists, mostly from organisations concerned with peace and human rights, autonomous women's groups, experts in law and other social sciences and humanities, activists of civic oriented political parties; shortly - citizens concerned because of a growing clericalisation in Serbia, the loss of a secular character of the state and a growing influence of religious communities, especially the Serbian Orthodox Church, on state affairs, the education system and public life in Serbia in general.

We are for:

-Â Â A secular state " complete division of church and state, no interference of any church into state affairs, as well as no interference of the state into religious affairs;

-Â Â A secular education system " schools with no religious indoctrination and no interference of church or religious institutions, education based on the principles of science and rationalism;

-Â Â Freedom of religion " reaffirming the right of each individual to belong to a religious community, to change it or abandon it, as well as to not believe and not belong to any religious community;

-Â Â The equal treatment of believers and non-believers - there should be no discrimination whatsoever, nor any privileges based on public expressions of religious beliefs or a lack thereof;

-Â Â A society where religious expression is an exclusively private matter of each individual woman and man, especially as far as state officials are concerned.

We intend to:

-Â Â Â warn the public that loosing the secular character of the state entails erious consequences on peace, democracy, human rights, especially womenâ€™s rights;

-Â Â Â bring attention to the constant abuse of religion, tradition, nations, ultural heritage â€“ all for political purposes, in order to gain legitimacy and political power;

-Â Â Â support real freedom of belief and secularism as a key legacy odernity;

-Â Â Â encourage and multiply similar coalitions within civil society ecause that is the best way to protect peace, democracy and human rights.

We are initiating:

-Â Â Â Educational activities which will spread information on the values of secularism through leaflets, brochures, public events, ound tables, seminars, etc.;

-Â Â Â Lawmaking initiatives, one of which will be a proposal to question the constitutionality of the Law on Churches and Religious Communities;

-Â Â Â A number of activities that will mark December 10th â€“ the nternational Day of Human Rights. The slogan for the activities will be â€œStop Clericalisationâ€• and public will be informed about the specific details in due course.

Women in Black

Center for Peace and Democracy Development

Center for the Advancement of Legal Studies

Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia

Youth Initiative for Human Rights

Belgrade Center for Human Rights

Lawyersâ€™ Committee for Human Rights

Queeria Center for the promotion of a culture of nonviolence and diversity

Republika Journal

Social Democratic Union

Urban In

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Belgrade, October 9th 2007