



CONFERENCE OF INGOs
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

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CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution of the Conference of INGOs on freedom of expression, adopted on 6 October 2006

All too often, in our member countries of the Council of Europe, men and women are threatened with death, attacked or killed **for their opinions, writings or artistic works, or because they work on behalf of the community.**

The European organisations forming the Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs), meeting on 6 October 2006 at the Council of Europe, which represents eight hundred million inhabitants, draw attention to this fundamental principle:

No cause can ever justify death threats, since the right to life is the first of all rights and respect for this right is an absolute requirement in the area covered by the Council of Europe member states, where the death penalty has been abolished.

INGOs, which embody civil society, are permanently committed to fostering dialogue and upholding the right to free discussion - the only possible response to contradictory viewpoints, including those that seem hard to accept. One cannot combat ideas by making victims of those who express them.

INGOs will always support those who are victimized because of their opinion, in compliance with international standards, and they condemn acts that endanger human lives.

The day after this resolution was adopted, the Russian journalist Anna POLITOVSKAÏA was murdered in Moscow.

This appalling act demonstrates how urgent it is to rally the whole of civil society against all forms of violence and violations of freedom of expression.

It is of concern to us all.

This poem, written in Dachau and attributed to pastor Martin NIEMÖLLER, has lost none of its relevance:

When the Nazis came for the communists,

I remained silent;

I was not communist.

When they locked up the social democrats

I remained silent;

I was not a social democrat.

When they came for the trade unionists,

*I did not speak out;
I was not a trade unionist.
When they came for the Jews,
I did not speak out;
I was not a Jew.
When they came for me,
There was no one left to speak out.*