

Mr. Martin SCHULZ, MEP.
President of the European Parliament.
European Parliament.
Rue Wiertz.
Paul-Henri Spaak.
1047 Brussels.

1st November 2014.

Dear President SCHULZ,

We the undersigned European secular organisations wish to express our deep regret of your decision to invite Pope Francis to address the European Parliament. We do not think it appropriate for any religious leader to be invited to speak to a secular parliament. Having invited one what justification can be offered for not inviting others of other religions and competing denominations or sects?

Even many believers can not accept that a religious leader can claim the right to speak on their behalf, because he was not elected to it, any more than the leaders of other religious groups and non-religious Europe. Representation of European citizens should remain the prerogative of the European Parliament.

The invitation is doubly inappropriate given the Catholic Church's doctrinal positions on start and end of life and sexual matters, including women's reproductive rights: the very issues on which they campaign most forcefully, are the very ones on which they are at most variance from their followers, especially in Europe as evidenced by numerous polls and indeed by the extraordinary synod taking place in Rome. And such positions are generally at variance with the majority of the European population as a whole and often in conflict with Human Rights.

Worse, we find today that the religious movement represented by the Pope continues to actively combat human rights, such as the European Union defends, seeking to impose on the rest of society a dogmatic moral vision, in defiance of the principles of freedom of conscience and equality.

Secular Europeans stand for the separation of "state and religion". This principle should also apply inside the institutions of the European Union. If applied rigorously, it is, in our opinion, the most effective way of achieving peace and harmonious relations between the citizens of the European Union, whatever their world views.

Yours sincerely.

Members of the Alliance for a Secular Europe:

Asociacion Madrilená de Ateas y Librepensadores (Spain)

Associação República e Laicidade (Portugal)

Association Européenne de la Pensée Libre –Europe (pan-European)

Calendersign (Germany)

Central London Humanists (UK)

Coordinamento Nazionale delle Consulte per la Laicità delle Istituzioni (Italy)

EGALE - Egalité Laïcité Europe. (France)

Esperanto Organisation (pan-European)

European Humanist Federation (pan-European)

European Network Church on the Move (pan-European)

Humanistischverbond (Netherlands)

Humanist Union of Greece. (Greece)

International Humanist and Ethical Union (pan-European)

Ligue du Droit International des Femmes (France)

National Secular Society (UK)

Observatoire Chrétien de la Laïcité (France)

Osterreichische Plattform Betroffener kirchlicher Gewalt. (Austria)

Reseau d'Action Pour un Etat Laïque (Belgium)

Romanian Secular-Humanist Association (Roumania)

Sidmennt – Icelandic Ethical Humanist Association (Iceland)

Solidarity for Freedom of Conscience Roumania (Roumania)

Union des Familles Laïques (France)

United Kingdom Pink Triangle Trust. (UK)

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