

Lebenszentrum - Helfer für Gottes Kostbare Kinder Deutschland e. V.

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Universal Periodic Review
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
Palais des Nations

CH-1211 Geneva 10

Complaint against Germany for Consideration during the UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW submitted to uprsubmissions@ohchr.org and postal

Limitation of Freedom of Assembly and Freedom of Expression in Germany Negative Stereotyping of Pro-Life Activists in the German Media

Munich, 2nd October 2012

1. Who we are and what we do

The aim of our Christian faith-based association (founded 1999) “Life Center - Helpers of God’s Precious Infants” (“Lebenszentrum - Helfer für Gottes kostbare Kinder e.V.”) is to encourage and support expecting mothers in conflict to give birth to their child by offering solidarity and different kinds of support. We counsel in our office and on the public sidewalks in front of abortion clinics and pro-abortion-institutions, too. We see precious infants of God not only in the unborn children, but also in their mothers. Very often they were grateful for our support, because they had been worried and lonesome in their pregnancy conflict. We offer help for women suffering from abortion, too.

Our association articles are approved and confirmed at register court and the fiscal authorities of Munich.

2. Violent acts against our Life-Center in Munich and Infringements of Freedom of Assembly and Expression by the city Governments of Freiburg and Munich

In Freiburg, the Agency for Public Order restricted access around the entrance area of “pro familia” (an organisation which offers pregnancy conflict counseling including the option of abortion – the organisation has own abortion-clinics) for counsellors of our association. The city of Freiburg reacted on a media-campaign (initiated by “pro familia”) of two newspapers and a TV-Channel. In all three of them, we had no chance to express our position.

We are facing similar difficulties in Munich, proceedings are currently going on in administrative courts. In addressing women in conflict in front of an abortion clinic (side-walk counselling, „Gehsteigberatung“) or in front of pro-abortion counselling centers, the Agencies for Public Order see a threat of the women’s privacy and rights. In the city of Freiburg pro-life activists therefore faced a fine of 250 €. In Munich we are supposed to pay 1.500 € only for showing a picture of a 12 weeks old embryo with the message “six months before birth” (see the attached photo) on a public sidewalk in front of an abortion-clinic.

Four times the windows of our life-center have been destroyed since October 2008. And very often the walls have been scrawled with left radical and/or blasphemous parables.

In our thirteen years of side-walk counseling, we haven't done anything wrong or illegal. This fact is confirmed by more than a hundred women and by the law-court process of the abortion doctor against our life-center in 2006, which he lost clearly. Until today there never was a complaint of a woman at the police or at an agency of the public order.

The police of Munich controlled us by civil forces for several months in the year 2000 and confirms until today that our behavior always has been and still is impeccable.

In Germany abortion continues to be an illegal action though not punished under certain circumstances. Not to be able to manifest one's convictions by peaceful demonstration or speaking kindly and respectfully to strangers, is a violation of freedom of expression, which indirectly discriminates especially against Christians, as the issue is of particular concern not only but especially to Christians.

3. Negative Stereotyping of Pro-Life Activists in the Media

In the state-sponsored ARD, a television channel under public law, a short film about our work was aired. Several indicators prove that this was a slamming attack to make our work impossible:

- No woman who was happy about the survival of her child had the possibility to speak to the TV team. We offered this, but the TV team did not show any interest.
- No woman who suffered or suffers from an abortion, could speak with the TV team. We offered this to the TV team, but they had no interest.
- We told them about several cases in which the women received solidarity and real help from us; we handed over written testimonies of thankful and happy mothers including baby-photos to the reporter Tim Fugmann - you didn't see or hear anything about that in the film.
- The moderator of the telecast introduced us as people, who "harass and threaten" women and doctors. But in the film itself neither the abortion doctor nor his patients said anything about threatening or the like.

By this and other examples it became very clear for us that the makers of the report created wrong "facts" on purpose and transferred these to their viewers. There was no balanced coverage at all (which our constitution and the German Broadcasting Law directs especially for media under public law), but a virulent campaign.

4. Our problems and complaints

The city of Munich started to hinder our sidewalk counseling after the television report of ARD, although not a single woman had made a complaint in the 12 years before. The city of Freiburg hindered us because of a media campaign. Just like in Munich, no woman has ever complained about us or our work!

We were surprised and shocked that a TV channel under public law is able to produce such a one-sided report in which there was not a single piece of positive information about the pro-lifers or happy mothers. It was an obviously manipulated rendering of the reality, ignoring of both happy **and** suffering mothers, how the television station under public law (ARD Berlin-Brandenburg) suppressed true facts. We could not imagine that our constitution and the German Broadcasting Law, which were installed after World War II also to prevent media from ideological abuse, were so much ignored. We experienced similar things with newspapers.

As an attachment (by post letter) we add the DVD ("Programmauftrag Desinformation?" ("Program-Order Desinformation?") by an experienced film producer from Berlin who investigated this ARD report critically.

We suffer from this kind of negative stereotyping professionally and personally and do not find sufficient help or attention in the government, which seems not to be able to stop such a discrimination of law-abiding, peaceful citizens. A penal report against ARD at the public prosecutor in Berlin came to nothing. The Broadcasting Council did not react.

Our concern regarding our own work and our country is: If our government does not show any interest to stop ideological abuse of media and city governments, the virulent campaigns and anarchistic violence (“no state”) in Germany will grow more and more.

Wolfgang Hering - President