

Forum for Religious Freedom - Europe names Aaron Rhodes President

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Dr. Aaron Rhodes presenting a paper at a UPF conference at the European Economic and Social Council Forum for Religious Freedom - Europe names Aaron Rhodes President

Vienna, 4. April, 2014 (FOREF): Dr. Aaron Rhodes will succeed Professor Christian Bruenner as President of the Forum for Religious Freedom – Europe (FOREF). The board of directors will formalize the selection at their General Assembly meeting on 5 April 2014.

Aaron Rhodes is a founder of the Freedom Rights Project, a human rights research initiative and think-tank. He was formerly associated with the Institute for Human Sciences (IWM) and the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF), which he led for 14 years between 1993 and 2007. In 2008, he and colleagues established the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran. Rhodes has taught and lectured widely at universities in the United States and Europe. (Photo [L-R] Peter Zoehrer, Dr. Aaron Rhodes, Dr. Willy Fautre, Jura Nanuk)

In 2008, Rhodes was made an honorary citizen of the Republic of Austria in recognition of his work on behalf of human rights, and in 2009, The University of Chicago awarded him a citation for public service, noting that he is “regarded as one of the world’s leading human rights activists.” Rhodes earned his doctorate in the Committee on Social Thought at The University of Chicago, and before that a bachelors degree from Reed College.

Professor Christian Bruenner, former Austrian MP and Dean of Law at Graz University, is an international authority on the freedom of religion. Professor Bruenner co-founded the Forum for Religious Freedom - Europe with human rights activist and journalist Peter Zoehrer in 2005 as an independent civil society structure to monitor threats to religious freedom and advocate for respect for international human rights standards and obligations.

The mandate of FOREF is:

Protection of the right of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief

Promotion of basic democratic principles and the Rule of Law

Monitoring and documentation of official and public intolerance against religious minorities and advancing public awareness

Advocacy with local, national, and international authorities

Promotion of objective approaches to understanding the emergence of new religious movements

Supporting civil society’s ability to pro-actively find solutions to inter-religious conflicts