



Swiss Vote to Deport Foreign Criminals

Over the course of centuries, Switzerland has developed a reputation as a place of sanctuary for dissidents and refugees from oppression. From John Calvin and the Huguenots in the 16th century to German Jews fleeing the Holocaust in the 20th century, Switzerland has been a refuge. However, the Swiss are now sending a clear message to foreigners residing in their country: "Do not take such hospitality for granted."



A year ago, a decisive majority of Swiss voters supported a ban on Muslim minarets; [as reported for *The New American* last November](#):

Unlike other Europeans who have surrendered to creeping Islamic hegemony, many Swiss apparently don't share the typical benign view of Muslim immigrants and believe the minaret signals a rise of Muslim political power. They believe cultural and religious symbols such as the minaret mean something, and they may well take the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Erdogan at his word: "The mosques are our barracks, the domes our helmets, the minarets our bayonets and the faithful our soldiers," he proclaimed in 1998. In 1995, he averred, "You cannot be secular and a Muslim at the same time. The world's 1.5 billion Muslims are waiting for the Turkish people to rise up. We will rise up."

Now Switzerland is once again choosing a path to the preservation of their nation and its security. The measure that was under consideration in the November 28 referendum was whether to immediately deport foreign nationals convicted of various offenses, once they had paid their debt to society. Once again, Swiss voters have decided that their safety and security are not to be sacrificed on the altar of foreign opinion and misplaced sentimentality. [According to an RTT News article](#):

In the referendum held on Sunday, some 53 per cent of the Swiss voters backed the controversial proposal that calls for automatic deportation of foreign criminals convicted of committing crimes ranging from murder to filing false claims for unemployment benefits.

As per the measure approved, convicted foreign criminals would now be deported to their home countries once they serve out their sentences in Switzerland. They are also barred from returning to Switzerland for at least 20 years.

On its face, the referendum makes a great deal of sense; such foreigners are guests, and a blatant disregard for the laws of their host country would certainly seem to many observers to be sufficient grounds for eviction. Certainly the measure would appear to be in the best interests of both the Swiss and their government, since they have no moral obligation to serve as the dumping ground for criminals of foreign origin. However, the Swiss government saw things differently, and opposed the referendum. Again, according the RTT News report:



Written by [James Heiser](#) on November 30, 2010

The Swiss government had urged voters to reject the measure, citing concerns that deportations of immigrants back to countries that practice torture and execution might be in direct violation of Switzerland's obligations under international laws.

The referendum was initiated by the right-wing Swiss People's Party (SVP) which was also instrumental in holding the November 2009 referendum that banned construction of minarets on mosques in Switzerland, which has some 400,000 Muslims among its six million population.

Obviously elected officials can see the shape of Switzerland's political future: The SVP appears to have a clear understanding of the views of the Swiss people on certain pivotal issues. Rather than accommodating the views of the people, it appears that the government will continue to pursue the favor of foreign opinion over the interests of the nation.

Unsurprisingly, the vote also met with angry opposition from outside Switzerland, with Amnesty International (AI) expressing its immediate disapproval. [As reported by the UPI](#), AI is incapable of recognizing that conviction for a major crime is sufficient grounds for expelling a foreign national:

Under provisions of the referendum, foreign nationals convicted for criminal offenses such as murder, rape, armed robbery, human and drug trafficking, and welfare fraud, would be stripped of their residence permit and right to remain in the country, Amnesty International said.

"If put into practice, the amendment to the constitution risks violating Switzerland's obligations under international law, in particular the obligation not to return anyone to a country where they would be at risk of torture or other forms of persecution," said John Dalhuisen, Amnesty International's Europe and Central Asia deputy program director. "Switzerland cannot, and must not, allow popular and xenophobic initiatives to override its obligations under international law. Switzerland should also grant persons subject to deportation the opportunity to appeal any decision."

The referendum would remove any possibility of appealing the deportation order, which would be made by a regional migration office, AI said. Removing the right to appeal also would put Switzerland in breach of its international obligations, AI said.

While AI may wish that Switzerland would view its so-called international obligations as a national suicide pact, the logic behind Sunday's referendum is clearly understandable: If a houseguest threatens your children, breaks your furniture, and threatens to burn down the home, you have the right to call the police and have him removed from your home. It is hardly xenophobic for the Swiss — or any other people, for that matter — to conclude that their criminal justice system has enough trouble dealing with crimes committed by their own citizens without opening themselves up to the recidivism of foreign nationals. The sentiment expressed by AI may be received by the Swiss (and others) as a signal that its opposition to criminal regimes is not matched by support for those nations which desire to uphold a system of law within their own borders. The people of Switzerland have spoken, amending their constitution to cope with foreign criminals in a way that is consistently applied and appropriate to the offense. Switzerland will continue to be a refuge for those who are fleeing oppression; it will not be a den for criminals to plot their next offense against the generosity of their hosts.



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