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## MINARET BAN NOT A RELIGIOUS LIBERTY ISSUE, SAYS AIDE

### **Suggest Vote Played on Fears and Dialogue Is Needed**

ROME, DEC. 3, 2009 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- A vote to ban minarets in Switzerland capitalized on fear but does not fall into restricting religious liberty, according to the secretary of the Vatican's council that deals with migrants.

A vote Sunday in Switzerland banned the construction of minarets -- the tall slender towers, typically part of mosques, with a balcony from which a muezzin calls Muslims to prayer. There are four minarets already standing in Switzerland, which will be left alone; Muslims are not called to pray from any of those structures in Switzerland.

Archbishop Agostino Marchetto, president of the Pontifical Council for Migrants and Travelers, told I.Media that those people behind the Swiss referendum played with "sentiments of fear" instead of fostering dialogue between Muslims and the local population. The minaret debate was cast as a question of the assimilation of Muslims into the social life of Switzerland, with minarets being presented as symbols of Shariah law.

Archbishop Marchetto suggested that the vote "reveals a concern that pertains to the physiognomy of the nation, the question of visibility, but does not pertain to religious liberty."

Religious liberty, per se, he said, "was not called into question."

The archbishop explained: "This is an issue that does not directly infringe on the right of worship because it will always be possible to build mosques."

Instead, he said, it refers to "the vision Muslims have of their mosques."

"Their sensitivity must be taken into account," the prelate recommended, "but this decision does not infringe on freedom of worship."

He suggested "recognizing that in many Muslim countries, the visibility of churches and their bell towers, for example, should take into account the surroundings in which they live and the mentality of the people."

Archbishop Marchetto affirmed his hope that "a dialogue begins between those who want mosques of a certain type and the local realities that manifest sensitivities, sometimes even unjust ones."