

The Path of Guru Jara – religious society

Address: Nádražní okruh 13, 74601 Opava, Czech Republic
Phone: +420 608 040 142
Website: www.guru-jara-samadhi.com, www.cestagurujary.cz,
Email: info@cestagurujary.cz



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Czech Republic: Judges as members of minorities

Recommendations:

To Czech Republic:

We recommend to Czech Republic to actively promote awareness about religious tolerance in the field of minority religions, to allow judges and other state representatives to fully enjoy their right for freedom of religion and belief publicly.

We seek to draw attention to issues of judicial training, selection and appointment, which should be according OSCE standards also carried out in a non-discriminatory manner which actively encourages candidates from diverse backgrounds including minorities.

While we welcome judges (as any other public person) being LGBT, or members of minor religions¹, we are afraid that prejudices towards minorities in our society enable the blackmailing of such judges.

Regarding our field of interest, belonging to a minor religious group is a very sensitive issue, especially for a public person like a judge. Even having atheism as a personal worldview is not a guarantee that the judge will be neutral as defined by terms of state neutrality, as it is something far more expected in Czechia society.

We perfectly understand that for those judges who have the inclination to an active religious life, practicing freedom of religion and belief is easier to do it in secret. What would happen

¹ Just reminder, that just 90 years ago, this „minority“ category in then Czechoslovakia also included all women. Until 1925 there were almost zero women in lawyer’s professions in Czechoslovakia. Source - The activities of Czech women in the legal professions in the Czechoslovakia in years 1918 – 1938, by JUDr. Vendulka Valentová. Rigorous thesis. 2011 at CUNI Prague – online: <https://is.cuni.cz/webapps/zzp/detail/76274?lang=en>.

if such a practice were to become public? We believe they would be under enormous pressure, and the easiest solution is to deny their faith or any connection to their possible religious affiliation.

For instance this year Czech Minister of Justice, Dr. Pelikán, supported activities of the religious society Yoga in Daily life, but only after the group was presented as secular, stripped of all its religious affiliation and publicly hid their master. We assume he might not be publicly supporting the event of the religious society, where the highest spiritual representative is Swami Maheshwarananda, who was charged in EU for sexual harassment and exploitation of its own members just few years ago. Moreover, Czech anti-cult members have written for years about the dangers of this group for young people in terms of psychological manipulation and exploitation. Of course, we are skeptical of these allegations, which are often rooted in prejudices and hate in society.

We have experience within our religious minority, when Chairmen of regional court Dr. Gargulák, and judge Dr. Bučková, denied publicly through their court spokesmen in 2016 any previous connection to our group or even previous recognition of our spiritual leader Guru Jara, despite both being active mentors of our spiritual teachings (i.e 1996-2008 the latter). When public opinion turned against us after 2011, after accusations in the media from alleged sexual exploitation in our group supported by claims of members from the Czech anti-cult movement, it was really difficult to combat such social pressures for our publicly active members, and especially in their professional positions.

We stands for the safety of judges or any public persons coming out regarding sexual orientation or religious affiliation without fear of becoming a target of prejudice or hate crimes.