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Mister President and all the members of the Commission,

My name is Princess Loona I'm speaking on behalf of the European Raelian Movement, a new atheist religion, founded 30 years ago, present in 90 countries and on the five continents. We offer a third hypothesis for the origin of life on earth.

First of all, we are worried that on 28 June 2007, a Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe organized a study day entitled "Sects and cults: a challenge to democracy and human rights". The very clear title made there and the fact that some of the guest-speakers or movements represented on the panel of that study day are known to be antireligious surprise us in regards with the commitments of the Council of Europe.

I will be very brief. We have attended this conference 4 times already in hope that, with your help, we will slow down the SCANDALOUS discriminations of 2 governments against new religions: I'm speaking of France and Belgium.

For the moment, these countries don't respect all the Human Rights and the OSCE recommendations that you asked them to follow. They've pursued their politics of discrimination against religious minorities.

As you know, Raelians have been deprived of their rights of parenthood in divorce rulings, lost their jobs for being Raelian, received death threats and verbal aggressions, have been refused conference rooms, refused leave for national meetings; social and familial rejection and so on .....

**There are two origins for this discrimination and goodwill is all that is necessary to stop this:**

**the first origin** is the famous list of the so-called "sects", which was established more than 10 years ago and used to discriminate against the members of religious minorities. Every year, these governments like to say that this list has no legal repercussions and that this list exists only for information purposes. Are these two governments blind or do they not want to see the reality? Every year, there are social and psychological tragedies as a consequence of this list which creates discrimination and intolerance in Society and is an obstacle to the freedom of consciousness and religion. For example a school in Paris has refused a student because he is member of the raelien movement. The code of deontology of this school stipulates that you cannot register if you are member of one of the 173 cults in the list made by the french government.

Here are 4 recent examples, which are backed by information in this file:

**In France, courts base their decisions on the « sincerity » of journalists' or private individuals' opinions, even if they express serious slanderous accusations against religious minorities.** Slandering has become acceptable to French magistrates, when it concerns movements, founders and members that have been listed and qualified as sects. We have 5 testimonies which illustrate this phenomenon.

1. A judgement on the 1st of February 2005, confirmed by a court ruling in Paris on the 12 of January 2006 and a court ruling on the 9th January 2007 recognized that Mister Philippe Bouvard made slanderous comments about Rael describing him as a "crook". This ruling was overruled based on the information in the report of the 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1995 which denied Rael the right to answer this attack. This report which grants parliament immunity for the authors and reporters at the national assembly makes slander acceptable for French magistrates if it concerns movements or founders and members listed as « sects ».

2. The same judgement on the 16th of March 2004, the 12th of December 2005 and the 31<sup>st</sup> of May 2007 acknowledged that Ms. Dominique Saint Hilaire had "evidently" slandered Rael by accusing him of swindling and tax evasion.

Despite this ruling, the report made reference to the parliament's report and the sincerity of Ms. Dominique Saint Hilaire's comments and therefore, no sentence was pronounced and no compensation given either.

3. It's also on the basis of this report and this list that a young Raelian woman lost her job as an animator for teenage children in Vincennes, near Paris, despite the fact that no previous observations nor criticism had been made against her work. It was following a TV show where she appeared that a letter was sent to her employer and which referred to the fact that: « The French Raelien movement is considered a sect by a parliamentary report ... » (the letter is enclosed in our file) ». A final ruling at the Court in Melun on the 15<sup>th</sup> of February 2005 recognized that the loss of her job based on slanderous comments was illegal and condemned the school of Vincennes. The latest judgement was ignored since no one was prosecuted and the case was dismissed. This case demonstrates the will of Public authorities to tolerate slanderous behaviour with the will to prevent people from pursuing their professional activities because of their religious beliefs.

4. The situation in France is so serious so that in this atmosphere of hate everything is possible. **Even incitation to murder.** Ms. Ophelie Winter, after having been asked about cloning in a press release in Max Magazine in March 2003, declared: « I think Rael should be killed ». The Judges pronounced no sentence as the judgement on the 28th May 2003 in the Versailles court was broken by the court on the 26<sup>th</sup> September 2006, which considered that Ms. Winter expressed herself with humour and thus didn't justify any penalty! Would the sentence have been the same if it were made against a high religious figure?

5. The situation in France is so serious that in this atmosphere of hate, everything is possible. **Celebrities insult members of religious minorities**, such as Mister Bernard Kouchner, who qualified Mister Marcel Terrusse, who was the spokesman for the Raelian movement as « dangerous » and M. Terrusse as a « bastard » on a TV show on the public channel France 2 on the 6th of January 2003. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of May 2007, the Paris court judged that Mister Kouchner and the director of the public service channel France 2 were guilty of insults and public injuries. Mister Bernard Kouchner is a person who has international responsibilities (Civil administrator and was a high representative of the United Nations, ONU for Kosovo). Mister Bernard Kouchner has been a member of the French government and he is currently Minister of Foreign Affairs. He manifested the hatred and slander which animates representatives and public powers in France towards religious minorities.

**In society, we face discrimination when renting conference rooms or when we participate in public events. We are often told: "we can't accept you because you are on the government's list of harmful sects".**

The second origin of discrimination is in the form of subsidies and other financial support given to anti-sect associations like UNADFI and CCMM in France.

The money which supports these associations comes from tax-payers, among who are members of religious minorities, which means that their money is used to fight against their own beliefs! This is against the constitution which clearly stipulates a total separation between State and religion.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of July, the Court of Appeals in Rouen condemned the president of UNADFI, (the *National*

*Union of Associations for the Defense of Families and Individual Victims of Sects*), Catherine Picard, to pay 6,750 Euros to the Jehovah's Witnesses for slander. For years, UNADFI and other anti-sect organizations in France have been financed by the Prime Minister's Cabinet and other public entities.

This funding would be better invested in organizations that really promote religious tolerance.

What is more, in Belgium, the government continues to finance a coordination cell to fight what they call "harmful sects".

In Belgium, an example of this will from politicians to discriminate against religious minorities, comes from an assistant of the mayor from the Waterloo community, Mister Yves Vander Cruysen, who used his political power to cancel one of our conferences in Waterloo for a third time, even though he is responsible for religious minorities. He even boastfully proclaimed on 2 television stations and 4 newspapers, that he had forbidden Raelians to hold their conference in Waterloo.

**That's why we are demanding with insistence that the Belgian and French governments follow the following recommendation by the OSCE:**

1. **In France:** that we destroy subsidies and other financial support given to anti-sect associations like UNADFI and CCMM.
2. **In Belgium:** that we stop this exceptional law which created a "Center for information and advice" on dangerous cults" and "the coordination cell to fight against so-called "harmful sects" financed by the government.
3. **in these 2 countries:** that an official statement be made to clarify the situation and stop the confusion in the courts, among magistrates, the Police Corps, teachers and media, that the reports made by the Parliamentary commission on religious minorities have no validity nor are they a reference and must therefore not be quoted nor taken into consideration since they cause discrimination.
4. **to stop using the term « sect » in all the administration's reports and replace it by the term « religious minority » because the term « sect » generates serious discrimination and intolerance.**

All Raelians are proud of their religion and they will continue their non-violent struggle for freedom and for a better world without discrimination. We are tired of being stigmatized like the Jewish people were 50 years ago *and of being treated like second class citizens!*

Peace and love to all those who will help to make this world a world of freedom and tolerance.