



Participant in the Fundamental Rights Platform of the European Union since 2010

NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations since 2009

INGO with participatory status at the Council of Europe since 2005

Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

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Working Session 14: Fundamental Freedoms II including:

- Freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief

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Vice-president

FECRIS, the European Federation of Centres of Research and Information on Sectarism, links associations aimed at defending victims of sectarian deviances in more than 30 countries. It enjoys participatory status at the Council of Europe, Consultant status with the United Nations Organisation and is represented at the European Union's Fundamental Rights Agency.

More than in the past years and with more strength than ever before I here wish to draw the attention of the Governments here gathered to the fact that, contrary to what some want them to believe, our institution's concern is not to organise crusades against cults, not to fight freedom, is not a threat to freedom of conscience, belief and religion. Nothing could be further from the truth. FECRIS and its member associations provide support to victims of sectarian deviances. Such victims are not an invention, they exist and are able to testify the hellish life they endured in movements that have abused them and exerted such subduing pressures it takes them years to recover.

I am here today to more particularly decry the fierceness of those who accuse us, slander us, hack our internet sites, twisting freedom of religion into a rallying banner.

Make no mistake; religion instrumentalization is an extremist's weapon, as was quite courageously said by Dalil Boubakeur, Chairman of the French Council of the Muslim Faith in a recent plea in Paris.

FECRIS today hereby wishes to voice its revulsion at the way freedom of religion, which it respects as a fundamental part of the human rights, should have been instrumentalized to vacuum a Council of Europe report of any of its substance, the sole aim of which was to protect minors against abuse from deviant groups.

The unanimous character of these pamphlets aimed at downplaying this report and attacking their sponsors betrays their authors' ill intentions, namely to undermine a just cause by stirring it away from its objective.

Neither defamation nor ideological extremism are conducive to the respect for others and the democracy that the free world, represented by institutions like yours, wanted.