

Church of Scientology – Office of Human Rights

OSCE HDIM 2014

30th of September – Working session 14

On April 10, 2014 the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe voted down a report by French MP Rudy Salles, Board member of Miviludes, the French Inter-Ministerial Mission for Monitoring and Combating Sectarian Abuses, on “The protection of minors against the excesses of sects”.

For years, France has singled out minority religious groups labeled as “sects” or “sectarian movements” for official hostility and adverse treatment by the government and other public authorities. French authorities have seen the protection of minors as a mean to sensitize European countries and institutions to their view on the issue of so called “sects” and get an agreement on their policy in this regard.

The report submitted to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe by Mr. Salles proposed a Resolution and a Recommendation to adopt the French anti-religious minorities discriminatory policies at the European level in the 47 countries of the Council of Europe, in particular special indoctrination sessions for judges and police forces against targeted religious minorities, financing of anti-religious minorities associations and adoption of exceptional legislation to criminalize conversion to minority beliefs as “psychological subjugation”.

In reaction, more than 80 faith based or non faith based NGOs, from all over the world, including Christians, Muslims, Jews, Scientologists, Sikhs, Hindus, Scientologists and even Atheists and Humanists wrote protest letters to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and stood up against this bill in contradiction with Freedom of Religion and Belief international standards, in a vote which has been described by human rights advocates as a *“decisive victory for the protection of human rights and religious freedom, which was made possible because of the thousands who stood up and voiced their opposition in a critical time of need”*.¹

Finally, the Recommendation to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe was rejected by the Assembly, and the Resolution was fully amended by the Assembly to now request the Member States to implement policies of non-discrimination of traditional and non-traditional religions, new religious movements and “sects”, as provided in the final Resolution:

The Council of Europe has always promoted a culture of “living together” and the Assembly has spoken out on several occasions in favour of freedom of thought, conscience and religion, as well as in favour of minority religious groups, including those which have recently appeared in Europe (...) The Assembly does not believe that there are any grounds for discriminating between established

¹ <http://www.worldreligionnews.com/issues/religious-freedom-victory-council-europe>

and other religions, including minority religions and faiths, in the application of these principles (...) that no distinction is made between traditional religions and non-traditional religious movements, new religious movements or sects.²

This final decision from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe shows that the Council of Europe is democratically opposing discriminatory French policies against religious minorities.

We urge the French authorities to draw the necessary conclusions from this outcome. The countries of the Council of Europe, in alignment with the OSCE guidelines on non-discrimination on the basis of religious affiliation, do not want such a discriminatory system as the one existing in France. We are open to any discussion on this topic with the French representatives, and respectfully ask the ODIHR to engage in discussions with France to put an end to discrimination against religious minorities in this country.

² <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=20889&lang=en>