



**Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (OSCE)
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- Working Session 2 -**

**- France -
The inadequate and irresponsible fight against sectarian abuse**

Introduction

- **CICNS**¹ – Our association (Centre of Information and Consultation on New Spiritualities), which is independent of any religion and any political party, represents any citizens acting in a peaceful way, so that the principles of an open 'laicity' be respected, as well as basic freedoms of thought, conscience and religion in accordance with the European Convention on Human Rights.

- **Status** – For five years, CICNS has analyzed the debate on the « cults » issue in France². The sustained condemnation of spiritual research, repeatedly presented to the public through derogatory expressions such as 'sect' or 'cult', is perpetrated by some individuals and groups who are heading a crusade to entrench prejudice against freedom of spirituality as a whole. Criminal acts committed by a few individuals, along with a few tragic events around the world are used to justify an ongoing campaign of discrimination in France. CICNS members do not deny that when criminal acts are committed, they should be judged and punished according to law, when evidence provides the required proof. However such criminal acts should be treated for what they are, independent of the spiritual belief or associations of the perpetrators. One function of the CICNS is to keep in its archives, examples and testimonies of allegations of criminal acts, some without any credible evidence, which have fuelled campaigns of disinformation on the nature of spiritual research and led to discrimination, injustice and human tragedy. This justifies the existence of the CICNS.

- **An inadequate and irresponsible stand** - The use of such allegations to denigrate legitimate spiritual movements and research has no place in a society that claims to be a democracy. Asma Jahangir, special rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief at UN, mentioned after visiting France in September 2005, "a climate of general suspicion and intolerance"³. This climate is the consequence of a thirty-year policy led today by MIVILUDES⁴ (the French inter-ministerial mission to monitor and combat sectarian abuse under the supervision of the Prime Minister) and a fraction of members of Parliament⁵. While it is true that the Ministry of the Interior has adopted a much more balanced approach⁶ and, through its influence, does succeed in moderating MIVILUDES policy, the overall tone is dictated by the inter-ministerial mission. An intimidating arsenal has been put in place in terms of communication in the media, documentation, organization and legal provisions⁷. Despite discourse offering emphasis on secular values and the respect of freedom of conscience⁸, the French public authorities' actions against sectarian abuse are inadequate and irresponsible. We therefore propose a critical review, as specified below.

An inadequate and irresponsible stand against sectarian abuse

1- A purposely ambiguous stance - The commitment of French authorities in 2002, to switch from combating cults to combating sectarian abuse, in particular with the creation of MIVILUDES, has not been upheld, mainly because some anti-cult proponents didn't mean to: "We (...) study cults for some time now, most of us, here, in order to preserve individual and collective liberties"⁹; and because the groups in which sectarian abuse is supposed to occur are systematically labelled as 'cults' thus generating a great deal of confusion in the media (making use, without hindsight, of the fear generated around 'cults'), among the public and even among members of the French parliament or government representatives¹⁰. Using synonyms of the word 'cult', such as 'cultic group', 'group with cultic characteristics', 'group with sectarian abuse' towards movements which have been consistently called 'cults' for years, is but another hypocrisy.

2- Deleterious terminology - The term 'cult' ('sect') has acquired a pronounced pejorative meaning in France. It is synonymous with 'criminal group'. It is an insulting expression which aggregates in the public view, the crimes and offences that make the headlines (paedophilia, fraud, collective suicides and so on). Is it acceptable to prompt healthy public debate on spiritual minorities when they are designated by terms that instantly discredit them? We think not. It is worth noting that the anti-cult terminology has spread to all segments of society in France, especially in the political arena¹¹, thus increasing its disparaging effect.

3- Rumours and unfounded data - The anti-cult discourse in general or issued by MIVILUDES, mainly focuses around fears which have been generated around so-called 'cults' over three decades. This fear is fuelled using data that does not rely on solid research methodology - or for that matter, is not based on peer reviewed scientific results (sociologists of religion have been put aside¹² by MIVILUDES or have left the structure¹³ or refused collaboration¹⁴ considering they couldn't work in satisfactory conditions). Among the ludicrous data broadcast regularly, we draw your attention to statements including "500 000 persons are caught in a sectarian environment"¹⁵, "this endemic evil", that "80 000 children (...) are directly threatened by sectarian abuse"¹⁶, and the notion that France would now harbour 500 cults¹⁷ (keeping in mind the pejorative connotation of the word), that a third of psychotherapists "come from sectarian backgrounds or are comen"¹⁸. The media indulgently relay these figures with little or no critical thinking and the general public, caught in an artificially created state of anxiety, doesn't seek proof, rather, seeks to be reassured.

4- Accusations of mental manipulation - The very notions of 'mental manipulation' and equivalent expressions such as 'mental control', 'mental destabilization', 'psychological subjection', are systematically mentioned¹⁹ as characteristics of so-called 'cultic groups'. These concepts do not find consensus among the scientific community²⁰ and should therefore remain in the domain of scientific research. That is why the vote of About-Picard law²¹ in France, a bill unwisely penalizing a crime of 'psychological subjection' and targeting specifically so-called 'cults' despite its final formulation, is a matter of great concern; The invocation of complex concepts caricatured in the extreme in the communication performed by MIVILUDES²², anti-cult associations or the media is misinformation.

5- Irrelevant criteria for classification of sectarian abuse - Together with the 'mental manipulation' concept, the other criteria used to determine sectarian abuse²³ could in fact be applied to almost any group found in humanity. Use of these criteria is an attempt to impede the enforcement of common-law with so-called 'cults'²⁴.

6- The spirit of 'laicity' disregarded - Referring to legal means available with regard to sectarian abuse, the 2007 MIVILUDES annual report²⁵ states: "It is absolutely essential to refer to the doctrine of the movement and to integrate it in the enquiry because it contains in a systematic way, the ideology that urges to or leads to the violation of law". As part of the 1905 law of separation between Church and State, the latter and its services do not recognize any cult and should therefore not evaluate beliefs. The evaluation of a movement's doctrine can only be envisaged if performed by independent and qualified

experts, for example, by sociologists of religion - among other experts. But by keeping scholars at bay, MIVILUDES denied a 'knowledge acquisition' approach. It is therefore legitimate to ask how and by whom beliefs are evaluated in France, to determine their alleged dangerous aspects²⁶ (to suggest, as is more and more the case today, that many so-called 'cult's have nothing to do with spirituality is a way to judge what is of a spiritual nature and what is not²⁷).

7- A non contradictory approach without methodology - The testimony of 'victims' plays a major role²⁸ in the policy adopted to combat sectarian abuse and cults in France. Although it is quite natural to take these testimonies into account, they shouldn't be the only source of evaluation of spiritual minorities (as is the case today), all the more so as several administrations, testifying during the parliamentary enquiry commission of 2006²⁹ on the theme 'Stolen childhood', presented very low figures on problems linked to sectarian abuse. Such disputes should therefore include the testimony of all parties to the debate (which is not the case today). In addition, it would have been necessary to apply a suitable methodology³⁰: Individually identify victims to assess their true number and thus verify whether a large scale public action was relevant; categorize these victims into 'true victims' and 'non-credible victims'³¹; in the case of true victims, qualify the crimes they were subjected to; evaluate crimes caused by individuals or those that could be attributed to a movement's doctrine; set up statistics to compare delinquency in the midst of spiritual minorities and the rest of society to verify whether these movements constitute identifiable pockets of delinquency (an assertion implied by anti-cult proponents, which we consider unfounded). These basic tasks would have required the cooperation of independent experts with acknowledged credentials, in several fields (sociology, theology, psychiatry, psychology, law, etc.), publishing referenced and peer reviewed results. The fact is, this basic methodological work, which would have arrived at a consensus amongst a cross-section of scientific disciplines, has not been done to date.

8- Stepping unwisely outside the field of penal law – Unlike the position held by the Ministry of the Interior (particularly at the Central office on cults) which focuses on the prosecution of actual penal infractions³² perpetrated amidst spiritual minorities³³ (the normal way to evaluate public order crimes in a state ruled by law), MIVILUDES, supported by a fraction of members of parliament, aims at instating a form of extreme precaution principle³⁴ which leads to the pre-designation of groups suspected of sectarian abuse. This reasoning is probably explained by the small number of convictions³⁵ pronounced against so called 'cults'³⁶. Stepping outside the field of penal law is in itself a problem. Nonetheless, in a context where it was appropriate, a great deal of care would be essential to ensure it does not lead to intolerance and judgement towards alternative choices of life³⁷, while pretending that freedom of conscience is respected and family and individual values reassured, as is currently the case in France.

9- Perpetuation of discrimination - If the transition from 'combat against cults' to 'combat against sectarian abuse' had been effective, one objective for MIVILUDES would have been to ensure that discrimination towards spiritual minorities ended³⁸. It would have been necessary to assess the damage caused by the previous policy aimed at cults (1996, 1999, 2007 parliamentary reports, the impact of MILS, the predecessor of MIVILUDES) with qualitative and quantitative analysis; it would have been necessary to confirm from the groups arbitrarily qualified as 'dangerous cults' that the people involved no longer suffered in their professional, social or private life from having made alternative spiritual choices. In fact, the opposite has taken place³⁹.

10- MIVILUDES repository for cultic groups – MIVILUDES announced the release of its new repository⁴⁰. Initially meant to be widely published, it will not be so, as a result of the Ministry of the Interior intervention towards the Prime Minister⁴¹. If stopping a planned publication is commendable, the repository still exists and will be open according to MIVILUDES, "on site and on request", "to law's administration, associations, spirituals movements themselves, public authorities, ministries and local elected representatives, who often question us when they have to rent a public hall for such and such conference or to grant somebody an agreement for nursery care assistance. Also individuals can already consult us although we do not actually release any documentation"⁴². Considering the prevailing French climate around so called 'cults', this repository, indexing more than 500 movements and organizations, is equivalent to a list of proscription, as was (and still is) the parliamentary list of cults of 1996, which was

severely criticized. Though without legal value, this latter list has been regularly used by authorities⁴³ and is systematically referenced in the media, without being contestable in courts of law. Will the repository be contestable in courts of law? MIVILUDES asserts that it will take into account contradictory data⁴⁴ - yet no contradictory approach has been used to establish such data. Furthermore, in an era of Internet access, it may be asked how long the repository will remain with limited access.

Conclusion

- ***New dialogue*** – Our critical analysis of the fight against sectarian abuse led in France, highlights too many unacceptable aspects to allow us to point out any positive side. MIVILUDES chooses to work with contributors mainly in the anti-cult camp⁴⁵ - contributors who often distinguish themselves with violent talk⁴⁶ and the mission has not created or sustained acceptable dialogue to understand an important social issue. Today's spiritual minorities participate in shaping tomorrow's spirituality. To refuse this background tide by ostracizing it, is a way to turn French society against a part of its very self. It is necessary to establish new dialogue, open, serene, respectful, healthily contradictory, grounded in a knowledge-acquisition approach and open curiosity towards new spiritualities, and under the rule of law. Until now, the media has been a key player in an unhealthy, deteriorating debate; yet they could become players in its reconstruction.

- ***An observatory of spiritual minorities in France*** – CICNS strongly recommends the creation in France of an independent Observatory on spiritual minorities⁴⁷. This observatory would be a balanced and reference structure (composed of personalities with diverse opinions and acknowledged credentials), similar to INFORM⁴⁸ in the UK, that could express its views and recommendations to the government, the parliament and public authorities in order to improve law bills, to preserve public liberties with respect to the diversity of spiritual and therapeutic choices in the 21st century, while enforcing public order. The Observatory would engage in a knowledge acquisition process towards spiritual minorities, through which the minorities would feel confident in coming out of the shadows they have been driven into.

- ***A European Observatory on spiritual minorities*** – A European observation structure of spiritual minorities federating recommendations and views expressed in the different European countries appears to be necessary, to harmonize the comprehension of a significant and sensitive issue in society.

¹ See the presentation of our association on our website ([source](#)).

² Our observations are based on our own research and contributions of sociologists, lawyers, various actors in society, some of whom we have interviewed, and on testimonies of members of spiritual minorities (see our video section - [source](#)).

³ See Asma Jahangir's (special rapporteur at UN) report after her mission to France ([source](#)).

⁴ See MIVILUDES website ([source](#)).

⁵ MPs activity in the anti-cult fight has been particularly intense, as no less than three parliamentary enquiry commissions have taken place on that subject: in 1995 (that commission produced the first list of 'cults' – [source](#)), in 1999 (on the theme 'cults and money', that commission completed the first list of 'cults' – [source](#)) and in 2006 (on the theme 'Stolen childhood' - [source](#)). Some MPs want to launch a fourth parliamentary enquiry commission: "LePoint.fr: Why do you want a new parliamentary enquiry commission on cults? MP Jacques Myard: There is today a rise in the number of con men and psychotherapists promising recovery to depressed and defenceless people. In fact they belong to cults and try to swindle these people. Therefore I have officially signed Friday my request for the creation of a parliamentary commission on the medical and paramedical aspects of sectarian abuse" (Le Point, 29 February 2008 - [source](#)).

⁶ See an article by Raphaël Liogier, sociologist, in Le Monde dated 3 March 2008, on the cultural difference between MIVILUDES and the Ministry of the Interior about the cult issue ([source](#)). CICNS has on its own verified this difference of approach through several meetings with the directors of the Central office on cults.

⁷ In 2008, around 400 pages were published to warn the public and administrations against the danger of sectarian abuse. Among the available documentation, the following can be found: MIVILUDES annual reports, the guide for territorial authorities facing sectarian abuse, the guide for the public agent facing sectarian abuse, the guide for the

enterprise facing sectarian danger, the justice facing sectarian abuse (see our commentary on the latter as it gives a status on the operational measures taken to combat sectarian abuse [source](#)).

⁸ Example: the introductory paragraph to the guide for territorial authorities facing sectarian abuse is entitled: “A fundamental principle, the freedom of thought, conscience and religion” ([source](#)).

⁹ Some examples:

- a- A press release signed among other MPs by Georges Fenech (then MP) on 27 June 2005, justifies the use of the list of cults from the parliamentary report of 1996: “A reference for the work on prevention and combat against sectarian abuse” ([source](#)).
- b- Quote from MP Jacques Myard, when auditioning Mr. Jancovici during the parliamentary enquiry commission of 2006 entitled ‘Stolen childhood’: “(...) Mister, you have mentioned two cults, from which one has already made the headlines in the past, (...) and the other which I didn’t know, because indeed they swarm (...)” ([source](#)). As a reminder, Georges Fenech was the president of this parliamentary enquiry commission.
- c- Quote from MP Jean-Pierre Brard (member of MIVILUDES Conseil d’Orientation), when auditioning Mr. Rufo during the parliamentary enquiry commission of 2006 entitled ‘Stolen childhood’: “We (...) study cults for some time now, most of us here, in order to preserve individual and collective liberties (...)” ([source](#)).
- d- In a document entitled ‘Justice facing sectarian abuse’ ([source](#)), Georges Fenech, the author, states that the notion of ‘cult’ has no legal definition (page 20). Why then is there in the police force a referent group for enquiry on ‘cults’ collaborating with MIVILUDES (page 25)? Why does MIVILUDES work in close partnership with anti-cult associations, which according to Georges Fenech himself are structures of ‘protection against cults’ (page 39)? Why is Georges Fenech recommending the creation of a ‘European observatory on cults’ (page 47)?
- e- Interviewed on 19 December 2008 by journalist Paul Vermus ([source](#)) in a debate around integration and cults, Georges Fenech states: “If I give you the name of all the cults I have in my line of sight, I am good for a trial on the spot... Not easy to put five hundred cults and communities under surveillance, when five hundred thousand people are involved, from which there are eighty thousand children” ([source](#)).

¹⁰ Some examples :

- a- Between January and September 2009, MPs have asked 51 questions about sectarian abuse to the government. In the National Assembly database, questions are categorized by a field which takes the value ‘cults’ for those questions. Out of 51 questions, 44 contain the term ‘cults’ in the text and some of them have been systematically asked to all ministries ([source](#)).
- b- 10 February 2009 – Question to the Government from MP Robert Didier – : “Concerning cults, he wishes to know the measures envisaged to control and prevent the diffusion, the publication and the free over-the-counter sale on the French territory and French speaking internet of books published or written by people identified as belonging to or promoting cultic groups” ([source](#)).
- c- 2 June 2009 – Question to the Government from MP Michel Zumkeller –: “Mr. Michel Zumkeller asks Ms the Minister of higher education and research on the annual report on cults, published by MIVILUDES (inter-ministerial mission of vigilance against sectarian abuse). This report describes the means used by cults to settle in ‘new niches’. He wishes to know the undertaken measures to oppose the control by cults of the domains she has competence on” ([source](#)).
- d- 28 July 2009 – Response from the Minister for food, agriculture and fishing to a question to the Government – the Minister states that he is “(...) producing information intended to help his staff members understanding the organization of the fight against cults and sectarian abuse in France, as well as the procedures to engage in when they are confronted to a suspicion of sectarian abuse, or even an actual sectarian abuse” ([source](#)).
- e- 23 February 2008 – Jean-Luc Melancon, French political leader – talks about MIVILUDES as the ‘Inter-ministerial mission of vigilance and combat against cults’ ([source](#)).
- f- 15 July 2009 – Laurent Wauquiez, State secretary –: “I can testify that (...) on my own district, some cults have taken advantage of professional training structures” ([source](#)).
- g- 15 September 2009, Michele Alliot Marie, Minister of the Interior: “I will submit in the next penal bill a measure allowing the winding-up of associations, groups or cults convicted of fraud” ([source](#)).

¹¹ See our article on the diffusion of the anti-cult terminology in the different segments of society ([source](#)).

¹² Some examples :

- a- About the annual meeting of [CESNUR](#) in Bordeaux, Jean-Michel Roulet (former president of MIVILUDES) considers that it is a way “for a few scholars to spend time quoting each other” (source: Sud-Ouest, 2 June 2007).
- b- In the TV program ‘Les infiltrés’ on France2, 17 December 2008, discussing the cult issue, Georges Fenech answers a proposal made by Nathalie Luca, sociologist, to use the work of scholars at MIVILUDES: “I am not as bright and brilliant as they are (...) My only work, it is not to engage in university studies, it is to

denounce what threatens public order, what is an infraction to the law, what constitutes a danger to public health (...) and to fight everything which is contrary to the interest of individuals and society; let us each of us do our work” ([source](#)).

- c- In the 2008 MIVILUDES report, pages 51 and 52, brushing aside the possibility of a common work with scholars, the rapporteurs state: “(...) it is about recommending an objectivity and neutrality, which the intelligence community and MIVILUDES would allegedly lack, by relying on the expertise of scholars specialized on the subject of religion, when these scholars are those who duly referenced by the cultic circle of influence, continuously denigrate those exerting a vigilance and conducting the combat against sectarian abuse and put suspicion on the reliability of ex-members testimonies” ([source](#)).

¹³ Example of Nathalie Luca, social scientist (Le Monde 19 December 2005) ([source](#)).

¹⁴ Example of Sebastien Fath, social scientist ([source](#)).

¹⁵ In the newspaper Lyon Capitale, 7 May 2008, Georges Fenech states: “The Government is determined in its decision to combat sectarian abuse which, according to my figures, concerns about 300 000 French citizens” ([source](#)). In the TV-program ‘C à dire (France 5)’, 2 October 2008, he mentions “500 000 citizen concerned by the sectarian issue”. In the document “Justice facing sectarian abuse”, he adds: “Society could not stay insensitive to that endemic evil affecting around 500 000 of our fellow-citizens”, page 10 ([source](#)).

¹⁶ In the document ‘Justice facing sectarian abuse’, released to the Prime Minister in spring 2008, Georges Fenech mentions 60 000 children concerned by the sectarian issue. A few month later, in the TV-program ‘C à dire (France5)’, 2 October 2008, he states that “80 000 children (...) are directly threatened by sectarian abuse”. No explanation is given regarding the origin and the evolution of these figures. Those numbers have been cited the first time during the parliamentary enquiry commission of 2006 entitled ‘Stolen childhood’ (See our [commentary](#) on the auditions performed during that parliamentary enquiry commission).

¹⁷ In an interview in the TV-journal Soir3 on France3, 30 April 2008, Georges Fenech mentions 300 identified sectarian movements. In the newspaper France Soir, 1st October 2008, he talks about 200 movements. George Fenech was invited in the TV-program ‘Allo Docteur – France5’, 27 May 2009, presented by Marina Carrere d’Encausse: “MCdE: (...) The 2008 report has been released. First disturbing figure, in fifteen years you note that the number of sectarian movements in France has increased fourfold. Rising from 200 to close to 600. How can this incredible rise be explained? GF: I don’t think these figures are in the report. MCdE: I have been given this number. GF: Yes...it is a reality...”. Interviewed in the newspaper Liberation, 3 August 2009, Georges Fenech speaks now of “500 movements and structures” ([source](#)).

¹⁸ Georges Fenech, interviewed on the radio Europe 1: “There is probably one third of psychotherapists who belong to the sectarian circles or are con men”.

¹⁹ Quote from MIVILUDES 2008 report ([source](#)), page 168: “(...) the sectarian environments are often tempted, we see it, to couple their control activities on the people with various fraudulent activities destined to make their profit even more lucrative (...)”. See also an interview of Georges Fenech in the newspaper Liberation, 3 August 2009: “L: In which case can we talk of sectarian abuse? GF: When there is mental control or when the life of a person is threatened” ([source](#)).

²⁰ See for example the scientific collective work: ‘Misunderstanding cults – Searching for objectivity in a controversial field’, edited by Benjamin Zablocki and Thomas Robbins. See also CICNS file on the subject of mental manipulation ([source](#)).

²¹ See the bill for About-Picard law voted 12 June 2001 ([source](#)).

²² See the book by Arnaud Esquerre, sociologist at EHESS, ‘La manipulation mentale – Sociologie des sectes en France’, edited by Fayard, 2009; he describes the use of the notion of mental manipulation by the State as one of the “means used by authorities on psyche”. See also this work for a description of About-Picard law genesis, its “absence of effects” and its “unexpected effects”.

²³ See MIVILUDES website for a list of criteria for sectarian abuse ([source](#)).

²⁴ See an example of analysis on the sectarian abuse criteria, CICNS website ([source](#)).

²⁵ See MIVILUDES 2007 report ([source](#)), page 17.

²⁶ Quote from Catherine Picard, president of UNADFI, the main anti-cult association in France, when she was auditioned during the parliamentary enquiry commission of 2006 entitled ‘Stolen childhood’, answering a question from MP Christian Vanneste: “For some time, for the freedom of conscience sake, we did... shall I say restrict ourselves and we said: doctrines are not our business so long they do not attempt to public order and to the laws of the Republic etc. (...) But in order to support our files and to answer the type of questions you ask, we have been driven to dive into the source of sectarian movements and look (...)” ([source](#)). Would UNADFI, a close working partner for MIVILUDES, be giving opinions on beliefs to the mission (Catherine Picard is a member of MIVILUDES Conseil d’Orientation), when this association has no acknowledged competence on the subject?

²⁷ In response to Emmanuelle Mignon (VSD 20 February 2008 - [source](#)), Nicolas Sarkozy former cabinet director, who declared that cults in France are a “non problem”, MP Alain Gest (member of MIVILUDES Conseil

d'Orientation) stated: "By invoking freedom of conscience, it is, once again, the same mistake which consists in comparing cults and religions... as do hope the most well-known sectarian movements" ([source](#)).

In MIVILUDES 2008 report ([source](#)), page 53, the rapporteurs state: "The main concern, today, for the State and the associations has to do with the domains of health and training, where it is often difficult to discern any trace of spirituality".

²⁸ This focus on 'victims' is just an aspect of a more general focus on 'victims' in France; see in particular the book by Caroline Eliacheff and Daniel Soulez-Lariviere: "The time for victims", edited by Albin Michel ([source](#)).

²⁹ See CICNS documentary '120 minutes for spiritual freedom', part 2, giving extracts of the administrations testimonies ([source](#)).

³⁰ Olivier Bobineau, a social scientist, has denounced MIVILUDES lack of methodology in the TV-program 'Ce soir ou jamais', France 3, 19 May 2009.

³¹ Many scholars propose to evaluate with caution apostates testimonies, for example: Brian Wilson – 'Apostates and new religious movements', Richardson JT – 'Apostates, Whistleblowers, Law, and Social Control', Bromley D – 'The social construction of religious apostasy'. The last two authors are referenced in the work 'Misunderstanding cults', already mentioned.

³² Other members of the Government officially hold that position as well. Thus Eric Besson, current minister for immigration, stated in response to a question to the Government: "To belong to a movement considered as a sectarian group is not in itself an infraction, nor a threat to public order. The legislator has always considered that the existing incriminations listed in the penal law were sufficient to apprehend and, if needs be, punish sectarian groups activities that are conflicting with public order" ([source](#)).

³³ See, among others, an article by Stephanie Le Bars in Le Monde, 9 February 2008: "anti-cult MPs take the offensive" ([source](#)).

³⁴ Quote from Jean-Michel Roulet, MIVILUDES former president: "If it is meant that there are sectarian abuse only when there are victims, and if there are victims only in case of law conviction and if it is meant that we face a cult only when public order is threatened, then a highway is open in front of sectarian groups", LCI 4 April 2008, ([source](#)).

Quote from Georges Fenech, the current president of MIVILUDES, appearing in the TV-program 'C dans l'air (France5)', 3 August 2009: "Sectarian abuse is not just about infractions or fraud; sectarian abuse occurs when an individual or his/her family is cut from the rest of society" ([source](#)).

³⁵ CICNS inquiries on a subset of the parliamentary list of sects of 1996 show that many groups listed had not been convicted at all neither for penal nor administrative infractions. See also our interview of Jean-Marc Florand, lawyer ([source](#)). It is beyond comprehension, why no statistical analysis on penal and administrative convictions among spiritual minorities has been conducted by a state putting sectarian abuse in the forefront.

³⁶ *ibid*, Arnaud Esquerre, page 184; the sociologist summarizes the position of the director of the Central Bureau on cults whom he has interviewed in 2007: "The director of the Bureau on cults calls for the defence of public liberties and declares that 'cults' are not a problem with regard to public order (...)".

³⁷ Raphaël Liogier, sociologist, refers to the idea of "aesthetic judgment" ([source](#)). See also in the MIVILUDES guide 'The enterprise facing sectarian danger', page 50, the list of " terms or words that should immediately trigger an interrogation on the part of people in charge of economic security in enterprises" ([source](#)). We find words like 'well being', 'confidence', 'knowledge of oneself', 'fulfilment' etc.

³⁸ CICNS had a meeting with MIVILUDES former president, Jean-Michel Roulet, on 24 October 2006 ([source](#)). Asking him if he was aware of discriminations affecting spiritual minorities due to the policy conducted in France, he replied by the negative. As an answer to our arguments, his conclusion was: "Even if there was only one victim of sectarian abuse, our line of action is justified".

³⁹ See examples of discriminations affecting spiritual minorities on CICNS website ([source](#)). Among other examples : three women facing the accusation of being in a 'cult' during a divorce procedure ([source](#)) ; example of a spiritual community in the south of France which underwent a police force raid, its members put in police custody for interrogation, one of them indicted, on the ground of a few unverified accusations supported by an anti-cult association ([source](#)) ; example of the Tabitha religious community in the south-west of France taken as a target by the 2006 parliamentary enquiry commission "Stolen childhood" ([source](#)) ; example of a naturopath undergoing the global suspicion towards alternative therapies ([source](#)); example in the news of three youth workers accused, by false confessions forged by police officers, of being in a 'cult' (one of the youth worker has spent more than three months in prison while the two others were put under judicial review with the interdiction of practising their profession) ([source](#)).

⁴⁰ Georges Fenech made contradictory statements concerning a possible 'list of cults', finally settling for a new term that he imagined less controversial: 'repository'. In an interview granted to the newspaper Le Figaro on 18 May 2009, he states: "We are only interested in structures that give us problems. In that way, we need to work out a list of movements with sectarian abuse" ([source](#)). In the newspaper Liberation, on 3 August 2009, he states: "For now, we have indexed 500 movements or practices. It goes from the level of pseudo psychotherapists to well established organizations. It has never been intended to make a list of 'cults'" ([source](#)).

⁴¹ As soon as MIVILUDES repository project was known, the Ministry of the Interior weighed in with the Prime Minister: “Matignon did indeed received a mail signed by Michele Alliot-Marie, asking François Fillon services to straighten MIVILUDES action, after its president, end of January, did mention the idea of a new orientation for the policy followed by the mission”, in the newspaper Le Parisien, 13 February 2009 ([source](#)).

⁴² A quote of the response given by Georges Fenech in Liberation, 3 August 2009, when asked by the newspaper: “Who will have access to the files [in the repository]?” ([source](#)).

⁴³ See on our website an article on the non legal applicability of parliamentary reports on cults ([source](#)).

⁴⁴ About the repository, Georges Fenech states, in the newspaper Le Figaro, 19 May 2009: “We will add victims’ testimonies, but also testimonies from the communities’ leaders in order to respect contradictory viewpoints” ([source](#)). Nevertheless, Georges Fenech respect for contradictory viewpoints has not been convincing when he presided the parliamentary enquiry commission of 2006 entitled ‘Stolen childhood’: those spiritual minorities who were publically accused on the parliamentary channel, did not have any recourse but to fill in a pre-established and out of context form sent to them by the commission ([source](#)). And for those groups who considered legitimate to sue their accusers, MPs passed a law giving immunity to witnesses for parliamentary commissions (understand: those which deal with cult issues) ([source](#)).

⁴⁵ For example, the two main French anti-cult associations, [UNADFI](#) and [CCMM](#), are represented by their respective president at MIVILUDES Conseil d’Orientation (Catherine Picard for UNADFI, Jacques Miquel for CCMM) ([source](#)). UNADFI is declared to be of ‘public interest’ (‘charity’) and is financed by the State at more than 90 %.

⁴⁶ During the TV-program ‘C dans l’air (France5)’, 3 August 2009, entitled ‘Cult or not cult’, in which Georges Fenech was invited, Jacques Miquel, CCMM president, told about MIVILUDES repository: “A repository on movements with sectarian abuse has been announced and I heard that unfortunately it wouldn’t be given to the public, I would like to point out something that puzzles me quite a lot: in this country nobody would dare pick mushrooms without a flora and believe me, and I am an amateur mycologist, movements with sectarian abuse are much more toxic than mushrooms” ([source](#)).

⁴⁷ See a more detailed description of the Observatory on spiritual minorities on our website ([source](#)).

⁴⁸ See INFORM website ([source](#)).