

## **EMERGING PATTERN OF ATTEMPT TO THE RIGHTS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN MOLDOVA**

ORAL STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF JEHOVAH'S CHRISTIAN WITNESSES

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Jehovah's Witnesses are present in Moldova since more than 100 years, and they were registered there as a religion on July 27, 1994. However, Jehovah's Witnesses in Moldova are facing acts of violence, assaults, harassments and religious discrimination in various cities.

**Violence and assaults:** Many Witnesses, due to their religious affiliation, have been assaulted by priests or mayors, insulted with obscene language and violently threatened. Even the privacy of persons with whom the Witnesses were speaking was violated.

On June 30, 2006, Nina Scalozub was arranging the burial of her husband who was not one of Jehovah's Witnesses. The Orthodox priest forbid the burial in the village cemetery due to her religious affiliation and gathered approximately 30 residents to help him to block access to the cemetery. Only after the involvement of the police did the burial take place in a separate part of the cemetery.

Lack of alternative civilian service: Transnistria has no law providing alternative civilian service. Consequently, between 1995 and 2008, more than 20 Jehovah's Witnesses have been prosecuted (sentenced to prison terms or fined) because of their conscientious objection to military service for religious reasons.

**Restrictions of Religious Freedom:** Jehovah's Witnesses are experiencing difficulties holding religious meetings throughout Transnistria. Their activity is virtually paralyzed because of the attempts of the Transnistrian authorities to liquidate the legal entities of Jehovah's Witnesses and discontinue their activity.

**Difficulties and opposition to have houses of worship:** Local officials deprive Jehovah's Witnesses of the ability to obtain, renovate or use their houses of worship (Kingdom Halls) in the cities of Codru, Ghindesti, Mereni, Persecina, Tartaul and Racaria.

We are very concerned that the sufferings Jehovah's Witnesses endured during the Soviet era may be revived. We appeal to the Moldavian authorities to put an end to the discrimination inflicted to Jehovah's Witnesses and to find a constructive solution through a frank dialogue with our community in Moldova.