



SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

Statement of the Seventh-day Adventist Church on Religious Minorities and Religious Freedom

Throughout history religious minorities have often been subject to discrimination and outright persecution. Today religious intolerance and prejudice are again on the rise. Notwithstanding the affirmation of the freedom of everyone to hold and disseminate religious views and to change one's religion--an affirmation sustained in the United Nations instruments and documents comprising an "International Bill of Rights"--many countries deny this right to their citizens.

International instruments condemn discrimination against minorities, but tragically, some nations have published lists of religious groups described as potentially dangerous sects. Anti-sect commissions have been set up, investigative personnel have been trained, and restrictive laws passed. Hundreds of thousands of innocent believers are now under official suspicion and are treated as second-class citizens. All this violates religious freedom, which is the most basic and essential of the fundamental rights of humankind. Seventh-day Adventists believe in obeying the laws of the land as long as they do not conflict with the laws of God. However, we oppose any law, policy, or activity which discriminates against religious minorities.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church stands for religious freedom for everyone, as well as for the separation of church and state. Scripture teaches that the God who gave life also gave freedom of choice. God only accepts homage that is freely given. Seventh-day Adventists further believe that the law must be applied evenly and without capricious favour. We submit that no religious group should be judged because some adherents may appear to be extremists. Religious freedom is limited when aggressive or violent behaviour violates the human rights of others.

In support of Article 18 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international instruments, and in harmony with its beliefs and its history, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is fully committed to promote, defend, and protect religious freedom for everyone, everywhere. To that end, we will continue to cooperate with the United Nations Human Rights Commission and other international agencies and religious organizations to encourage every nation to implement the fundamental right of religious freedom. In addition, we will continue to promote dialogue and better understanding between governmental authorities and people who belong to religious minorities.

This statement was voted during the Annual Council of the General Conference Executive Committee on Wednesday, September 29, 1999 in Silver Spring, Maryland

http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/statements/main_stat45.html