

## The Path of Guru Jara – religious society

Address: Nadrazni okruh 13, 74601 Opava, Czech Republic

Phone: +420 608 040 142

Website: [www.cestagurujary.cz](http://www.cestagurujary.cz), [www.guru-jara-samadhi.com](http://www.guru-jara-samadhi.com)

Email: [info@cestagurujary.cz](mailto:info@cestagurujary.cz)



CESTA GURU JÁRY n.s.

## OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

Warsaw, Monday 26 September 2016

Working session 11: Tolerance and non-discrimination I, including prevention and responses to hate crimes in the OSCE area, and combating racism, xenophobia and discrimination, also focusing on intolerance on religious grounds.

### Czech Republic

#### Persecution of Guru Jara, Barbora Plaskova and believers of new Czech religious society

##### We recommend to the Czech authorities:

- to issue a new passport to Jaroslav Dobes and Barbora Plaskova, detained for being undocumented at the Immigration Detention Center of Manila in the Philippines since spring 2015 because the Czech embassy withdrew their passport;
- to take into consideration the cancellation of the sentence to a prison term of Jaroslav Dobes and Barbora Plaskova by the High Court of Olomouc and the ensuing presumption of innocence;
- **to actively resolve the case of Guru Jara and Barbora Plaskova in a timely matter, with diplomacy and respect for basic human rights, the presumption of innocence and the Geneva Convention;**
- to actively support and protect **religious diversity and tolerance in Czech society**, and to prosecute cases of hate speech or hate crimes;

Further recommendations can be found in the contribution of Human Rights Without Frontiers Int'l, presented at the OSCE HDIM on 23 September 2016 and in the report of legal expert of Dr. Athanassios Pantazopoulos dated 21 September 2016.

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

One year ago, here at OSCE HDIM, Soteria International called your urgent attention to the persecution of Mr. Jaroslav Dobes, known as Guru Jara, and his closest disciple, Ms. Barbora Plaskova, in the Czech Republic.

The claim of Soteria was confirmed this year by the Report on Religious Freedom of the US Department of State: our case in the Czech Republic is mentioned in it.

**Both leaders of the religious group, Path of Guru Jara, have been imprisoned for over 18 months at the immigration detention in the Philippines because the Czech consulate withdrew their passports on the grounds that they had been sentenced to a prison term by a first instance court in the Czech Republic but this sentence was totally cancelled by the High Court of Olomouc. Both Czech citizens remain presumed innocent as there has not been any sentence against them for about 18 months.**

**The systematic destruction and attack on our religious group was first initiated by the anticult movement in the Czech Republic over 15 years ago.** Each step in the process of our victimization is outlined exactly within the scientific study done by Dresden University regarding the activities of the anticult movement of FECRIS in France, published in 2012. Typical pattern of involvement of anti cult movement towards targeted religious minority could be described as follows:

- 1. The targeted group is labeled dangerous and manipulative.*
- 2. Former members and/ or their relatives are presented as victims.*
- 3. The group is labeled a "sect". A sect according to anti-cult movement definitions is not entitled to enjoy the right to freedom of belief.*
- 4. Relying on the accusations of former members and of the anti-cult movement, the police collect their one-sided testimonies as a starting point of their investigation.*
- 5. These former members are viewed as specialists on the topic and slander the group in the media.*
- 6. Biased examination and assessment of the group's spiritual practices, which are not understood, occur.*
- 7. Stigmatization of the group in public opinion by the activities of the anticult movement.*
- 8. Police raids and confiscation of items needed for the practice of the group then take place.*
- 9. Criminal accusations and prosecution of the leaders and members follow.*
- 10. Other members experience discrimination and a high level of public intolerance caused by social panic artificially created.*
- 11. Public personalities as politicians or academics who view the persecution as unjust are not listened to by the media, the police and the judiciary.*
- 12. Finally, the group is paralyzed, de facto destroyed and sometimes dissolved.*

**In 2010**, 4 years of investigations culminated in police raids when **members of Path of Guru Jara were victims of brutal persecution by the special police task force (UOOZ)**. Police behavior included broad wiretapping, coercive interrogation, warrantless searches, confiscation of money, sexual harassment and physical and emotional threats. These illegal acts have shattered the trust of our members in our right to religious freedom within the Czech Republic and have moved us to inform Czech executive authorities about this violation of our constitution.

**A massive media campaign started in 2011 from unverified, slanderous sources of the anticult movement and police to ultimately create a monstrous image of our peaceful church and its representatives.** This has caused many members to lose their jobs,

academic degrees and communities. Many members who have undergone repeated persecution are now unfortunately experiencing grave psychological and health problems.

**We conclude that the persecution of our religious group, Path of Guru Jara, would not exist without the involvement of the Czech anticult movement, which has afflicted Czech society and authorities for many years with their intolerant opinions about new religious movements.**

Each of these significant events has all but destroyed our spiritual movement as we have lost thousands of believers and students. In October 2014, after Guru Jara and Barbora Plaskova were sentenced in their absence to a prison term, we understood that if we didn't fight harder for our human rights, we would undoubtedly perish as a community. We also think that the policies of the public authorities are far from the legacy of our former president Vaclav Havel, with regard to respect and tolerance towards religion, and the **state does not behave according to principles of neutrality**. So on the 17th of November 2014, on the 25th anniversary of the Velvet revolution, we held our first demonstration of prayer for religious freedom in the Czech Republic and the release of Guru Jara and Barbora Plaskova.

**In February 2015 the Czech Embassy in Manila asked for the cooperation of the Filipino authorities to arrest internationally wanted and dangerous criminals on the run.** In March they informed the Philippines authorities that our representatives are both undocumented aliens and their presence in the Philippines poses a risk to public interest (fugitive). Although both have lived quietly in the Philippines since 2009 with their families, the Philippines police trusted Czech authorities overall.

Barbora Plaskova was arrested in April 2015, when she tried officially to extend her visa. Guru Jara was arrested in May 2015 during his spiritual workshop with Japanese students, when Philippines police SWAT team raided his ashram. Immediately after their arrest, they both asked for international protection.

**A few days later in May 2015, appeals court reversed the criminal charges upon Guru Jara and Barbora Plaskova in their entirety due to the lack of evidence and enormous procedural errors.**

**Following their arrest, one month later in June 2015, an illegal forcible deportation attempt of Guru Jara was initiated by the Czech police during his pending asylum case.** The Czech police blatantly ignored the presumption of innocence and persuaded the Philippines authorities that Guru Jara did not deserve the Geneva Conventions which protect asylum seekers. The operation failed as Guru Jara collapsed at the airport and had to be sent to the local medical facilities. Since that moment, we have deeply feared for our leader's life and safety.

**Today, while Path of Guru Jara is an officially registered church in the USA and in the Philippines, our process of registration in the Czech Republic is indefinitely delayed.** Ironically, the independent expert on our local registration case is the same member of the anticult movement who assisted the court in determining a verdict against Guru Jara in 2014.

However, it is only thanks to the cooperation from several human rights NGOs and devoted supporters from the EU, the Philippines, the USA and Japan that we have begun to actively defend our rights. Without these enormous combined efforts, Guru Jara and his religious community would be merely history. **We are extremely grateful to every brave and open-minded politician or supporter who has dared to combat the prejudices in our case.**