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**- France -
The fight against sectarian abuse revealed as a vehicle for propaganda**

Introduction

Our last contribution¹ to this audience, commenting upon the French policy on so-called 'fight against sectarian abuse', took place on the 29 September 2009. Two years later, our critical analysis is even more relevant as we have witnessed a gradual intensification of this fight, supported at the highest level of the state. In its nine years of existence, MIVILUDES (the French inter-ministerial mission to monitor and combat sectarian abuse, under the Prime Minister's authority) has blacklisted nearly all alternative approaches whether spiritual, therapeutic or educational, using a substantial propaganda strategy. Furthermore, this has been enforced in the name of secular values and the defence of individual rights. We describe the main features of this propaganda in the first part of this document. In the second part we provide examples showing, on a monthly basis, the excesses of the anti-cult mindset.

A well grounded propaganda system

1. **A conservative 'one way of thinking'**: After more than thirty years of misinformation, the 'cult'/'sect' issue has become an orthodox mindset. The mere mention of the word 'cult' is enough to spur a consensual feeling of rejection, usually without any real knowledge of the groups or people referred to. The integrity of the French fight against sectarian abuse is rarely put under scrutiny, or even brought into perspective, within the broader European context, whether it be in political, media or intellectual circles²; not even the allocated resources and their effectiveness are discussed. Extreme statements are frequently made by journalists, members of government or politicians, along with members of the civil society, afforded media coverage, without any question being raised. For example: "*Gurus of all kind show relentless devilish cunning*"³; "*What is at stake for year 2010 is to purge vocational training from the cancer of cults*"⁴; "*We wish to see put in place a national campaign against sectarian abuse to be considered as other dependencies like alcohol, drugs or tobacco*"⁵; and "*80 000 children (...) are directly under the menace of sectarian abuse*"⁶.

2. **A permanent doublespeak:** This ‘one way of thinking’ allows and feeds itself with a set of deceptive arguments and doublespeak intended to give some credibility to an otherwise dubious anti-cult policy. MIVILUDES is but one zealous perpetrator of such doublespeak:
- a. By claiming not to target ‘cults’ but only their alleged misbehaviours⁷; while hypocritically continuing to use the disparaging appellation ‘cult’ or ‘sectarian movement’ against those groups⁸.
 - b. By claiming there are no longer any lists of ‘cults’ in France⁹.
 - c. By claiming the inter-ministerial mission “*takes part in the battle against all forms of discrimination, led by Public Authorities, reminding state agents their obligations on this matter, during consultations and training sessions*”¹⁰. It would be very easy to interview so-called ‘sectarian’ groups – and foremost among these, those having undergone intrusive investigation by MIVILUDES or police force raids¹¹ - to observe that institutionalized discrimination is at work.
 - d. By claiming to adhere to French secular values when the whole anti-cult policy led in France is an antithesis of secular principles¹².
 - e. By claiming to provide extensive and pertinent information¹³ while spreading all kind of rumours, fear-mongering¹⁴ and unfounded and false information¹⁵. Notably claiming to use the work of researchers¹⁶ while social scientists contributions are dutifully ignored¹⁷.
 - f. By claiming there is no attempt to export the French anti-cult fighting model - while France’s stance on that matter is unique and not understood by many other countries which prompts our government to seek supporters abroad¹⁸. All the more so as the mission claims international organizations to be infiltrated by cults¹⁹.
 - g. By saying nothing about, or downplaying, the recent condemnation of France, in its opposition of Jehovah’s Witnesses, for violation of European convention’s article 9 on religious freedom²⁰, a significant decision by the European Court on Human Rights, contributing to discredit of the French anti-cult policy.
3. **Complacent mass media:** The anti-cult propaganda relies on the active cooperation of mass media²¹. MIVILUDES and particularly Georges Fenech, the mission’s current President, know how to take advantage of the media’s addiction to the ‘sensational’, the ‘emotional’, and to excessive statements. The media relishes ‘cults’ and victims stories. The sociological truth, less eye-catching, is of no interest to them because it has nothing to do with the journalistic hype denigrating those groups. For that matter, some journalists do not hesitate displaying their anti-cult views – thereby expressing non-critical support for MIVILUDES work – or to suggest them, quite often regardless of the ethics of their profession²². If a sign of the deceptive alleged transition from a ‘fight against cults’ to a ‘fight against sectarian abuse’ was needed, it would be enough to record the proportion of journalists ignoring or discarding the meaning of MIVILUDES acronym²³, a confusion in line with the mission’s doublespeak. Nevertheless, the recent decision by ECHR (condemning France v. Jehovah’s Witnesses) produced a positive change in the media coverage of this group²⁴ (otherwise regularly bashed by the media). This may indicate that such decisions, if repeated, could help ease France’s blinkered vision regarding the cult issue.
4. **‘Mind control’ as a recurring theme:** An anti-cult propaganda theme used *ad nauseam* to discredit so-called ‘cults’ is the notion of ‘mind control’ (*‘mental manipulation’*)²⁵. This notion derived from the Anglo-Saxon pseudo-scientific concept of brainwashing is often refined into two other formulations: ‘loss of free will’²⁶ and ‘vice of consent’²⁷. These three notions applied to cults (outside a research environment where they can possibly be studied) are discriminatory and dangerous concepts:
- a. They deny an individual possession of any self-determinism or any responsibility, considering he/she can simply be controlled against his/her will, as a brainless victim.

- b. They do not gather consensus in the scientific community, on the contrary, they are seen as pseudo scientific concepts by many scientists²⁸.
- c. They imply that 'cults' are using sophisticated persuasion techniques²⁹ that are seemingly absent from other parts of society, which is at best very naïve and at worst, a blatant show of cynicism³⁰.
- d. They suggest that any offence, any ill-will expressed or 'strange' behaviour observed amidst 'cults' is the result of 'mind control'³¹, moreover, this occurs while there are no comparative studies on similar offences or ill-will in the rest of society³².
- e. They lead, in France, to a specific legislation aimed at 'cults'³³.

5. **'Raids' and 'exit counselling' as means of operations:** We have already mentioned MIVILUDES' intrusive investigations and CAIMADES'³⁴ supervised police force raids in training centres or communities. A new type of intervention has appeared recently in France: 'exit counselling', an allegedly non-coercive 'exfiltration' technique to get individuals out of a supposedly sectarian community. We question vigorously the legality, conformity to fundamental rights and operational mode of this technique:

- a. If indeed the value of consent of the adult cannot be discarded except on exceptional grounds in the field of private law relationships or in the field of legal right on freedoms³⁵, the only potential justification for an 'exfiltration' operation would rely on the relevance of the three notions: 'mind control', 'loss of free will', 'vice of consent'. As shown above, such validation is lacking. And if by chance, as unlikely as it may be, it is obtained in the future, the whole of society would be impacted; the 'exit counselling' technique would have then to be generalized. This raises a serious question: How would established religions, convents and monasteries, the army, political parties, publicists, corporations, clubs of supporters, etc react?³⁶
- b. If, in theory, 'exit counselling' no longer uses visible violence - abduction, confinement, which rendered illegal its ancestor 'deprogramming'³⁷ -, some anti-cult activists think otherwise³⁸. It is also worth noting that some of the journalists who covered corresponding news items mentioned 'commando-like operations'³⁹. In a country which has legislated on workplace harassment, on psychological violence (in the family environment), on psychological subjection (About-Picard law aiming 'cults'), how is it that 'exit counselling' psychological violence cannot be legally questioned? What difference is there between an 'exit counsellor' who would succeed in convincing an individual to quit a group through the technique of 'exit counselling' and the persuasion skills granted to the 'guru' (those one seen as harmful), as in both cases, it targets the same people said to be responsive to manipulation?
- c. 'Exit counselling' technique supervision is supposed to be certified in the presence of a lawyer and psychologists. Some lawyers and psychologists are actively involved in the virulent French anti-cult fight and do not hesitate proposing actions and legislation that other citizens consider contrary to liberties; therefore their professional title is not a guarantee. Assuming that legality (in the penal sense) was definitively acquired, the only way to validate the operational mode of 'exit counselling' technique – potentially impacting several hundred of thousands of citizens - would be to obtain a methodological consensus on the part of lawyers and psyche professionals (among their representative structures). To the best of our knowledge, this consensus does not exist.

Anti-cult fight on a monthly basis

January 2010: The French national debate on the Muslim face veil (so-called niqāb, improperly named burqa in the French debate)⁴⁰ has been used to further extend the anti-cult rhetoric.

January 7, 2010: Police raid at the *University of World's knowledge and wisdoms* (Terre du Ciel)⁴¹. The sectarian abuse hypothesis initially brought up to justify this intentionally intimidating procedure has been quickly put aside, but moral and financial consequences have been significant for university's staff.

February 2010: MIVILUDES publishes a ten-bullet questions/answers document⁴² aimed to parents in order to help them protect their children against sectarian abuse in health matters. Example of question that should arouse suspicion, if the answer is positive, in parents' mind: *"Is the therapist critical towards state services in charge of youth?"*.

March 2010: Georges Fenech, current MIVILUDES president, proceeding with his tour of sunny overseas territories, goes to New Caledonia to spread the anti-cult mindset⁴³.

March 2010: A mayor in the north of France⁴⁴ allows himself to invoke the 1996 parliamentary list of cults, although without any legal value and despite a 2005 note by Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin⁴⁵ explicitly recommending not to use it, to refuse a public meeting for a group mentioned in that list.

March 9, 2010: A few weeks before the release of MIVILUDES 2009 annual report, a government's response to a parliamentary question⁴⁶ illustrates the absurdity of French anti-cult fight: *"For the year 2009, no complaints signalling sectarian abuse have been filed to DJEPVA"*⁴⁷.

March 27, 2010: Freemason orders⁴⁸, among the main leading anti-cult proponents in France, carry on their lobbying on the subject, a disturbing stand in light of freemasonry's own highly controversial history⁴⁹.

April 2010: MIVILUDES publishes its 2009 annual report⁵⁰. Once again, the inter-ministerial mission asserts a repressive approach, does not acknowledge the discriminations caused by its policy and discard a knowledge acquisition based methodology. This stance is clearly summarized in Georges Fenech's own words: *"The public must be warned: all that which is natural can partly hide sectarian abuse"*.

April 2010: Mainstream media⁵¹ fail once again to question the government policy expressed in MIVILUDES 2009 annual report; no contradictory viewpoints are presented to question the report's content and conclusions.

April 2010: Education, outside public or 'under contract' schools⁵², is considered by MIVILUDES to be a nest for sectarian abuse [note: as a reminder, schooling is not mandatory in France, only education is].

April 7, 2010: Cults become a good subject for audience ratings in TV series (example: *Plus belle la vie*, France 3) and in literary production: example, a novel by Sarah Chiche: *L'emprise*⁵³ [Stranglehold].

May 2010: The controversial debate around the French law regulating the title of 'psychotherapist'⁵⁴ is seized by Georges Fenech to further spread the key but fraudulent anti-cult concept of mental stranglehold (mental manipulation)⁵⁵.

September 2010: MIVILUDES, architect of the anti-cult psychosis in France, publishes the results of a survey on a sample of 962 French individuals⁵⁶ concluding that 42% of them see cults as a menace to their friends and families.

September 25, 2010: Georges Fenech, anti-cult proponent of the early days and proactive supporter of the 1996 list of cults⁵⁷, sees no contradiction in stating that: “*There is no authority in France giving labels such as: you are a religion or you are a cult*”⁵⁸.

October 2010: MIVILUDES publishes a Guide for the protection of youth against sectarian abuse⁵⁹. The sensitive subject (rightly so) of youth is used in a perverse manner to state ludicrous data on the alleged number of victims of sectarian abuse⁶⁰ and to promote ostracism against groups labelled as cults⁶¹.

October 2010: Most mainstream media pass on Georges Fenech statement that 50,000 to 60,000 children would be victims of sectarian abuse, without investigating the absence of proof supporting such a statement.

October 2010: The deleterious anti-cult climate impacts two recent law cases⁶².

November 2010: After undergoing an unjustified and destabilizing intrusive investigation (described as a ‘raid’ in the press) by MIVILUDES, a spiritual community (*Moulin des Vallées*) has filed a complaint in the court of law⁶³ against MIVILUDES. The prosecutor in charge, seeing no matter for prosecution, closes the case. [Note: in France, prosecutors are hierarchically attached to the ministry of Justice and therefore their independence with regard to the government is always a matter of controversy].

November 2010: Again, some ‘freemason orders’ display a simplistic anti-cult attitude while organizing an internal meeting ‘inadvertently’ programmed in the premises of a group labelled as ‘cult’ in the 1999 parliamentary report.⁶⁴

December 2010: MIVILUDES launches an unjustified and alarmist campaign against so-called ‘apocalyptic’ groups in the perspective of year 2012, in particular in relation with the site of Bugarach in the south of France⁶⁵.

January 2011: The French anti-cult mindset is so well established that a Member of Parliament goes as far as to propose legal immunity to members of MIVILUDES, some of whom being sued by minorities or citizens considering they have been defamed or blacklisted⁶⁶.

January 2011: On the web site of the Ministry for work, employment and health, one can read⁶⁷: “*If you think you have been subject to exorbitant financial pressure, mental subversion, or if you have heard a discourse disparaging conventional medicine, you might have been victim of sectarian abuse*”. That type of slogans - nowadays widespread on official websites - encourages the anti-cult mindset⁶⁸.

February 2011: The vocational training business is one of the main targets for anti-cult policy as expressed by the secretary of state for employment: “*What is at stake for year 2010 is to purge vocational training from the cancer of cults, a situation tolerated for too many years now. The government will lead a relentless hunt on that matter!*”⁶⁹.

March 2011: Following a testimony, a 70 strong police force besieges a personal development centre; four people are placed in police custody. On what grounds? “*A potentially sectarian activity*”⁷⁰.

March 2011: A ‘spiritual healer’ course is cancelled; the event’s organizer has received an official mail warning her that the anti-cult squad would step in her premises, should this course be maintained. Destabilized by such an intimidating threat, the organizer chose to cancel the course⁷¹.

April 2011: The party in power launches a debate on ‘laicity’. Spiritual, therapeutic and educational minorities are not mentioned. Their arbitrary status of ‘cults’ excludes them from any debated issue in society as the ‘cult’ issue is not to be examined in a contradictory way in France⁷².

May 2011: Two recent legal cases show how the anti-cult phobic attitude is used to try to explain unsolved situations⁷³.

June 2011: MIVILUDES president launches a new alarmist campaign against ‘apocalyptic’ groups on the Bugarach site⁷⁴.

June 2011: In the wake of this campaign, MIVILUDES releases its 2010 annual report. The *modus operandi* remains unchanged: promote reflexes of suspicion and spread rumors of danger on all counts. The main targets this year are: so-called ‘apocalyptical’ groups and alternative medicines, in particular those around cancer treatment⁷⁵. With this report, MIVILUDES once again asserts its role of arbiter on good and bad practices or beliefs, in a secular state supposed to prevent the intrusion of the political into the realm of beliefs and alternative choices of life⁷⁶.

June 2011: Once again this year, mass media fail to become a necessary counter-power⁷⁷ at the time of release of MIVILUDES 2010 report. No contradictory viewpoints are presented to question the report’s content and conclusions.

Conclusion

In 2009, during the meeting organized between NGOs and the *Advisory Council*, CICNS proposed to include in the *Guidelines for review of legislation pertaining to religion or belief*⁷⁸ an entry recommending states to not use fraudulent notions like ‘mind control’ (‘mental manipulation’) to discredit groups already labelled as ‘cults’. We reiterate our proposition and also add a new one to the same effect on the use of techniques like ‘exit counselling’.

In addition, if the European Court on Human Rights encourages states to provide information to citizens, it appears necessary to have means for evaluating the quality and outcome of this information⁷⁹. An entry in the *Guidelines* to this effect would seem appropriate (in many respects state information/communication has often more impact than current legislation). Today French anti-cult information (propaganda) issued by the Government or Parliament is not assessed. We consider that the creation of an independent and official (meaning funded and supported by the state) observatory on spiritual, therapeutic and educational minorities, as a replacement for MIVILUDES, would be the most democratic and safe option to provide sensible information regarding those groups⁸⁰.

¹ See the document we presented at HDIM, Warsaw 2009, on OSCE web site ([source](#)).

² With the notable exception of researchers in social science; example: the conference “Which regulation for new religious movements and sectarian abuse in the European community?” organized jointly by Agence Nationale de la Recherche (ANR), laboratoire des Cultures et Sociétés en Europe (LCSE), Université de Strasbourg, Centre d’Etudes Interdisciplinaires des Faits Religieux (IESR), Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS – Centre d’Etudes Interdisciplinaires des Faits Religieux), Institut des Sciences Sociales du Politique de l’Ecole (ISSP Cachan), 15 January 2010 in Paris-Cnrs.

³ Quote by Paul Amar, journalist presenter in the TV program *Revu et corrigé*, France 5, 10 April 2010, commenting the release of MIVILUDES 2009 annual report ([source](#)).

⁴ Quote by Laurent Wauquiez, Secretary of state in the Ministry of economy, Senate – 23 September 2009 session ([source](#)).

⁵ Quote by Charline Delporte, president of ADFI Nord (anti-cult association), interviewed in l’Express, 15 June 2011, on MIVILUDES 2010 annual report ([source](#)).

⁶ Quote by Georges Fenech in TV program *C à dire*, France 5, 2 October 2008 ([source](#)).

⁷ Georges Fenech, MIVILUDES current president, is a generous provider of inconsistent statements showing the hypocrisy of a mission fighting against cults while pretending fighting against sectarian abuse, example: 19 November 2008, in VSD, he 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](#)). Interviewed by Robert Ménard, Itélé>, 15 June 2011, Georges Fenech declares: “As for me, I don’t know what a cult is, I have no list, you ask questions, I answer you. There is no legal definition of a cult, I do not fight cults”. ([source](#)). MIVILUDES president is aware of the pejorative load of the word ‘cult’; questioned on sectarian abuse suspicions brought upon an alternative banking organism, he admits: “It would be malicious to say that Nef is a sectarian group”, France Info, 11 December 2010, program *Le vrai du faux* ([source](#)). In the 13:00 news program on the radio France Inter, 15 June 2011, the journalist, Claire Servajeau, asks Georges Fenech: “It means that cults can prey upon anyone and that no one is safe?”; Georges Fenech: “No one, nobody is safe” ([source](#)). Our previous document presented at HDIM 2009 gives further demonstration of the deception consisting in pretending that a ‘fight against sectarian abuse’ would have replaced a ‘fight against cults’ in France.

⁸ The stigmatising load of the term ‘cult’ is acknowledged by participants involved in the observation of spiritual minorities. Brigitte Knobel (Director of [Centre intercantonal d’Information sur les Croyances \(CIC\)](#) in Switzerland) comments: “CIC abstains from using the term ‘cult’, pejorative and stigmatising. The term ‘cult’ indeed favours an association between strangeness and dangerousness and tends to underestimate the religious dimension of controversial groups”, in ‘Which regulation for new religious movements and sectarian abuse in the European community?’, Presses universitaires d’Aix-Marseille, under the direction of Nathalie Luca ([source](#)). Germany, another example, has taken position against the use of the term ‘cult’, considered to be “too negatively connoted” (Nathalie Luca, *ibid.*).

⁹ Since the publication, on May 27 2005, of a bill by the Prime Minister pertaining to the ‘fight against sectarian abuse’ ([source](#)), it is not appropriate to mention ‘lists of cults’ in France; therefore MIVILUDES has replaced the term ‘list’ by the term ‘repository’. Georges Fenech, interviewed on the parliamentary channel LCP on June 16 2011, in the TV program *Ca vous regarde*, states: “It is a sensitive subject. (...) What we are interested in are the movements bearing danger, that’s it. And for those, I can assure you that at MIVILUDES we have a filing cabinet, each time we consider that there is danger somewhere, not just denouncement, we open a file and based on that file we inform Public Authorities, citizens, associations, that’s our role. So, call it a list, as you wish, in any case we have in our premises files referenced according to hazard”. Georges Fenech had claimed that MIVILUDES repository would be open to contradictory sources: “We will include victims statements, but also those from communities’ leaders in order to respect contradictory views”, in *Le Figaro*, 19 May 2009, ([source](#)). Several spiritual minorities informed us that they couldn’t actually access their file. On June 16 2011, in the TV program *Ca vous regarde*, LCP, Catherine Picard, president of the anti-cult association UNADFI, member of MIVILUDES Orientation Council: “As for myself, I would favour a new list, for prevention and education” ([source](#)).

¹⁰ Quote by Amélie Cladière, former MIVILUDES general secretary, (Nathalie Luca, *ibid.*).

¹¹ See our interview of the community ‘Moulin des vallées’ after it had undergone an intrusive investigation led by MIVILUDES ([source](#)). Also see the last raid of police forces in a ‘biodynamism’ centre in Nyons ([source](#)). Questioned on the way to reconcile an alleged battle against discriminations with that type of violent and traumatic investigations, Amélie Cladière’s answer is: “I don’t see the point” (Nathalie Luca, *ibid.*).

¹² See in particular Georges Fenech’s quotes concerning Jehovah’s Witnesses chaplains in the prisons and the commentary made by sociologist Jean Baubérot on his blog ([source](#)). Also see our synthesis on ‘laicity’ ([source](#)).

¹³ Amélie Cladière: “How do we get our information? To tell the truth like everybody else, except that we use all of our time to that purpose, which gives us a better information than mister everybody” (Nathalie Luca, *ibid.*).

¹⁴ Example of needless alarming statement by Georges Fenech: “*The public must be warned: all that which is natural can partly hide sectarian abuse*”, radio Europe 1, 7 April 2010 ([source](#)).

¹⁵ The evolution (and it is just a sketch) of the alleged number of under 18 victims of sectarian abuse as stated by Georges Fenech, leaves one speechless for its silliness ([source](#)).

¹⁶ Amélie Cladière: “*We are informed like everybody else, through the work of scientists*” (Nathalie Luca, *ibid.*).

¹⁷ In the TV program *Les Infiltrés*, France 2, 17 December 2008, Nathalie Luca proposes to the MIVILUDES to use the work of scientists and to have spiritual minorities at the table of discussion, something which is done in other European countries. For Georges Fenech, the scientists’ ‘theoretical’ work does not fit his mission: “*I am not as intelligent and brilliant as they are (...) My only job, it is not to make academic studies, it is to denounce that which troubles public order, that which is an offence with regard to law, that which constitutes a danger to public health (...) and to fight against everything which is contrary to the interest of the individual and society; to each one his job.*” ([source](#)).

¹⁸ Amélie Cladière, former MIVILUDES general secretary, questioned on MIVILUDES suspected lobbying to export its model, answers: “*(...) We do not wish to export anything. Each model is respectable. (...) what we wish and ask again (...) is a dialog at the European level on all these public policies because even if there is no public instance in the majority of impacted countries, there are nevertheless public policies on these matters.*”, (Nathalie Luca, *ibid.*). How then to explain that FECRIS, a European anti-cult structure, is mainly financed by France? Why does Georges Fenech recommend the creation of a ‘European observatory on cults’ (page 47) in his document ‘Justice facing sectarian abuse’ ([source](#)) addressed to the Prime Minister?

¹⁹ Journalist Robert Ménard, *Itélé*, on June 15 2011, draws Georges Fenech’s attention on the fact that UNO criticizes France’s stance on cults; - G. Fenech: “*This is because of these NGOs which are proxies for sectarian organizations and are registered at the United Nations*” - R. Ménard: “*My!, this is too easy when it’s UNO challenging you*” - G. Fenech: “*No, it’s not the United Nations...*” - R. Ménard: “*What, They are infiltrated by cults?*” - G. Fenech: “*... It’s these NGOs which are proxies once again and are registered at the Council of Europe, at UNO, among international instances; they are doing a significant lobbying (...)*” ([source](#)).

²⁰ See for example an article in *Le Monde*, 30 June 2011: ‘Jehovah’s Witnesses: The European Court for Human Rights condemns France’ ([source](#)).

²¹ Eileen Barker, Professor at the London School of Economics, founder of [Inform](#) (Information network on religious movements) explains that: “*Misinformation about the movements has sometimes originated from the movements themselves, and sometimes from their opponents, but it is the mass media that have been the main vehicle for spreading sensational and frequently distorted stories about unusual and bizarre groups.*” (Nathalie Luca, *ibid.*).

²² Examples: 7 April 2010, on the radio Europe 1, Marc-Olivier Fogiel questions Georges Fenech: “*Today, there is no list where these cults can be found, it would be simpler for all those listening to us; isn’t it something missing, something lacking?*” ([source](#)). 8 April 2010, TV program *C à dire*, France 5, Thierry Guerrier notes, as if it was a piece of evidence, that: “*The hunting for cults in France is far from being over*” ([source](#)). 10 April 2010, TV program *Revu et corrigé*, France 5, journalist Paul Amar asserts, without caring to bring evidence or to ask them to Georges Fenech, his guest: “*Sectarian abuse go on and (...) gurus of all kind show relentless devilish cunning, as has been demonstrated by MIVILUDES last week*” ([source](#)). 16 June 2011, TV program *Ca vous regarde*, LCP, Antoine Guélaud, chief editor at TF1 and a guest in the program, gives his opinion: “*As a means for prevention, for me, I am convinced that the public should be more informed and it is absolutely necessary to establish a list of sectarian movements. (...) Cults are everywhere today, people have to know*” ([source](#)).

²³ Examples: 10 April 2010, TV program *Revu et corrigé*, France 5, journalist Paul Amar, at the start of the program, introduces MIVILUDES as ‘the mission against cults’ ([source](#)); probably warned about his mistake, he will correct his statement later on in the program. 7 April 2010, radio RTL, Vincent Parizot mentions “the release of MIVILUDES report on cults” ([source](#)). 15 June 2011, *Le Journal du Dimanche*, introduces MIVILUDES as the ‘inter-ministerial mission fighting against cults’. 14 June 2011, *Le Figaro* releases an article entitled ‘End of the world: warning of the anti-cult mission’ ([source](#)).

²⁴ See for example an article in *Le Point*: ‘Two hundred Jehovah’s Witnesses baptised in Villepinte with a feeling of ‘relief’’, 23 July 2011 ([source](#)).

²⁵ Amélie Cladières, MIVILUDES former general secretary, answers Patrice Rolland asking her if what makes MIVILUDES action unity could be the idea of ‘mind control’ in religious matter, in psychological matter; Amélie Cladière: “*It is not untrue to say that what may underlie all these notions is the notion of ‘control’. It is the notion of undermining individual freedom and the whole debate revolves around it. Because, after all, one can sacrifice his life, his wealth, sacrifice his family ties, sacrifice his physical and mental integrity - well concerning children it is much more questionable - under the condition that one is perfectly free to do it. So indeed the question of ‘control’ is right behind.*” (Nathalie Luca, *ibid.*).

²⁶ “*(...) mental manipulation and mind control, lead people to find themselves captured to the point where they loose their free will in their family, professional, sexual or financial environment*”, Maître Picotin ([source](#)). “*Nobody is safe*

from mental manipulation plots used by cults to deprive individuals from all free will”, Psychothérapie Vigilance ([source](#)).

²⁷ “We need an offence or even a crime about mental manipulation, (...) so that mental manipulation be considered as a vice of consent”, Maître Picotin, interviewed in the radio program *Café crimes*, 25 November 2009, Europe 1. See also our synthesis on the notion of ‘mental manipulation’ ([source](#)).

²⁸ The ‘loss of free will’ is considered to be a pseudo scientific concept by many scientists, see *Misunderstanding cults – Searching for objectivity in a controversial field*, Benjamin Zablocki, Thomas Robbins. Concerning an alleged ‘vice of consent’, Patrice Rolland, professor at Paris XII University, reminds us rightfully that: “The principle, in the field of private law relationships or in the field of legal right on freedoms, is that the value of consent of the adult cannot be discarded except on exceptional grounds” ([source](#)).

²⁹ “Gurus and other manipulators being often a step ahead of social sciences”, Maître Picotin ([source](#)).

³⁰ David Bromley (in *Misunderstanding cults*, *ibid.*) notes that: “There are numerous institutions arenas through the social order in which high control, encapsulation, and identity transformation occur that do not evoke a brainwashing designation”.

³¹ “Another frequently used concept which has been more obfuscating or misleading than enlightening is that of ‘brainwashing’. This, obviously enough, is a metaphor rather than a scientific term. People using the term are often more likely to be expressing disapproval of the end result (‘incredible beliefs’ and/or ‘incomprehensible behaviour’), rather than describing the process leading to the outcome. It may also be that the concept of brainwashing is being used to absolve anyone but the movement from responsibility for the unacceptable outcome. It is not being denied that the outcome may not be of our liking, but it is being suggested that it is more useful to understand how the convert (recruit) actually came to join the movement than merely to proclaim that s/he must have been brainwashed.”, Eileen Barker in (Nathalie Luca, *ibid.*).

³² “A further error encouraged by the media’s coverage of the movements is the assumption that a particular type of behaviour which has been brought to one’s attention is typical of the movement but not of the rest of society. If, for example, one learns from the media on three separate occasions that members of a movement have committed suicide, one might start to wonder what it is about the movement that makes people kill themselves. One may, however, be forgetting that the media are unlikely to file a report when a Catholic has committed suicide – that would just not make a newsworthy story. The social scientist would want to compare the rate of suicide in the movement with the rate among the general population and may well find that the latter is twice that of the former. One might then wonder what it was about the movement that prevented people committing suicide. Of course, there may be numerous reasons that have little to do with the movement one way or the other that are responsible for the different suicide rates, but at least it would no longer be assumed that visibility alone reflects typicality.”, Eileen Barker in (Nathalie Luca, *ibid.*)

³³ See, in particular, how in three comparable domains – working environment, family, ‘cults’ – in terms of possible conflicts between adults related to domination, money, sexual behaviours, the French legislation treats differently the case of ‘cults’ with About-Picard law.

³⁴ CAIMADES was created at MIVILUDES instigation: “Year 2009 has also seen the creation of a specialized enquiry service in the Ministry of the Interior, the Unit for assistance and intervention on matters of sectarian abuse (CAIMADES), in charge of helping magistrates to solve complex cases (pertaining to ‘sectarian stranglehold’, very difficult to characterize)”, in *Vie publique*, 8 April 2010 ([source](#)).

³⁵ See Professor Patrice Rolland opinion above ([source](#)).

³⁶ Some Members of Parliament had express concern about the possible enforcement of anti-cult About-Picard law – and hence the enforcement of the ‘psychological subjection’ offence – to political parties and other structures. They had been reassured by Catherine Picard, then reporting on the law: “In no circumstances would syndicates, professional structures or political movements be targeted”, thereby illustrating her peculiar idea of common law ([source](#)).

³⁷ See our file on ‘deprogramming’ ([source](#)).

³⁸ According to Sonia Jouglu, clinical psychologist specialized in the support to victims of ‘cults’ for thirty five years, commenting ‘exfiltration’: “This method seems inappropriate to us, because by using violence there is a risk to strengthen adherence to the group”, *La Croix*, 10 January 2010 ([source](#)). According to Rick Ross, former American ‘deprogrammer’ (condemned for that practice): “Deprogramming and exit counselling rely on the same principles” ([source](#)).

³⁹ *Le Figaro*, ‘Liberated from family guru’, 19 December 2009, “Aristocrats from Bordeaux, under influence for eight years, have been ‘exfiltrated’ from Oxford. A true commando operation” ([source](#)). *Telegraph*, 2 December 2009, “Daniel Picotin, a lawyer acting for the freed family members, mounted two ‘exit counselling’ commando operations” ([source](#)).

⁴⁰ See our comments on the French debate on the Muslim face veil ([source](#)).

⁴¹ See a description of the police raid at *Terre du Ciel* University ([source](#)).

⁴² See MIVILUDES advices to parents with regard to health ([source](#)).

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- ⁴³ ([source](#)).
- ⁴⁴ See our press release ([source](#)).
- ⁴⁵ See Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin's note ([source](#)).
- ⁴⁶ See our press release ([source](#)).
- ⁴⁷ DJEPVA : Direction de la jeunesse, de l'éducation populaire et de la vie associative (Department for youth, popular education and associations in community outreach)
- ⁴⁸ See our press release ([source](#)).
- ⁴⁹ See our detailed analysis of freemasonry anti-cult stand ([source](#)).
- ⁵⁰ See our comments on MIVILUDES 2009 annual report ([source](#)).
- ⁵¹ See our analysis of MIVILUDES 2009 report's press coverage ([source](#)).
- ⁵² ([source](#)).
- ⁵³ See our comments on this novel ([source](#)).
- ⁵⁴ ([source](#)).
- ⁵⁵ See our synthetic analysis of the concept of 'mental manipulation' ([source](#)).
- ⁵⁶ See our press release ([source](#)).
- ⁵⁷ See 2005 Fenech, Vuilque and Brard MPs press release ([source](#)).
- ⁵⁸ TV program *Envoyé spécial*, France 2 ([source](#)).
- ⁵⁹ See our comments on MIVILUDES guide ([source](#)).
- ⁶⁰ See our press release ([source](#)).
- ⁶¹ See our press release ([source](#)).
- ⁶² Law case 'Le Dinh' ([source](#)) and law case 'DISA' ([source](#)).
- ⁶³ See details for 'Moulin des Vallées' case ([source](#)).
- ⁶⁴ See details for the freemason internal controversy ([source](#)).
- ⁶⁵ See our comments on this first alarmist campaign launched by MIVILUDES and taken over in the media ([source](#)).
- ⁶⁶ See our press release ([source](#)).
- ⁶⁷ See the Ministry for work, employment and health web site ([source](#)).
- ⁶⁸ See our press release ([source](#)).
- ⁶⁹ See our press release ([source](#)).
- ⁷⁰ See our press release ([source](#)).
- ⁷¹ See our article on this case ([source](#)).
- ⁷² See our press release ([source](#)).
- ⁷³ See our press release ([source](#)).
- ⁷⁴ See our press release ([source](#)).
- ⁷⁵ See our press release ([source](#)) and our comments on MIVILUDES 2010 annual report ([source](#)).
- ⁷⁶ See our press release ([source](#)).
- ⁷⁷ See our analysis of MIVILUDES 2010 report's press coverage ([source](#)).
- ⁷⁸ Voir les lignes directrices sur le site de l'OSCE ([source](#)).
- ⁷⁹ *"If one attempts an assessment of jurisprudence pertaining to the state communication functions, one will note that the specific intervention of the state is not only admitted and legitimate, but it can be seen as necessary for the horizontal protection of human rights. At first glance, at the level of statements on principles, the state intervention in the public debate is subject to particularly high standard requirements. (...). The state has a specific obligation to neutrality and objectivity. It may have to submit its information to a contradictory evaluation on the part of targeted groups. It must in any case refrain from all intention towards turmoil or indoctrination. On the other hand, when comes the test of negative consequences of these information means, and the proof of a causality link between this information and hindrance to these groups tranquillity, particularly in their exercising their religious freedom, one seems to observe a far less binding approach to give responsibility to the state. Indeed, in a rather recurrent way, the Court seems to deny public information policies, any measurable or identifiable effect, sometimes 'de facto', sometimes 'de iure'."*, Louis-Léon Christians (Professor at Louvain's Catholic University) (in Nathalie Luca, *ibid.*, translation Cicns).
- ⁸⁰ See a presentation of our Observatory project ([source](#)).