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**Association internationale  
POUR LA DÉFENSE DE LA LIBERTÉ RELIGIEUSE  
International Association  
FOR THE DEFENSE OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY**

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Schosshaldenstrasse 17, CH-3006 Berne, SWITZERLAND  
[www.aidlr.org](http://www.aidlr.org)

Phone +41 (0)31 359 15 31

Fax +41 (0)31 359 15 66

E-mail: [liviu.olteanu@aidlr.org](mailto:liviu.olteanu@aidlr.org)

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**O.S.C.E. HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING**

Working Session 14 – Fundamental freedoms II, including freedom of thought, conscience,  
religion or belief  
**Warsaw 1<sup>st</sup> October 2014**

Statement Submitted by the Attorney Liviu Olteanu, Secretary General of the  
**INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE DEFENSE OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY**  
(AIDLR) SWITZERLAND

**Freedom of thought, conscience and religion: Challenges and Perspectives**  
**APPEAL TO RELEASE ADVENTIST PASTOR ABDUCTED DURING CHURCH SERVICE**  
**IN EAST UKRAINE<sup>1</sup>**

Mr. Chairman

Excellences

Ladies and Gentlemen

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<sup>1</sup> <http://news.adventist.org/all-news/news/go/2014-09-30/pastor-abducted-during-church-service-in-east-ukraine/>

## PART I

1. **A Seventh-day Adventist pastor is missing after being abducted by gunmen during a communion service on Saturday<sup>2</sup> - 27th September 2014 - at a church in separatist-controlled eastern Ukraine.** Unidentified men carrying machine guns and wearing camouflage burst into the church in the city of Horlivka on September 27 and seized **Pastor SERGEY LITOVCHENCO**, the Ukrainian Seventh Day Adventist Union Conference said. The incident occurred as the pastor was leading the congregation in a communion service in the small, rectangular church located at 1 Ulitsa Horlovskoi Divizii.

2. **"The Horlivka gunmen justified their actions by saying that "this is Orthodox land and there is no place for various sects here,"** the conference statement said. "They interrupted the worship service and forced the worshipers to disperse, and they ordered Pastor Sergei Litovchenko to close the church, forced him into a car, and drove away in an unknown direction" said the statement."

3. **"Where he is and what has happened to him is unknown",** said Vassily Nichik, director of the Public Affairs and Religious Liberty department of the West Russian Union Conference, which borders eastern Ukraine. **John Graz, director of the Adventist world church's Public Affairs and Religious Liberty department,** expressed deep concern over the kidnapping and said he was puzzled over the reason why anyone would target the pastor.

4. **According to John Graz "the Seventh Day Adventist Church is officially recognized in Russia and Ukraine, and we expect the members and pastors to be respected by the authorities on the territory of eastern Ukraine (...).** "The Seventh-day Adventist Church is not involved in politics, and we don't understand why it should be attacked, Graz said on Monday."

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

5. **The International Association for the Defense of Religious Liberty from Switzerland is deep concerned on the kidnapping of the Pastor Sergei Litovchenko and ask the presidency of the OSCE, the Government of Ukraine and the Government of Russia Federation, to intervene for the release of Seventh Day Adventist pastor.** We believe that churches of Ukraine - Orthodox, Seventh Day Adventist, Baptist, Romano Catholic, Greek Catholic, Pentecostal, Protestant, etc. - no matter the name or the size of them- can live with understanding and respect, working together for liberty and peace.

## PART II

6. **ALL OF US KNOW that 76 percent of the world's population live in nations where religious freedom is highly or very highly restricted.** Religious freedom is under assault. Without religious freedom: democracies cannot consolidate, economies cannot develop and national security cannot be protected.

7. **SOMETIMES THE WORLD DOESN'T REACT IMMEDIATELY AND EFICIENTLY,** with a strong commitment in favor of those that suffer intolerance, discrimination and persecution especially when a religious minorities or one person belongs to one religious minorities. Why?

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<sup>2</sup> Saturday is the Sabbath - as day of rest - for the Seventh Day Adventist Church members

- Usually the nations look to their problems at home and think that religious freedom is non-relevant as a model for society and according to the working policy of its Government.
- Many nations wait and react in function of the attitude and reaction of worldwide or regional economical and military powers.
- Lack of political will to spend financial and human resources for the issues of others.
- Lack of empathy and deficiency on understanding and practicing the culture of respect for other's difference.

**8. TODAY THE WORLD DOES NOT HAVE THE LUXURY OF REMAINING SILENT** on the issues which affect peace, people's life, freedom and security.

**9. IT IS NECESSARY FOR THE OSCE MEMBER STATES** and the whole world, to stand up and stop every form of intolerance, discrimination and of killing of innocent people as it happens in Ukraine, Iraq, Syria, Nigeria, North Korea, etc. due to religion or belief. In many places it starts with religious and ethnic hatred, prejudice, nationalism, fundamentalism, political and religious intentionality, etc.

TWO BIG QUESTIONS:

**10 (A) WHY THE OSCE MEMBER STATES AND CIVIL SOCIETY HAVE TO STAND UP defending the principle of religion freedom or belief for all people?**

Some reasons<sup>3</sup>:

- a) It is a moral imperative.
- b) It is a fundamental human right that has distinct and inevitable public dimension.

**11. (B) HOW THE GOVERNMENTS HAVE TO LOBBY AND PROTECT THE PRINCIPLE OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM FOR ALL PEOPLE** according to the article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights from 1948, article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights from 1966, UN Declaration on the Elimination all Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief from 1981 and according with all the documents of the Council of Europe, European Union and OSCE on freedom of religion?

- a) Underlining the urgent need of TRAINING THE TRAINERS (Starting with the members of the Governments, diplomats, religious leaders, etc.)
- b) By a COORDINATED STRATEGY where have to be included different category of policymakers, stakeholders. The AIDLR has created, proposed and developed the special framework with five components: 'Government – Diplomats - Religious Leaders – Scholars - Civil Society', gathering together the representatives from national (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Justice, etc.), regional (EU – COE – OSCE) and international level (UN) because each category has a different approach on the issue of freedom of religion. Together it is easier to propose and coordinate an efficient strategy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

**12. The International Association for the Defense of Religious Liberty from Switzerland**

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<sup>3</sup> According to Georgetown University professor T. Farr

**expresses its deep concern over the kidnapping of the Pastor Sergei Litovchenko and is asking the presidency of OSCE, the Government of Ukraine and the Government of Russia to intervene for the release of Seventh Day Adventist pastor.**

**13. I would like to conclude with three declarations:**

- Freedom of religion and belief is being denied in the most gross and systematic way possible – through the attempted extermination of religious minorities<sup>4</sup>.
- When we are facing an extremely grave situation, the world cannot simply stand by and watch as it unfolds.<sup>5</sup>
- The resolutions will not be enough. Promises on paper cannot keep us safe.<sup>6</sup>

Thank you Excellences.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

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<sup>4</sup> Heiner Bielefeldt, Special Rapporteur of UN on freedom of religion or belief

<sup>5</sup> Børge Brende, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Norway.

<sup>6</sup> Barak Obama, US President