

## ***Human Rights Without Frontiers Int'l***

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### **OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**

Warsaw, Tuesday 24 September 2019

#### **Working Session 13**

#### **Rule of Law II : Combating religious intolerance and discrimination**

#### **GERMANY: The controversial “sect filters”**

*Human Rights Without Frontiers* does not defend any religion or belief system but defends the right of individuals to believe or not to believe. Whether they believe in the teachings of Jesus Christ, Mohammed, Hare Krishna, Rudolf Steiner or Ron Hubbard, it is their personal choice and this choice is protected by international standards.

Germany fails to respect this individual right when it stigmatizes and discriminates against people who believe in the teachings of Scientology.

In Bavaria and a few other German Länder, the authorities use what they call “sect filters” when someone applies for a public job, a public service contract or a government bid. These “sect filters” contain questions exclusively targeting the possible affiliation or relationship of the candidate with Scientology. If so, the candidacy will be disqualified and so will it if the applicant refuses to fill in the questionnaire.

This is not only intrusive and discriminatory but this gravely violates the international human rights standards and stigmatizes the followers of Ron Hubbard as sub-citizens. The teachings of Scientology are not banned in Germany and spreading them is not a criminal activity. Therefore, their followers

should not be treated differently from the followers of the Bible, the Coran, the Bhagavad Gita, the Buddhist or any other teachings.

Last week during the session on Freedom of religion or Belief, the German delegation to the OSCE replied to a similar criticism formulated by another NGO that in their country Scientology is not recognized as a religious community. This answer is completely irrelevant for at least two main reasons. Firstly, it must be strongly stressed that according to the OSCE/ODIHR standards, a non-recognition of a religious or belief system by the state does not justify any discrimination against its followers. Secondly, German courts have already stated that Scientology was entitled to the protection of article 4 of the Basic Law on Freedom of Religion or Belief.

Belgium does not recognize anthroposophy but it does discriminate against the followers of Rudolf Steiner and its schools even benefits from public money.

*Human Rights Without Frontiers* strongly recommends that the German government immediately ban the “sect filter” and requests the assistance of the OSCE in this matter.