

*Speech at OSCE Human Dimension Meeting: Freedom of Religion or Belief in Warsaw
28.09.2009*

IMPACT OF RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS (“NEW LIFE”, “ALMATY CHURCH OF SCIENTOLOGY”) ON THE FAMILY AND PERSONALITY IN KAZAKHSTAN

Dear ladies and gentlemen!

Speaking at this meeting on behalf of our organization is a great responsibility since it reflects not only the opinion of our fund employees but also of Kazakhstan citizens. The people who suffered from destructive impact of some religious communities which have actively developed in Kazakhstan within the past decades apply to our public organization.

Our report generalizes the opinions of practical psychologists, sociologists, philosophers, pedagogues carrying out rehabilitation work with people who suffered from religious communities' activity. The sufferers are represented both by adepts of religious communities and members of their families including minor children.

Firstly, in Kazakhstan, as everywhere in the civilized society, the citizens enjoy the basic human rights and freedoms being simultaneously the tolerance indicators of the society itself. It is assumed that the activity of organizations uniting citizens by religious convictions is first of all aimed at satisfaction of religious feelings and demands of a personality, and assists in moral and psychological support of a person in complicated life situations.

Secondly, in activities carried out by religious structures

- it is assumed that activities of religious organizations will not cause violation of the rights of an individual in case he decides to withdraw from a religious community;
- it is also assumed that if one of the members of a family intends to join a religious community it should not affect the other members of his family. For instance, if the members of an adept's family are not interested in joining religious activity, the religious community should not be entitled to require involvement of the family members in the community, and in case of their refusal it should not force the adept to break with his relatives;
- it is assumed that a religious community is not a financial structure systematically collecting fees from its members;
- it is assumed that a religious community when satisfying religious feelings of its members, fostering religious values does not humiliate and depress the minds of their members and their children who mainly followed their parents (and, respectively, did not make an independent choice).

Unfortunately, the above assumptions have been violated by the existing religious communities, namely, by the New Life church and Almaty Church of Scientology. For that reason the press conferences where the people decided to tell the society and the fellow citizens how their personal life, life of their families had changed due to participation of some of the family members in the above religious communities were held by our public fund. The materials of the press conferences are being presented to your attention.

Upon the results of the press conference held with regard to the New Life church activities we would like to present you the photographs demonstrating the so called role play with children and teenagers. You can see the comments of the children who participated in that role play in the materials provided to you. The photographs show the pastors of the New Life church (Kazakhstan section) and their assistants conducting the role play. We also would like to point out the photograph of the placard the contents of which may cause religious strives in the society.

As a practical psychologist I have been studying the family system and consulting citizens during ten years. In this respect I mark the following peculiarities of impact of religious

communities on the family and person.

At the present stage of family development (in particular, Kazakh family, and there are also data on studying Russian, Uigur families etc.) the changes in habits and traditions have been observed. These changes are characteristic for a “transitional” stage of development, where along with traditional forms of regulation between family members the new forms of relations are being developed. These changes were determined by strong migration processes during 20th-21st centuries involving the Kazakh society in the intense rhythm of global processes.

The deep reconstruction of psychical support of activities and development of ability to act based on personal competent understanding and not on the opinion of the family, elder members or the group were required. Kazakhstan society as well as any society in the world has a stable system of values. The values transferred from one generation to another both assist in the integrity of the society itself and reflect its individual character.

The family in the Kazakh society is a predominant value for a personality and the society. This is the opinion of 86% of the country population according to the social research. The family not only forms and determines an individual’s behavior, conditions the emotional side and structure of behavior remaining unchanged to a great extent for the whole life, but also has a modifying influence on behavior in each specific period of time.

In this regard the activities carried out by some of the religious communities are aimed at adepts breaking with their families. Blaming the family members by adepts for non-compliance with the religious community values causes not only a considerable personality breakdown of the adepts themselves but demoralization of their family members. Breaking with the family actually leaves a person in a motivational and psychological vacuum.

Consultations and communication with the citizens who addressed us for help (former adepts, former community members) reveal a psychological breakdown, dependent forms of behavior, deprofessionalization, slow rehabilitation of a personality, and in some cases its absolute absence. Experience of consultation work in the fund proves the immediate necessity for establishment of a special rehabilitation center for the persons who suffered from activities of destructive organizations, since the family cannot stand the former adept’s aggression.

The issue of qualified specialists as well as specially developed methods of personality rehabilitation is also vital. We believe that the right to freedom of conscience granted to the citizens should not at the same time violate the other rights or limit personal freedoms. For instance, we point out that the rights of other people having no relation to religious communities should not be violated.