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

***Newsletter "Intolleranza e Discriminazione Fondata su Religione o Credo"***

***Un sistema di allarme preventivo per vigilare sulla libertà di religione o credo***

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**Le Istituzioni e la discriminazione delle minoranze religiose e spirituali in Italia e Romania**

**3 Ottobre 2013**

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## **OSCE**

### **Le Istituzioni e la discriminazione delle minoranze religiose e spirituali in Italia e Romania**

HRWF (03.10.2013) – Ogni anno l'Ufficio per le Istituzioni Democratiche e i Diritti Umani ( Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) ospita, a Varsavia, L' Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM), il più importante Congresso Europeo sui Diritti Umani. Il giorno 26 Settembre 2013 è stato dedicato al tema: Freedom of Religion or Belief.

La delegazione italiana ha presentato due Statement e ha partecipato al Side Event organizzato da Soteria International sul tema: Institutional Discrimination and Stigmatisation of Religious and Spiritual Minorities.

#### **Statement presentati da Soteria International e Associazione Atman Italia**

**26 Settembre 2013**

**Morning Working Session 6**

#### **SOTERIA INTERNATIONAL – STATEMENT**

Mi chiamo Raffaella Di Marzio. Dirigo da dodici anni il Centro di Informazione e Consulenza Sette Religioni e Spiritualità, a Roma. Da quasi venti anni sono impegnata nello studio e nella ricerca sul fenomeno della diffusione, sul territorio italiano, di minoranze religiose e spirituali. Secondo i dati del 2012 forniti dal CESNUR, diretto da Massimo Introvigne, in Italia ci sono almeno 836 minoranze religiose e spirituali organizzate, circa 200 in più rispetto al 2001. Negli ultimi quindici anni, nel mio paese si sono aperti pericolosi scenari di intolleranza verso minoranze religiose e spirituali che vengono di volta in volta etichettate con lo stigma di "sette", "psicosette", "sette sataniche", "culti distruttivi", ecc.

L'allarme creato ad hoc è stato tale che il Ministero dell'Interno nel 2006 ha creato una Squadra di Polizia Anti Sette (SAS) che "avrebbe compiuto clamorosi errori giudiziari a Firenze, Bari, Assisi, eccetera, in quanto coordinata da referenti ed "esperti" identificabili all'interno di gruppi anti-sette, alimentando un clima di diffidenza pericoloso per l'inclusione delle minoranze religiose sul territorio e sostenendo la tesi di un "allarme sette" non suffragato dai fatti; [...] le Forze dell'ordine della SAS hanno operato avvalendosi in modo quasi esclusivo dal forum Anti-sette il quale, per quanto sembri non aver dato prova alcuna di scientificità nei metodi d'indagine né di superiorità accademica in alcun campo, è però membro del FECRIS, organismo francese noto per le polemiche in merito alle svariate accuse d'intolleranza religiosa..." (Senatori Perduca e Poretti, Legislatura 16 Atto di Sindacato Ispettivo N. 4-08595, 5 Novembre 2012). Alcuni Parlamentari hanno messo in dubbio che l'attività della SAS sia compatibile con la Costituzione italiana, la Carta dei diritti dell'uomo dell'Unione europea e le linee-guida del Consiglio d'Europa (Senatori Perduca e Poretti, Legislatura 16 Atto di Sindacato Ispettivo N. 4-08595, 5 Novembre 2012; Onorevole Binetti, Legislatura 16 Atto di

Sindacato Ispettivo N. 3-02387, giovedì 12 luglio 2012, seduta n.665.; Sen Pastore, Legislatura 16 Atto di Sindacato Ispettivo N. 3-02822, 26 aprile 2012, seduta n. 716).

Negli ultimi anni decine di minoranze religioso-spirituali sono state perseguitate e diffamate con accuse gravissime fondate sullo stigma di setta. Nomino solo alcuni esempi, come Ananda Assisi, Bambini di Satana, Osho Campus, Damanhur, Anima Universale, Osho Miasto: aggregazioni spirituali che, alla fine delle indagini o del processo, la maggior parte delle volte sono state prosciolte, mentre altre volte i reati sono stati commessi da singoli associati e non hanno mai coinvolto l'intera organizzazione. Il caso più recente è quello dell'associazione antropologico-spirituale Arkeon, accusata, inizialmente, da una organizzazione membro della FECRIS, in collaborazione con i media, di essere la più pericolosa psicosecca mai esistita in Italia, responsabile di manipolare mentalmente i suoi membri. I giudici, al termine del processo contro Arkeon, hanno concluso che la principale e più grave delle accuse, costituita dall'essere Arkeon una "psicosecca", non ha alcun fondamento (Sentenza n. 6445/06RGNR; n. 2492/09R.G.Trib.; 1558/12 Reg. Sent. p.896-897, 16 Luglio 2012, Dep. 10 Gennaio 2013).

### Recommendations

**Sono qui per segnalare all'OSCE, che opera per assicurare la pace, la democrazia e la stabilità, il pericolo che, in Italia, si verifichino limitazioni o violazioni della libertà religiosa delle minoranze e per chiedere alle autorità italiane:**

- **di intraprendere un'indagine, anche attraverso un'apposita commissione d'inchiesta, per verificare la costituzionalità e la legalità del Dipartimento di Polizia Anti-Sette e la correttezza del suo operato, specialmente in relazione ai consulenti di cui si serve per monitorare i gruppi religiosi e spirituali**
- **di verificare se la Squadra di Polizia Anti-Sette, nelle sue finalità e, attraverso il suo operato, non violi il diritto costituzionalmente garantito di professare la propria religione e il proprio credo**
- **di intraprendere, nei confronti delle minoranze religiose e spirituali presenti in Italia strategie di accoglienza e dialogo costruttivo che promuovano l'integrazione e la convivenza civile**

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## **ATMAN YOGA SCHOOL ITALY – STATEMENT**

My name is Roberta Rendina, representing Atman Yoga School Italy, personally persecuted with other 17 people in Italy, because of teaching yoga.

I want to raise the situation of freedom of religion and belief in Italy, where apparently the situation looks better than in other OSCE member states. Although the number of members of new religious movements is particularly low (2.5% - CESNUR valuation), Italian citizens who join these groups cannot live their spiritual life with serenity. Forms of xenophobia from the so called anti-sect forum, FECRIS affiliates associations, and big police operations, have created in the public opinion a strong negative feeling towards what appears to be "different" from the "normality".

Since the foundation of Anti-Sect Squad in 2006, the difficult situation has escalated for minority religions and new spiritual movements.

After having worked as politician and human rights activists for many years, I can now testify personally on the lacking freedom of religion and belief in Italy. 6th of December 2012, the day of the big police raid against Atman Yoga School in Italy, I was abroad. 6 am the police broke into the private house of my parents and my ex boy-friend actually living with another woman. They were not only awakened with the announcement that I was searched for criminal association, prostitution and human trafficking, but they were forced also to listen details on my love and sexual life and a big amount of lies. My father soon was taken to hospital for heart attack. My friends and yoga teacher colleagues reported that details from my love life as the love life of many others were discussed and brought as examples at the interrogations.

The people called for interrogation, were put in front of a picture of the founder of the Yoga School meditating. Put in the police office the photo had pins in the eyes, the hands, feet and the genital organs.

In a press conference the police gave information unrelated to the alleged crimes. In just few days we were with name and surname in all the newspapers. Neighbours started to tell between each other that we had seemed like 'normal people until that moment', that they could not imagine what we were. We became guilty without a trial. Some people still are risking their jobs, and relations with the families are very difficult.

All this seem to happen cyclically in Italy; Arkeon, Ananda Assisi, Damanhur, Osho, Scientology only to mention some of them. After the day that you become monster in the public opinion, it does not matter if you are later fully acquitted. People will continue to look at you suspiciously.

Another main effect is that the number of yoga practitioners is dramatically decreased, in the moment in

which this school was more popular than ever. For Arkeon the situation was the same. Is it a coincidence? Is the job of SAS is really to investigate and counteract the dangerous effects of the satanic sects as in the decree of foundation? Or is it the secular arm of extremist catholic interest groups that very honestly on their website published long comment on Yoga, Reiki an other disciplines, explaining why especially Yoga has to be considered without doubts, satanic?

Is the SAS with support of Anti Sect Associations is born to contrast crimes or to control the number of practitioners of other spiritual paths that are in the black list so to say of the extremist priests? The same groups are officially mentioned as consultants of SAS, and are even called in the Court as experts from the State? Can a member of a cult, judge another cult? Should not the state to be impartial?

### Recommendations

Atman Yoga School Italy recommends to the the OSCE ODIHR and OSCE participating states, especially to the Italian representative

-to investigate and counteract determining factors for discrimination against spiritual groups and minority religions, with regards to incitement coming from so called anti-sect associations to the creation of a social alarm non-existent on the 'sects' phenomena

-to investigate on the effects that the creation of special departments of police to fight the sects is having on the fundamental freedom of religion, consciousness and beliefs.

Atman Yoga School Italy recommends to the OSCE ODIHR and OSCE participating states,

-to actively promote an open spiritual society, to further promote tolerance and pluralism in spirituality through education.

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### Publications of HRWF Int'l: Order our Reports

#### Japan: Abduction and Deprivation of Freedom for the Purpose of De-conversion

[http://www.amazon.com/Abduction-Deprivation-Freedom-Religious-De-conversion/dp/147763911X/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1366841512&sr=8-1&keywords=Japan+Abduction+and+Deprivation+of+Freedom](http://www.amazon.com/Abduction-Deprivation-Freedom-Religious-De-conversion/dp/147763911X/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1366841512&sr=8-1&keywords=Japan+Abduction+and+Deprivation+of+Freedom)

#### Freedom of Religion or Belief World Report 2012 (142 p)

[http://www.amazon.com/Freedom-Religion-Belief-World-Report/dp/1482768739/ref=sr\\_1\\_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1366278549&sr=8-2&keywords=freedom+of+religion+or+belief+world+report](http://www.amazon.com/Freedom-Religion-Belief-World-Report/dp/1482768739/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1366278549&sr=8-2&keywords=freedom+of+religion+or+belief+world+report)

#### Freedom of Religion or Belief Prisoners List/ World Report 2012 (90 p)

<http://www.amazon.com/Freedom-Religion-Belief-Prisoners-List/dp/1482711591#>

#### Human Rights in China after the Olympics

[http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb\\_sb\\_noss?url=search-alias%3Dstripbooks&field-keywords=human%20rights%20in%20China%20after%20the%20Olympics](http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss?url=search-alias%3Dstripbooks&field-keywords=human%20rights%20in%20China%20after%20the%20Olympics)

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### Some activities in 2013

Publication of "Forceful religious de-conversion attempts from new religious movements" in "New Religious Movements in Russia" in the Journal of the University of St Petersburg, pp 71-77

**Participation in a side event on "Institutional Discrimination and Stigmatization of Religious and Spiritual Minorities" at the OSCE/ODIHR Conference in Warsaw (26 September 2013)**

**Statement on conscientious objection in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Turkey, and Turkmenistan at the OSCE/ODIHR Conference in Warsaw (26 September 2013)**

**Statement on social hostility in Armenia, France and Ukraine at the OSCE/ODIHR Conference in Warsaw (24 September 2013)**

**Co-author with Prof. Regis Dericquebourg of "Fecris: Europäische Föderation der Forschungs- und Informationszentren zu Sektenfragen" in Religion-Staat-Gesellschaft, Zeitschrift für Glaubensformen und Weltanschauungen, 14. Jahrgang (2013), Heft 1, Religious Freedom and State-Church Relations in Europe and the USA, ed. by Gerhard Besier and Hubert (June 2013)**

**Panellist at a hearing organized by MEP Laszlo Tökes (EPP) at the European Parliament about "The struggle of Ethnic Chins in a changing Burma/Myanmar" (9 July 2013)**

**Panellist at a conference organized by the International Cultic Studies Association entitled "Manipulation, Abuse and Maltreatment in Groups" in Trieste/ Presentation of the paper "The European Court on Human Rights and the accusations of mental manipulation and mind control (3-7 July 2013)**

**Co-organizing a conference with MEP François Alfonsi on "Human rights in Mali" at the European Parliament (17 June 2013)**

**Co-organizing with MEP Anna Rosbach a conference on "Human rights in North Korea" at the European Parliament (6 June 2013)**

**Interview and report about human rights in North Korea on ZDF TV Channel (Germany)(6 June 2013)**

**Panellist at the debate after screening of the film "Free China" at the Millenium Film Festival in Brussels**

**See <http://www.ntdtv.com/xtr/b5/2013/06/06/atext910178.html> (5 June 2013)**

**Co-organizing the screening of the film "Winter, go away" about human rights in Russia at the European Parliament and the ensuing debate with the Pussy Riots (29 May 2013)**

**Co-organizing the screening of the film "My Afghanistan" at the European Parliament and the ensuing debate (28 May 2013)**

**Publication of "La Fecris, la liberté de religion et les droits de l'homme" in "Réveil du religieux, éveil de la société", pp 107-114, L'Harmattan (Paris)**

**HRWF Int'l Report on Japan mentioned in the report of the US Department of State on Freedom of Religion or Belief. See <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/#wrapper> and click on Japan**

**Fact-finding mission in Bucharest about social hostility towards yoga groups (8-16 May 2013)**

**Co-organizing a conference about "Unprecedented Repression against Religious Minorities and NGOs in Russia" at the United Nations in Geneva (28 April 2013)**

Organizing a conference at the European Parliament to launch two reports: "Freedom of Religion or Belief World Report" and "Freedom of Religion or Belief Prisoners List in the World" (23 April 2013)

Author "La Fecris, la liberté de religion et les droits de l'homme" in "Réveil du Religieux, Eveil de la société", edited by Dominique Kounkou & published by L'Harmattan, Paris, pp 107-113 (2013)

Fact-finding mission in Israel (9-14 April 2013)

Author of "Die Geschichte von Jehovahs Zeugen in Belgien" in History of Jehovah's Witnesses in Belgium, pp 19-52, published in Jehovah's Zeugen in Europa, Geschichte und Gegenwart, Band 1, 736 p, edited by Gerhard Besier/ Katarzyna Stoklosa, LIT VERLAG W. Hopf, Berlin, 2013

Presentation of a paper at the hearing of the European Parliament Intergroup on Minority Languages about bilingual education in Greek kindergartens held in Strasbourg (14 March 2013)

Collecting testimonies of North Korean defectors in Seoul by one of HRWF experts on North Korea, Dr Aaron Rhodes (3-5 March 2013)

Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review of China on the forced repatriation of North Korean defectors (4 March 2013)

Publication of an article entitled "EU-China Relations: Constructive Engagement" in The Parliament Magazine, Issue 363, p 38 (18 February 2013)

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**HRWF network of experts covers more than 20 countries, including**

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