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Members of the Committee on
Equality and Non-Discrimination
Parliamentary Assembly
of the Council of Europe
Palais de l'Europe
Strasbourg

Europe, the 20th of February 2014

Dear members of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination of the
Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe,

We, members of civil society, being aware of the Motion for a Resolution Doc. 13333,
"The protection of the rights of parents and children belonging to religious minorities", and
being aware that this resolution has been sent to your Committee by the Bureau for
"possible follow-up", would like to express our strong support to this resolution.

Indeed, we think that the appointment of a rapporteur to examine this very important
question in the 47 countries of the Council is something that should be done.

Freedom of religion or belief is one of the most fundamental rights of human beings, and
in some countries of Europe this right is regularly challenged, minimized or infringed
upon without valid justification.

When religious freedom is threatened it is almost always the rights of the minorities that
are first to be denied or curtailed. There are many examples of this throughout the
Council of Europe's Member States and it is important that these be taken into account
in order that we do not become complacent and we take action to protect those
minorities in question. Particular attention should be given to the rights of minorities
especially where it concerns the right to educate one's children in conformity with one's
own religion or belief, this in itself being the subject of European Court of Human Rights
decisions.

We are appreciative and supportive of the work of the Council of Europe in protecting and promoting human rights throughout Europe and we believe that you will take this matter seriously. Nevertheless, we wished to express our support for appointing a rapporteur for this motion.

Respectfully,

Individuals (in their own names)

- ***Sheikh Dr Muhammad Al-Hussaini***, Secretary of Interfaith Alliance – UK
- ***Dr Alessandro Amicarelli***, attorney at law of the BAR of Italy and LAW Society of England and Wales, Doctor of Research in International Order and Human Rights "SAPIENZA" University of Rome – Italy
- ***Dr Iftikhar Ayaz***, OBE, Consul General of the Tuvalu Islands in UK, member of the UN Working Group for the Rights of Minorities, Chair of the board of trustees of the All Faith Network – UK
- ***Thierry Bécourt***, President CAPLC – France
- ***Dr Luigi Berzano***, full professor of Sociology at the University of Torino, Catholic priest – Italy
- ***Dr Silvio Calzolari***, professor of History of Religions at the ISSR (Higher Institute of Religious Sciences) of Firenze – Italy
- ***Dr Maria Chiara Giorda***, Professor, History of Religions at the University of Torino – Italy
- ***Jacques Dubreuil***, President of the Omnium des Libertés – France
- ***Dr Juan Ferreiro Gualguera***, Professor of Ecclesiastical Law at the State University of Coruna – Spain
- ***Gurjit Singh***, UNITED SIKH Trustee – UK
- ***Gursev Singh***, Dutch Sikh Council, spokesperson – Netherlands
- ***Karan Singh***, President of the Sikh Foundation of Switzerland – Switzerland
- ***Rev. Dr Dominique Kounkou***, attorney at law, PhD in international public law, Honorary President of the Council of Christian Churches of an African Approach in Europe – France
- ***Rev. Dr William McComish***, Dean Emeritus of St. Peter's Cathedral in Geneva, Presbyterian minister, general treasurer of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

- **Robin Marsh**, Secretary General Universal Peace Federation (UPF) - UK
- **Raffaella di Marzio**, psychologist of religion, contributing partner to the Brussels based NGO Human Rights Without Frontiers – Italy
- **HE Irénéo Namboka**, Human Right adviser for UN, former HR Officer of UNHCHR – Switzerland
- **Jura Nanuk**, President of Central-European Religious Freedom Institute – Hungary
- **Hans Noot**, President of the Gerard Noodt Foundation, member of the board of the ICRLS – Netherlands
- **Carmine Onnembo**, UPF Board of Directors – Germany
- **Bertil Persson**, National Chancellor of International Association of Educators for World Peace (UNESCO) Scandinavian rep. University of Peace (UNESCO) – Sweden
- **Dr. Elke Preußner-Frank**, Foundation member of the Federal Association of the Woman Federation for World Peace
- **Bashy Quraishy**, Secretary General of EMISCO (European Muslim Initiative for Social Cohesion – Strasbourg) – Denmark
- **Andrew S. Reed**, former secretary to Chairman (EFD group), EU Parliament – Belgium
- **Æthelwine Richards**, Orthodox Chaplain, York St. John University – UK
- **Eric Roux**, Steering Committee of EIFRF – France
- **Dr Vjekoslav Saje**, Centre for Inter-Religious Dialogue – Bosnia-Herzegovina
- **John Tamale**, Associate at UNCHR – Switzerland
- **Professor Aldo Natale Terrin**, Pontifical Institute of Pastoral Liturgy of Padua, Catholic priest – Italy
- **Professor Dr G.P.P. Van Tillo**, honorary professor of Sociology of Religion in the University of Amsterdam – Netherlands
- **Angelina Vladikova**, Chair of BRIDGES - Easter European Forum for Dialogue – Bulgaria
- **Martin Weightman**, Director All Faith Network – UK
- **Graeme Wilson**, Public Affairs Director, Church of Scientology – UK

Organizations

The ALL FAITH NETWORK UK – <http://www.allfaithsnetwork.org.uk/>

BRIDGES – Easter European Forum for Dialogue –
<https://www.facebook.com/bridges.forum>

CAPLC-European Coordination for Freedom of Conscience – Member of ENAR and participant organization of the EU Fundamental Rights Platform –
<http://www.freedomofconscience.eu/>

CERFI – Central-European Religious Freedom Institute – <http://cerf-institute.org/>

DUTCH SIKH COUNCIL – <https://www.facebook.com/dutchsikh.council>

EIFRF – European Interreligious Forum for Religious Freedom – <http://www.eifrf-articles.org/>

GERARD NOODT FOUNDATION for FoRB – <http://www.noodtforb.eu/>

SIKH FOUNDATION OF SWITZERLAND

UNITED SIKHS – <http://www.unitedsikhs.org/>

UNIVERSAL PEACE FEDERATION (UPF) – UPF is an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations



Doc. 13333
10 October 2013

The protection of the rights of parents and children belonging to religious minorities

Motion for a resolution

tabled by Mr Valeriu GHILETCHI and other members of the Assembly

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

The Council of Europe is committed to a policy for the protection of rights mentioned in Article 2 of the additional protocol of the European Court of Human Rights to respect the rights of parents to ensure that their children are raised and educated in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions.

The Parliamentary Assembly recalls Recommendations No. 1720 (2005) on "Education and religion", No. 1396 (1999) on "Religion and democracy", No. 1309 (2002) on "Freedom of religion and religious minorities in France", No. 1928 (2013) on "Safeguarding human rights in relation to religion and belief and protecting religious communities from violence" (particularly paragraph 9.11), No. 1904 (2012) on "The right to freedom of choice in education in Europe".

The Assembly has expressed concern regarding discrimination that may arise from unnecessary restrictions on the rights of parents to raise and educate their children in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions.

The European Court of Human Rights has also ruled on this matter in many decisions, reinforcing the rights of parents to raise their children in conformity with their own convictions.

The Assembly finds that new religious movements and religious minorities are especially at risk regarding the infringement of these rights by some member States.

Derogatory labeling of religious minorities as 'sects', 'sectarian', 'cults' or any other term generates bias and stigmatization and lead to undue restrictions to a parent's right to raise and educate their children in conformity with their own beliefs.

The Assembly therefore resolves to study and identify cases where member States do not respect the rights of parents to educate children according to their own religious and philosophical convictions, especially with regard to minorities.

Signed (see overleaf)

Signed¹:

GHILETCHI Valeriu, Republic of Moldova, EPP/CD
AGRAMUNT Pedro, Spain, EPP/CD
CHOPE Christopher, United Kingdom, EDG
CROSIO Jonny, Italy, EDG
DESEYN Roel, Belgium, EPP/CD
DONALDSON Jeffrey, United Kingdom, EDG
DUNDEE Alexander, [The Earl of], United Kingdom, EDG
GALATI Giuseppe, Italy, EPP/CD
HOVHANNISYAN Arpine, Armenia, EPP/CD
JAPARIDZE Tedo, Georgia, SOC
KALMÁR Ferenc, Hungary, EPP/CD
KORODI Attila, Romania, EPP/CD
LEIGH Edward, United Kingdom, EDG
MAGHRADZE Guguli, Georgia, SOC
MENDES BOTA José, Portugal, EPP/CD
OROBETS Lesia, Ukraine, EPP/CD
PALACIOS José Ignacio, Spain, EPP/CD
PINTADO Ángel, Spain, EPP/CD
QUINTANILLA Carmen, Spain, EPP/CD
SOBOLEV Serhiy, Ukraine, EPP/CD
WOLDSETH Karin S., Norway, EDG

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1. EPP/CD: Group of the European People's Party
SOC: Socialist Group
ALDE: Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
EDG: European Democrat Group
UEL: Group of the Unified European Left
NR: Representatives not belonging to a Political Group