

China: The persecution of the Church of Almighty God raised in a side-event at the UN

The denial of religious freedom in China and the case of The Church of Almighty God exposed at the 37th session of the Human Rights Council at the United Nations

CAP LC (05.03.2018) – <http://bit.ly/2FdMKRQ> – On March 1, 2018, during the 37th session of the Human Rights Council at the United Nations in Geneva, the Coordination of the Associations and Individuals for Freedom of Conscience (CAP LC) organized a side event on the denial of religious freedom in China and the case of The Church of Almighty God.

A panel of international scholars and human rights and freedom of religion experts discussed the dramatic situation of the members of The Church of Almighty God both in China, where they are severely persecuted, and in South Korea and Europe, where their requests for asylum are often denied. The event was introduced and coordinated by Mr Thierry Valle, the president of CAP LC.

Prof Massimo Introvigne, a well-known Italian scholar of new religious movements and managing director of CESNUR (Center for Studies on New Religions), presented the problems of

religious liberty in China and introduced The Church of Almighty God, insisting on the fact that scholarly studies have confirmed that most of the accusations against this church found on the Internet are false. See his presentation at <https://tinyurl.com/ycn2zpcr>.

Ms Lea Perekrests, deputy director of HRWF (Human Rights Without Frontiers), presented both statistics and several case studies of members of The Church of Almighty God who have been arrested, incarcerated, and tortured in China. Some of them died in jail. See her presentation at <https://tinyurl.com/yazszc3u>.

Ms Rosita Ąoryte, a former Lithuanian diplomat who is currently president of ORLIR (International Observatory of Religious Freedom of Refugees), insisted on the fact that being a member of The Church of Almighty God is enough for being arrested or worse in China. As a consequence, refugees of that Church have a reasonable fear of being persecuted in China and should be granted asylum. See her presentation at <https://tinyurl.com/ybtvul3q>.

Mr. Eric Roux, the president of EIFRF (European Interreligious Forum for Religion Freedom), discussed the difficulties of the Church's asylum seekers in France, and how French authorities often rely on outdated or false information when rendering their negative decisions. See his text at <https://tinyurl.com/y86p4wpj>.

Attendees also watched a short video with testimonies of three members of The Church of Almighty God who have been

persecuted, jailed and tortured in China.

The Church of Almighty God is the largest Chinese new religious movement, with some three to four million members according to Chinese government's estimates. Its core belief is that Jesus Christ has returned as the incarnated Almighty God, this time in a female form as a Chinese woman. Its brand of Christianity is admittedly non-traditional, but this does not justify persecution in China, nor the lack of understanding for the well-justified refugee claims of its members in other countries.

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