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## **FRANCE : The MIVILUDES acknowledges the faulty bases of its reports**

### **Feet of clay: The French MIVILUDES acknowledges the faulty bases of its reports**

*These bases are the "saisines" (in theory, alerts by those who write to denounce a "cultic deviance"). We now learn the "saisines" are not real "reports."*

By Massimo Introvigne

Bitter Winter (14.09.2022) – <https://bit.ly/3qD8rUI> – France has a strange institution called MIVILUDES, the Inter-ministerial mission for monitoring and combating cultic deviances (dérives sectaires), which is now connected with the Inter-ministerial Committee for the Prevention of Delinquency and Radicalization (CIPDR).

It publishes periodically reports on “cults” (called in French “sectes”) that receive a good deal of criticism for their vagueness and lack of rigor. For instance, the Mission has recently admitted that its figures of 500 “cults” and 500,000 “victims of the cults” in France, which it often repeats and are quoted in the media, come from old texts of 1995, 2006, and 2010, which were controversial when they were published, are not even quoted correctly in the MIVILUDES’ reports, and of course cannot tell us anything about the situation today.

Bitter Winter has also denounced the faulty methodology of MIVILUDES, which declares a movement more or less dangerous based on the number of “saisines” concerning the group it receives every year. The “saisines” are alerts by those who write to the MIVILUDES, or use a web form, to denounce a “cultic deviance.” We objected that there is no verification that those sending a “saisines” to the MIVILUDES exist, let alone tell the truth, and mentioned the case of an American scholar who had successfully registered with the French governmental mission a “saisine” signed by Napoleon Bonaparte.

We believed that MIVILUDES’ use of the “saisines” was bad. We were wrong. It is much worse. A French correspondent who routinely inspects publicly accessible documents about the MIVILUDES found a decision by the CADA (Commission for the Access to Administrative Documents) dated May 12, 2022. The decision concerns a lawyer who had tried to obtain copies of all the “saisines” received by the MIVILUDES since 2015 about the Jehovah’s Witnesses.

The CADA decided that the lawyer, subject to certain conditions, has the right to consult them, after the MIVILUDES will have hidden the names and other details making it possible to identify those who sent the alerts, but this is not the most interesting part of the story.

What is more important is the MIVILUDES' somewhat arrogant statement in the procedure that the lawyer "made a confusion." The confusion, the MIVILUDES stated, was "between real reports (signalements) and 'saisines' sent to the MIVILUDES. The latter also include questions and institutional exchanges." The MIVILUDES then argued that "the reports, which consist of testimonies, contain many elements that could affect the security and privacy of the persons mentioned in them." They cannot be disclosed without eliminating all these "elements," and once all these details will be eliminated they will become uninteresting.

This argument refers to the "reports." The "saisines" however, we are now told, are not "reports" and also include simple "questions and institutional exchanges," which thus are not "testimonies." It seems that, if a local city council ("institutional exchange") or even a private citizen ("question") asks the MIVILUDES "What do you know about the group X?" this is counted as a "saisine." If two university students looking for material about the group X, and one city council to which the group X has asked an administrative authorization, contact the MIVILUDES, this makes three "saisines."

In the report for the years 2018–2020 of the MIVILUDES three "saisines" are enough to include The Church of Almighty God within the analysis of "cultic deviances." Remember, the "saisines" are not "reports" denouncing that identified French citizens had a negative experience with a group. They are just interactions with the MIVILUDES where the name of the group has been mentioned. Yet, the number of "saisines" is a key element to include a group in the MIVILUDES reports.

The conclusion is that the “saisines” belong to the category of thin air. Not only the system of the “saisines” is easily manipulable by those hostile to a certain group. Even if the “saisines” are genuine, they do not mean anything.

After the emotions created by the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, whom his assassin wanted to punish for his cooperation with organizations connected with the Unification Church, somebody proposed to import the MIVILUDES into Japan and create a similar agency there. Those who know how the MIVILUDES operates understand that the problem would be to shut it down in France, rather than to export it abroad and spread additional faulty research and false information.

*Photo: Protest against the MIVILUDES in Paris.*

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## Further reading about FORB in France on HRWF website

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