

# **RUSSIA: NGOs express serious concerns about rights of defense violations in Scientology case**

HRWF (20.11.2018) – Scientologists are in jail in Saint Petersburg for the sole fact of practicing their faith, which Russian authorities regard as “extremist,” a charge also used against other groups. We have followed with great concern news published in the Russian media about serious irregularities in the case of Scientologist Ivan Matsitsky, who has been in jail in the last seventeen months. The FSB is being accused of fabricating evidence, and the prosecuting judge of having violated the rights of the defense by not providing Matsitsky and his attorneys with the materials of the case within the date required by the law, and by extending Matsitsky’s pre-trial detention beyond any reasonable limit.

We understand that Matsitsky’s attorney has filed complaints against both Judge Evgeny Isakov and the FSB. We urge the Russian authorities to seriously investigate the complaints, to restore Matsitsky’s right of defense, and to abandon their faulty interpretation of the notion of extremism, which is used as a tool to ban unpopular religious minorities.

2018

CAP-LC Coordination des Associations et des Particuliers pour  
la Liberté de Conscience

CESNUR – Center for Studies on New Religions

EIFRF European Inter-Religious Forum for Religious Freedom

FOB – European Federation for Freedom of Belief

FOREF – Forum for Religious Freedom Europe

HRWF – Human Rights Without Frontiers

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**CHINA: Twenty banned religious groups**

FOREF (15.10.2018) – <https://bit.ly/2pVeaFS> – On September 18,

2017, the revamped China Anti-Cult (xie jiao) website reiterated the list of banned groups which had been listed publicly in 2014. Of the total 20 groups, eleven were listed as being “dangerous”:

1. Falun Gong (法轮功)
2. The Church of Almighty God (全能神)
3. The Shouters (呼喊派)
4. The Disciples Society (门徒会)
5. Unification Church (统一教会)
6. Guanyin Method (观音法门)
7. Bloody Holy Spirit (血淋淋圣灵)
8. Full Scope Church (全范围教会)
9. Three Grades of Servants (三等仆人)
10. True Buddha School (真佛学校)
11. Mainland China Administrative Deacon Station (大陆中国行政执事站)

See the [full article](#) (25 pages) as published by CESNUR earlier this year: **The Black-Lists: The Evolution of China’s List of “Illegal and Evil Cults”** by Edward A. Irons

### ***Abstract***

In China, departments under the central government have published lists of banned and illegal religious groups since 1995. This practice can be seen as an extension of traditional ways of categorizing heterodox associations dating back to imperial times. Groups on the current list are often identified as xie jiao—normally translated as “evil cults.” The list is thus directly connected to questions of the categorization of religion in China. The study of the lists provides insight into the government’s evolving policy on religion, as well as the legal environment for religious activity.

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## **WORLD: CESNUR's statement on refugees fleeing religious persecution**

CESNUR (30.10.2017) – <http://bit.ly/2z09Men> – October 27, 2017 is the International Religious Freedom Day.

CESNUR would like to seize this opportunity to call the attention of international organizations, governments, and religions on the dramatic situation of refugees seeking asylum for reasons of religious persecution.

On October 23, 2017 we participated in a conference in Seoul, Korea, devoted to the dramatic situation of refugees fleeing from China escaping religious persecution there, including members of the Church of Almighty God, which is banned in China and whose devotees are systematically persecuted there. Most of them fail to obtain asylum in Korea and other

countries, with a real risk of being returned to China, where they would be incarcerated or worse. Other religious groups and movements are in the same or similar situations.

Public opinion in several countries sometimes is not able to distinguish between economic migrants and refugees. The distinction is clear in international conventions. In 2004, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees published [guidelines on religion-based refugee claims](#). These guidelines clarify that new and non-traditional religions are entitled to the same protection as mainline religions; that individuals should not prove that they have been individually persecuted and a general pattern of persecution against their religious group is enough; and that “persecution” should be broadly interpreted, including prohibition to freely practice and propagate one’s religion.

Decisions by several international courts have also specified that accusations that a religious movement is responsible of crimes are not per se ground to refuse the religion-based refugee claims of its members, unless they are individually responsible for the crimes and there is reasonable evidence that crimes are real rather than trumped up charges created to justify persecution.

On International Religious Freedom Day 2017, CESNUR urges all international organizations, government, and religions to work for the protection of all religion-based refugees and the enforcement of the United Nations guidelines on religion-based refugee claims, including in the paradigmatic case of members of the Church of Almighty God fleeing China, as well as in other dramatic and urgent situations.

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