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## **FRANCE: French Evangelicals ask UN to help against secularist state**

### **FRANCE: French Evangelicals ask UN to help against secularist state**

*The French Evangelicals ask the United Nations to help the French state speak respectfully about beliefs and stop “fuelling anti-religious sentiment, prejudice or stigmatisation of believers.”*

CNE News (12.04.2023) – That is clear from a letter sent by the National Council of French Evangelicals (CNEF) to the UN

High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

The High Commissioner will come to France on May 1st for the periodic review of the country's compliance with international rights conventions. In that context, NGOs can send reports to the UN Commissioner to ask for attention to problems.

Together with the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA), the European Evangelical Alliance (EEA) and the European Baptist Federation (EBF), CNEF has produced a report with recommendations.

### ***Surveillance***

The French Protestants refer to the change in the law in mid-2021, reinforcing respect for the "Republic". In an earlier report from last October, the organisation wrote about a "shift toward a 'secular surveillance' of worship."

In a sheet with recommendations from this month, the four organisations warn that "new legislation on worship should not be restrictive or constraining". The Evangelicals see places of worship as "imperative needs of the population" that should be free to open also during a pandemic or security crisis.

Instead of speaking negatively about religion, state representatives should "promote the understanding of religious freedom in France by improving the teaching of the religious phenomenon within the national education".

In follow-up, the authorities should ensure everyone has freedom of expression, including the propagation of religious beliefs. That is part of the "pluralism of beliefs and opinions" in modern society.

At the end of the report, the Evangelicals ask for a "general conscientious objection" for caregivers, particularly concerning abortion and euthanasia.

## **Secular**

Since 1905, France has been a secular country. That means that the influence of the (Catholic) church was no longer part of the political establishment. During the decades after that, church people have complained regularly that the state took this so seriously that it actually meant that the state tried to wipe the church out of society at all.

In 1905, the Protestants were happy since they enjoyed more space because of the secularisation. But now, they also detect an “anti-religious sentiment”, as they wrote last October.

*Photo: The Evangelicals in France ask the UN to help to create a respectful environment for religion in their country. Photo Facebook CNEF*

**[Further reading about FORB in France on HRWF website](#)**

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