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UKRAINE : 82 Ukrainian academics denounce FECRIS for its links with Moscow

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On 18 November, Bitter Winter published an article titled "82 Ukrainian Academics Ask France to Stop Supporting the Anti-Cult Federation FECRIS" revealing that virtually all Ukrainian scholars of religion wrote to President Macron denouncing the complicity between Western anti-cultists and their Russian homologues who keep slandering Ukraine

Emmanuel Macron
Président de la République Française
Palais de l'Élysée
75008 Paris

Kiyv, November 11, 2022

Copy to:

Volodymyr Oleksandrovykh Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine
Vadym Omeltchenko, Ambassador Extraordinary and
Plenipotentiary of Ukraine to France
Etienne de PONCINS, Ambassador of France in Ukraine

Re: Funding of FECRIS association by France

Dear Mr President,

We are a group of Ukrainian scholars and human rights defenders, most of us currently based in Ukraine. We want to start this letter by saying that we deeply appreciate the help that France is providing to our country, in the most difficult situation that we are facing during these terrible times for our people.

Nevertheless, we would like to draw your attention on the following facts. At the Human Dimension Conference organized by the OSCE in Warsaw, on September 28 and 29, France has been publicly asked by NGOs to stop funding FECRIS (European Federation of Research and Information Centers on Sects and Cults), a French umbrella organization that gathers "anti-cult" organizations throughout Europe and is mainly funded by France.

What was reproached as regards FECRIS, besides its discriminatory activities against any religious minorities that they falsely label as "cults", was the fact that for years it has supported its Russian branch, whilst that branch is a key and constant actor in the Kremlin's propaganda against Ukraine, its government and its people.

The French Permanent Representation at OSCE issued a right of reply, and instead of answering on the merits of the criticism, only stated that "FECRIS is an association providing assistance to victims of sectarian aberrations. It is as such that it is supported by the French government, which intends to continue supporting its activities". We deeply regret that the French representation did not take seriously the facts that were denounced during this conference.

Unfortunately, the support of FECRIS to Russian propaganda against Ukraine is very well documented. It started long time ago. Alexander Dvorkin, Vice President of FECRIS from 2009 to 2021 and currently a board member, has been barred from entering Ukraine since 2014, because he was a very rabid anti-Ukrainian propagandist, spreading on Russian State TV that Ukrainian authorities were a bunch of "cult-followers" controlled by cults and the West. He was one of the first calling the Maidan authorities "Neo-Pagans" and "Nazis". Since, he made visits to the self-proclaimed "Luhansk People's Republic" and continued its propaganda against Ukraine there, in addition to Russia.

Alexander Novopashin, an official representative of FECRIS in Russia, is almost every day in Russian medias accusing Ukrainians to be "satanists" to be fought by the Russian troops, and even depicts us as "cannibals", praising the Russian government for the holy fight they are conducting in our territories. He even justified publicly the Russian invasion in Ukraine with these words: "Any disease must be cured, and, alas, if a person has gangrene, you have to take away its hand, and resort to surgical methods."

FECRIS association "the Saratov branch of the Center for Religious Studies", located in Saratov, just after the beginning of the war, published a call to denunciate to them any "provocateur" that would pretend that Russia triggered war, or were advocating for peace, so that they could liaise

with Russian law enforcement agencies to take care of them.

These are only few examples amongst dozens which have been documented.

Now, FECRIS took off their website the names of their Russian associations and are pretending that in fact they would support Ukraine. They don't and those are false pretenses. In fact, per the last documents that they filed to the French authorities, Alexander Dvorkin is still a member of their board of administration. They never distanced themselves from the actions of their Russian members. They never publicly sanctioned Alexander Dvorkin or other Russian members for the evil acts they committed recently and during these last years. To the opposite they supported them whatever they were doing. Now they say on their website that they also have Ukrainian branches as evidence that they would not support the Kremlin propaganda. What they forgot to say, is that they have two associations members of FECRIS in Ukraine, one of them being pro-Russian, and the other one being inactive for a decade while it is well-known for its discriminatory statements against minority religions, and it never publicly distanced itself from the Russian FECRIS.

Additionally, according to reports published by Chinese official sources, as late as July 15, 2022, FECRIS' treasurer Didier Pachoud and his FECRIS affiliate organization GEMPPI hosted in a conference in Paris Roman Silantyev, one of the Russian anti-cultists who claim that Ukrainian leaders are inspired by "occult and pagan" ideologies, and infiltrate "Satanists" into Russia for purposes of sabotage and terrorism.

That is why we respectfully ask you to make sure that France stops funding such an association which is an enemy of the West and democracy and has worked hand in hand with the Russian authorities against Ukraine. We hope that you will take this letter seriously and will consider its merits. It

might look unimportant, but it's important to realize that Vladimir Putin has now adopted FECRIS theories accusing the West of "Satanism", and that they are part of his state propaganda apparatus.

Thank you very much for your help on this important matter.

Respectfully,

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

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