



ADVENTIST WORLD AFFAIRS

NEWS AND ANALYSIS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY OF THE
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

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From the Director . . . Good News and Bad News!

The good news came from Turkmenistan where, after several years of persecution, our church has been registered. It is the first on the new list of recognized churches and religious groups. In 1999 our church building was destroyed, our church members have been persecuted, and they have had no right to meet together to worship God. Our pastor, who was "heroic" during that time, became a taxi driver. He did not leave the country, but found a way to meet his flock every week to give Bible studies and baptize new members. So this is really good news, even if we have to follow up and, if necessary, we will go to Turkmenistan.

The bad news came from France where the regulation which follows the law on *laicity* in the public schools won't make any accommodation for those who are systematically absent one day a week for religious reasons. Adventist students and teachers and conservative Jews will be on the grill, as will Muslim girls who wear headscarves.

It is a strange world where a totalitarian country, under international and United States pressures steps back and gives rights to religious minorities, and a democratic country steps forward with more intolerance and religious discrimination.

Please turn to page 3...

Annual Religious Liberty Banquet

U.S. Senator Sam Brownback of Kansas, a long time advocate for international religious freedom, was honored during a ceremony held in the United States Senate Caucus Room on April 7. In attendance at the event were members of the U.S. Congress, representatives from the White House, the U.S. Department of Justice, the U.S. Department of State, members of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, representatives from the Commission for Security & Cooperation in Europe, and diplomats from nations as diverse as the Ukraine, Ethiopia, Burma and Uzbekistan.

Dr. Barry Black, U.S. Senate Chaplain, gave the evening's keynote address. U.S. Senator Brownback, Prof. Jean Bauberot of the French Presidential Commission on Laicity and Prof. Krasikov of the Russian Academy of Sciences also spoke. The event was organized by Liberty Magazine, the North American Religious



ANN
From left to right, Lincoln Steed, John Graz, and NARLA member Diana Czajkowski.

Liberty Association (NARLA), and the International Religious Liberty Association (IRLA) in cooperation with the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

"The event highlighted our ongoing commitment to encouraging religious freedom," notes Lincoln Steed, editor of Liberty magazine.

Please turn to page 3...

UN Geneva: Adventists Address Top-level Meetings on Human Rights



Part of the room showing the Commission in session.

In March of this year, representatives of the Seventh-day Adventist Church had the opportunity to speak to the full body full sessions of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, the highest world body dealing with such matters.

"It's a great privilege, as well as a tremendous responsibility, to share our Adventist perspective with the ambassadors and delegates of 191 countries in the large meeting hall," said Dr. Jonathan Gallagher, main representative for the Adventist church. "To be able to address this audience of maybe 700 top-level people on behalf of the world church is an amazing opportunity that we

Please turn to page 4...

Vietnam Official Visits International Religious Liberty Association



L to R: Interpreter, Mrs. Seiple, Ambassador Seiple, Honorable Chinh, Dr. Graz, Chris Seiple, Mr. Cooper, Dr. Gallagher.

Senior Expert and Member of the Consultative Commission of the Vietnam Fatherland Front for Religious Affairs, The Honorable Nguyen Chinh, visited the the International Religious Liberty Association, May 6, 2004. A former Deputy Director of Religious Affairs Bureau of Vietnam, Honorable Chinh defines himself someone who is very interested in the field of religious liberty.

"Our country has seen so much war, so much suffering, including those within the Adventist Church," commented Chinh. "In war, there are "us" and "others." Now is the time to have peace and friendship between each other. We are now rebuilding our country, including its spiritual life."



The Honorable Nguyen Chinh, and Dr. Graz

Accompanied by Ambassador Robert Seiple (Chairman of the Board for the Institute for Global Engagement), Mrs. Robert Seiple, and Chris Seiple (president

for the Institute for Global Engagement), Chinh was welcomed by IRLA Secretary-General, Dr. John Graz, and Deputy Secretary General, Dr. Jonathan Gallagher.

Commenting on behalf of the IRLA, Dr. Graz said, "The visit of Honorable Chinh is important because it is part of 'building bridges' between people, beliefs and vision of the world as we want to improve cooperation and help build a better world for people worldwide."

The IRLA works very closely with the Institute for Global Engagement in many endeavors to build understanding among people of all religions. A strong advocate of religious freedom and human rights, the IRLA continues to promote and maintain religious freedom around the world, and to assist people who are discriminated against or persecuted for practicing their beliefs.

Viola Hughes

Ambassador of Spain Speaks Passionately for Religious Freedom at IRLA HQ



L to R: M Bediako (IRLA board of directors member), Ramon Santos (political counselor of Spain) J Graz (IRLA secretary general), Ambassador Ruperez, and J Gallagher (IRLA deputy secretary general).

A long-time defender of the principles of religious liberty, Ambassador Javier Ruperez from the Embassy of Spain in Washington, D.C. visited the headquarters of the International Religious Liberty Association April 19.

In conversation with IRLA officers, Ruperez summed up his convictions. He had written a highly-significant book on the situation in Spain in 1970 entitled,

"Confessional State and Religious Freedom."

Commenting on the situation at that time, he said that "the imposition of religion on all was wrong, not just for state, but also for fundamental freedoms. It is not enough to recognize religious freedom; we have to obtain the same recognition from others."

Speaking in the aftermath of the terrorist bombings in Madrid, Ruperez commented, "In order to achieve religious freedom, we need to ask for the respect of beliefs of others. All violence in the name of God should belong to the past. We should be vigilant in demanding respect by others for the freedom we proclaim-otherwise we could go back to the Dark Ages. We have been under assault by people who believe they can kill others in the name of God. I believe very, very strongly that such a view must be rejected."

In his conclusion, Ruperez observed, "After all the toil of centuries we can become lost in a quagmire where there is no mutual respect. It becomes a question of being willing to die for religious freedom." Responding

for the IRLA, Secretary General John Graz states that "the commitment of the government of Spain and especially Ambassador Ruperez to religious freedom is to be highly commended. We greatly value the material support voted to the IRLA and its Board of Experts meetings by the Spanish government that has enabled the production of such important documents as "Guidelines on Responsible Proselytism". The example of Spain for the cause of religious liberty is worth being adopted by many other states, and we extend our grateful thanks."



John Graz talking to Ambassador Ruperez

Jonathan Gallagher

AZERBAIJAN: NEW CRACKDOWN ON ADVENTISTS

Amid a new crackdown on Azerbaijan's Adventists, three pastors have been fined in the cities of Gyanja (Gänca) and Sumgait (Sumqayıt) for "illegal preaching" and for failing to register their place of residence, while the congregation in the capital Baku is facing increased pressure. "We don't agree with these fines," Pastor Yahya Zavrıchko, head of the Adventist Church in Azerbaijan, told Forum 18 News Service from Sumgait on 20 May. "All we want is to be able to function freely."

In Sumgait, an industrial town on the Caspian Sea north of Baku, Pastor Khalid Babaev was questioned on 19 May and today (20 May) was fined 82,500 manats (115 Norwegian kroner, 14 Euros or 17 US dollars) under Article 299 part 1 of the code of administrative offenses, which punishes leaders of religious communities who fail to register them with the authorities.

Pastor Babaev had been forced to flee from the Azerbaijani exclave of Nakhichevan (Naxçıvan) in February after receiving death threats for trying to lead the Adventist congregation there. He had moved to Sumgait only a month ago.

Police arrived at his home in the evening of 19 May, confiscated 48 religious books and took him to the police

station. There they warned him not to conduct any religious work until he had approval from the local administration, forced him to sign a statement to say he would comply with this instruction and told him to appear in court the following day. When Adventist colleagues - including Pastor Zavrıchko - joined Babaev at Sumgait's city court on 20 May, they learnt that the police would be handing down the fine, not the court.

"Pastor Babaev was not even holding a service at the time the police arrived at his home," Zavrıchko told Forum 18. He said Babaev had signed the instruction agreeing not to hold any worship services until the community registers only under great pressure and that the Church believes this demand is unlawful. Zavrıchko said that church leaders had visited the official at the Sumgait city administration responsible for links with social organisations and political parties and informed him of the church's intention to seek registration. Officials said there would be no problem and that all the church needs to do is to write to the city's mayor, Vagif Aliiev.

Zavrıchko believed the move to punish Babaev was initiated by Major Hasan Asadov, the head of the Sumgait police who had questioned the pastor the previous evening. Forum 18 was unable imme-

diately to reach Major Asadov. However, the police returned the confiscated books on 20 May.

Rahim Salimov, the local police officer involved in the case, insisted to Forum 18 that the Adventists can function in Sumgait only after they receive permission from the local administration. "They failed to register their place of worship," he told Forum 18 from Sumgait on 20 May. "It's a private home. The law says they have to register before they can conduct religious services." Asked which law specifies that religious practice without registration is illegal he repeatedly declared: "Azerbaijani law." But he was unable to specify which law.

Protestant congregations - especially those made up of ethnic Azeri converts - face great difficulties registering and obtaining legal status, especially in towns outside Baku. They often face obstruction or harassment from the authorities, as well as frequent attacks in the media. The pro-government ANS commercial television company showed another report in early May attacking members of the Baku Baptist church.

By Felix Corley, Forum 18 News Service
<http://www.forum18.org/>

Religious Liberty Banquet . . .

...Continued from page 1

"Liberty magazine has been on the forefront of this struggle for ninety-nine years. Recognizing the contributions of those who join us in the cause is a privilege."

Dr. John Graz, secretary general of the IRLA, comments that "we are delighted leaders in the field of religious freedom from around the world and across the nation joined us as we placed a spotlight on religious liberty in the heart of Capitol Hill. They are individuals who have dedicated themselves to the front line of struggle to advance the cause of freedom."

"Our Capitol Hill liberty awards dinner has become an important annual event" notes James Standish, executive director of NARLA. "The dinner brings together representatives from the U.S. Government, the international community, and representatives from diverse faith communities to recognize the importance of religious freedom and to discuss current challenges to religious liberty both at home and abroad," said Standish. "It was

a wonderful setting to say 'thank you' to Diana for her wonderful contribution to NARLA." All of the members of the North American Religious Liberty Association were invited to the event.

The United States Senate Caucus Room where the ceremony occurred has been the scene of many historical events. Hearings on the sinking of the Titanic were held in the Caucus Room, as were the Watergate hearings. The room was the location in which John F. Kennedy announced his candidacy for U.S. President.

Good News and Bad News...

...Continued from page 1

As we had been working to change the policy of intolerance in Turkmenistan, we will do our best to help the newly persecuted people in France. We will work in silence, if necessary. We will pray, because God is the one who gives us religious freedom, and He is the one who can help us to regain it when it is threatened by the power of intolerance!

John Graz

Meeting with Colin Powell and State Department Officials

Often the Seventh-day Adventist Church has the opportunity to act as representatives for religious freedom at government functions where we visit with government leaders to discuss issues concerning religious liberty and fundamental human rights. Just recently we had the privilege of attending an event at the U.S. State Department. During the event, which focused on fundamental human rights, we had the opportunity to meet, among others, Secretary of State Colin Powell, former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Jean Kirkpatrick, and a number of other State Department officials.

This was one of a number of visits with the State Department personnel during the year.



Secretary of State Colin Powell with James Standish, Director of Legislative Affairs.

22,000 Letters to Congress & Counting

If today is an average day in America, three Seventh-day Adventists will be fired from their jobs for no crime other than obeying God's law. And behind each statistic is a real person, with a real family, many of whom experience enormous hardship as a result of being fired.

The religious liberty team is working to change this. We're leading the effort to pass the Workplace Religious Freedom Act, S. 893 (WRFA). If passed, WRFA will provide overdue protection for Sabbath keepers and other people of faith in the American



Senator John F. Kerry, lead Democrat Sponsor of WRFA. James Standish, Executive Director of NARLA is behind him on the left. workplace. A nation-wide letter writing campaign has netted almost 22,000 let-

ters to Congress in support of the bill. And national leaders, including Senators John Kerry, Rick Santorum, Orin Hatch and Joe Lieberman have joined the effort.

The importance of the Workplace Religious Freedom Act cannot be over emphasized. If you would like to do your part to support the liberty of our members, visit www.religiousliberty.info and in about a minute you can send a letter to support this vital legislation. Please continue to pray for this effort as we work to advance the cause of freedom in a very tangible way.

2004 Interns Working for Religious Liberty

The Public Affairs & Religious Liberty Department offers internships in our offices at the UN in New York and Geneva and in our Capitol Hill office. Currently, three exceptional young Adventists are working with our team.

Juan Perla, a graduate of Andrews University, works with our team at the Commission for Human Rights. At this year's March/April Commission, Juan assisted in the translation of documents for our church and the International Religious Liberty Association. Juan also read some interventions, conducted a post-Commission briefing with students from Saleve Seventh-day Adventist University at Collonges, made contact with ambassadors for TV interviews, and other various projects.

Rachel Bostic, a graduate of Southern Adventist University, is working in our UN liaison office in New York City. She helped conduct a workshop on non-violence for school children to commemorate Martin Luther King Jr. holiday, and attended several meetings relevant to the Church's portfolios in the area of health, education, women's issues, etc.

Karin Bryner, a Senior at Pacific Union College, is interning in our office of legislative affairs on Capitol Hill. She's participated in a number of lobbying visits with the staff of U.S. Senators, is assisting with a variety of aspects of a major legislative

campaign, has co-written a script for Faith & Freedom, the new religious liberty show on Adventist Television Network, and is working on a variety of other projects, including our annual religious freedom report.

"The internship program has demonstrated the church's commitment to becoming more involved on the international scene," commented Dr. Jonathan Gallagher, U.N. liaison director for the SDA Church. "By developing these important contacts at the highest possible level, we have the opportunity to share our core concepts, values and activities with a wide audience. The involvement of our young people in this invaluable work reveals their commitment to this vital outreach beyond the borders of the church."

Viola Hughes

UN Geneva . . .

...Continued from page 1

enthusiastically endorse. Adventist speeches to the Commission have included statements on religious liberty, freedom of conscience, the rights of the child, and religious minorities. "We are particularly concerned about the decline in religious freedom around the world," Gallagher commented. "On this issue we were particularly pleased that



Dr. Gallagher with H.E. Ambassador Michael Smith of Australia, chairman of the UN Commission on Human Rights.

the news report by the United Nations Information Service picked up on this issue. In fact they cited our statement as the lead for their report, saying "The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists said the development of religious extremism and intolerance in many parts of the world was alarming."

Just the very fact that Adventists are present and active in this Commission is a statement of the church's commitment to human rights, Gallagher observed. Also present representing the church were Dr. Gianfranco Rossi, long-time activist in the area of human rights, and Juan Perla, volunteer intern; together with seven international students from the church's college in France.

But even more important than the speeches was the direct interaction with ambassadors, Gallagher added. "In talking directly with ambassadors and country representatives, especially of nations where there are major concerns, we can make a real difference," he said. "Most of these discussions cannot be reported as they are obviously of a very sensitive nature, but this kind of diplomacy is very helpful for the church and for others, especially those who are persecuted for their faith."

The Commission ran from March 15 to April 23.

Parl News

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