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Italy

The population of Italy is approximately 57.8 million. About 85% of the population is Roman Catholic. There are roughly 6,000 Adventist members in Italy. Religious freedom is well-respected and protected in Italy. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has an “Agreement” with the Italian state.



Norway

The population of Norway is 4.5 million. The 3.8 million-member Church of Norway has 1,300 parishes served by 9,200 elected council members, 1,200 clergy and over 5,000 lay employees. Citizens are considered to be members of the state church, unless they explicitly associate themselves with another denomination. The Church of Norway co-founded the Lutheran World Federation in 1947. Norway’s largest non-Lutheran denominations are Pentecostal (46,000 members) and Roman Catholics (42,000 members). There are approximately 4,900 Adventist members in Norway. The biggest non-Christian groups are humanists (68,000 members) and Muslims (56,000 members).

In November, 2002, the General Synod of the Church of Norway discussed the proposals presented in the commission’s report: *The Same Church: A New Order*. Many members of the commission believe that the Constitution should be changed in order to reflect the multi-cultural and multi-religious Norwegian society.

According to the *Ecumenical News International*:

Norwegian society has of late been reflecting its increasingly multi-faith nature, particularly in urban areas. Two years ago Muslims in the capital Oslo were granted the right to broadcast their Friday call to prayer through loudspeakers. The Norwegian Heathen Society, which claims there is no God, was also

granted the right to broadcast calls from a rooftop once a week, including the call, “God does not exist.” Until then, the only legal prayer calls in Norway were the ringing of church bells. (APD, August 5, 2002)



Portugal

The 10,025,000 population of Portugal is 80% Catholic and 4% Protestant. There are 8,170 Adventist members in Portugal.

In April of 2001, Parliament passed the Religious Freedom Act which provides recognized religions with benefits which were once exclusively reserved for the Catholic Church. According to the new Religious Freedom Act, the benefits once reserved for the Catholic Church will be extended to religious groups which have been established in the country for 30 years and have been recognized internationally for 60 years. Adventists were organized in Portugal in 1904. Negotiations between the government and the Vatican have been opened and should be completed by 2003. Until 2003, the *Concordata* with the Vatican remain in force.

For historical reasons, and the presence of a dominant Catholic Church, Portugal has to this point not been able to separate church and state. The new Religious Freedom Act is a great improvement over past discrimination, but does not completely eliminate unequal treatment of religious groups by the state.



Slovakia

The population of Slovakia is 5,396,193, of which approximately 60.4% are Roman Catholic. There are approximately 2,000 Adventist members in Slovakia. Slovakia enjoys religious freedom.



Spain

The population of Spain is 39,905,000 of which 93.63% are listed as Catholics and 1.1% are Muslims. There are 8,055 Adventist members in Spain. There is religious freedom in Spain, and Spain has played a very

positive role on the international level in promoting religious freedom. The Ministry of Justice's Director of Religious Affairs, Professor Alberto de la Hera, and his team have participated in many international symposiums and congresses focusing on religious freedom. All religious groups in Spain are given the opportunity to dialogue with the government, which has resulted in resolving many religious liberty cases. Under the outstanding work of the Religious Affairs Director, Spain has been a model in Europe for religious freedom. Religious minorities, including Adventists, have good relations with the government, and officials are often invited to various events organized by religious groups.

Recently, an outstanding issue between the Spanish government and the Church of Scientology was resolved when members of the Church were acquitted by a Spanish court. Spanish authorities began investigating the Church of Scientology in 1984. In 1988, Heber Jentzsch, the current president of the Church, was arrested during a trip to Spain and spent four months in jail. The World Religion News Service reported this year that:

In December [2001] the Madrid Provincial Court had acquitted 15 members and employees of the Spanish branch of Scientology who had been charged along with the church leader Rev. Heber Jentzsch. When Jentzsch did not appear for trial as it began in February, the court decided to try him separately. The 67-year-old lives in Los Angeles. On March 22, the prosecutor sent the court notice that, in light of the 15 acquittals, the original indictment "now lacks content." But the prosecutor recommended the court only shelve the case, allowing the possibility it could be reopened at some point in the future.

However, on Thursday the court announced that, with the indictment dropped the best way to end the case was to acquit Jentzsch. The court said in December there was no evidence to support prosecutors' allegations that drug rehabilitation and other programs

sponsored by the Church of Scientology in Spain amounted to illicit gathering aimed at activities such as bilking people of money. (*World Religion News Service, April 11, 2002*).



Switzerland

The population of Switzerland is 7.21 million, of which 46% are Roman Catholic, 40% are Protestant, including 4,086 Adventist members, 2% are Muslim, 1% are Orthodox, and 1% have no known religious affiliation. The Swiss enjoy religious freedom.



United Kingdom

No report was received from the United Kingdom, Sweden, Finland, Ireland and other European countries. No significant violations to religious freedom were noticed.

Category 2



Albania

The population of Albania is 3.5 million, of which 45% are Muslim, 30% are said to be Orthodox Christian, 10% are Catholic, and 262 are members of the Adventist Church. The constitution recognizes religious freedom and there are no major problems with religious freedom in Albania.



Andorra

The population of Andorra is 66,824, of which 90% are Catholics. There are few restrictions on religious liberty in this country. People are allowed to hold public religious meetings and perform religious rites in their churches. Proselytism is tolerated and several new religious movements have activities in Andorra. No Adventist church has yet been organized in Andorra.



Belgium

The population of Belgium is 10.3 million, of which 75% are Catholics and 3.5% are Muslims. Belgium

respects religious freedom and human rights. Unfortunately, the government of Belgium recently published a list of “sects” that resulted in problems for some religious minorities. In 2002, the Seventh-day Adventist Church signed, with the United Protestant Church of Belgium (EPUB), an agreement called Partnership, which is the official organization reorganized by the state.



Croatia

The population of Croatia is 4,661,000, of which 85% are Catholics and 3,284 are Adventists. There are no major religious liberty problems reported in Croatia.



Czech Republic

The population of the Czech Republic is 10.3 million, of which approximately 7,650 are Adventists. There are no major religious liberty problems reported in the Czech Republic.



Germany

The population of Germany is 82.2 million, of which 33.4% are Catholics, 3.2% are Muslims, 33% are Protestants, including 35,770 Adventist members, and 1.2% are Evangelicals. New religious movements have experienced some difficulty in Germany. In addition, there have been tensions between some sectors of society and the Muslim/Turkish minority.



Hungary

The population of Hungary is estimated at 10.1 million, of which 68% are Catholic, 21% are Reformed Church, 4% are Lutheran, and less than 1% are Jewish. There are 4,488 Seventh-day Adventist members in Hungary. There are no major religious liberty problems reported in Hungary.



Latvia

The population of Latvia is 2,359,000. The three largest faiths in Latvia are Catholicism, Lutheranism, and Orthodox Christianity. There are approximately 3,841 Adventist members in Latvia. There are no major religious liberty problems reported in Latvia.



Lithuania

The population of Lithuania is 3,690,000, of which 70% are Catholic and 4.8% are Orthodox. There are 897 Adventist members in Lithuania.

A law passed in 1995 divided religions and churches into three levels: 1) Traditional, 2) Recognized, and 3) Registered. *(See WR, 2001, pp 49-50)* The rights and privileges of each religious group were determined by which category in which the government placed it.

Adventists were very concerned when the Parliament was planning to pass anti-sect legislation. Valdis Zilgalvis, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Lithuania, wrote an official letter to the Parliament concerning the issue. In the letter he mentioned that the Adventist church was registered in 1923 in Lithuania, but lost its registration during the period of Soviet domination.



Luxembourg

No report received.



Malta

The population of Malta is 391,670, of which 95% are Catholics. There are less than a hundred Adventists in Malta. The influence and the presence of the Roman Catholic Church is strong, but there is not systematic discrimination against other religious groups, as was the case some years ago. The former US Ambassador to Malta was a Seventh-day Adventist.



Poland

There are no major religious liberty problems reported in Poland.

Category 3

Austria



The population of Austria is 8.1 million, of which 78% are Catholics, 5% are Protestants, including 3,593 Adventist members, and 2% are Muslims. There is nearly complete religious freedom in Austria. There are, however, no Seventh-day Adventist pastors serving as chaplains in the armed forces, and Adventists are not given access to TV/radio programming. There are only 12 registered churches in Austria. The list of registered churches includes the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), but does not include the Seventh-day Adventist Church, despite efforts over many years to obtain this recognition.

Azerbaijan



The population of Azerbaijan is 8 million, of which 90% are Muslims and 3% are Christians, including 200 members of the Adventist Church. Some independent TV programs were shown between June-December of 2001, which were very damaging to the image of the Adventist Church and ADRA (Adventist Development and Relief Agency). The programs included serious factual errors and false allegations. Dr. John Graz, Secretary General of the IRLA, visited Azerbaijan in 2001 and met with members of the media and the government. Local media also published some articles which turned society against Protestant churches in general. There are restrictions against the registration of minority churches, public evangelism, and literature distribution.

On February 24, 2002, in Gyanja, Western Azerbaijan, local authorities broke up a meeting at a Seventh-day Adventist church and sealed the church building. The motive was that the church had not obtain a re-registration certificate. According to the local Adventist leaders, all of the documents needed had been submitted before the February 1st deadline but no certificate was issued by the authorities.



Belarus

The population of Belarus is 9.98 million, of which 80% are Russian Orthodox and 20% are Catholics. There are 4,221 Adventist members in Belarus. In the Parliament newspaper, People's Newspaper, articles are published which call all Protestant churches "sects." These articles create a hostile attitude toward minority Christian churches. Adventist and other Protestant church leaders tried to discuss the situation with the author of those articles, but were not successful. It was thought that these articles could have been paid for by some interested organizations. Adventists took part in a round-table discussion on Religious Law concerning the country's religious situation with leaders of other churches. The round-table of leaders sent letters to the President of Belarus with suggested amendments to the new law. IRLA-Russia was also brought into this campaign. Sometimes it's not possible for Adventists to hold evangelistic meetings in public places in Belarus. In addition, religious groups cannot hold religious meetings in their churches if their congregation is not registered for that place. The restrictive law was passed and signed by the President on October 31, 2002.



Bulgaria

The population of Bulgaria is 8.132 million, of which Orthodox Christians make up 86% of the population, Muslims make up 9.5%, and Catholics and Jews make up 1%. There are 7,497 Adventist members in Bulgaria. The Bulgarian constitution guarantees religious freedom, but the government restricts the rights of non-Orthodox religious minorities. There are restrictions on disseminating information to the public and in keeping the Sabbath. The Adventist Church is restricted in its right to get legal status from the country, to build churches, and to use other buildings for meetings. Adventist pastors can minister in hospitals, but are restricted in prisons, and do not have access to the public through radio or TV programming.

According to *Tolerance Foundation*, religious freedom is not improving in Bulgaria. Attempts are still made to limit religious rights in many areas, such as the media. The “Consolidated Draft Denominations Act” has been criticized for not conforming to the European Union law. The other issue which is still open is the restitution of religious buildings which were nationalized when the Communists came to power. Life is not always easy outside of Sofia for religious minorities who try to share their faith. The following incident is an example:

“On June 21, 2001 in the village of Ravnogor, in the Bratsigico municipality a group of 20 Protestants from the United Church of God went to the village to show a film about the Bible and give a concert when a crowd of enraged local residents, led by the local Orthodox priest and the local director of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO) attacked the visitors. With shouts of “Get out of here, get out of here! You have no business in our village!” dozens of villagers ran at the young Protestants, who were camped out on a field at the edge of the village. They destroyed the visitors’ tent, beat one of them with a tent stake, and stole their expensive projector and generator. The police who were called to the scene refused to file an official protocol about the incident, and in this way effectively covered for the villagers who had committed the attacks and the theft. A few days after the victims filed an official complaint with the Prosecutor’s office, the stolen projector was thrown into the yard of the UCG office in Plovdiv and broke when it hit the ground. No information is available to point to whether the Prosecutor’s office formally continued its official investigations after the silent return of the stolen projector.” (See *Tolerance Foundation*, March 24, 2002, 1000 Sofia, 163A A Rakovski, Slo. Bulgaria.)



France

The population of France is 59,222,000, with Catholics making up the majority. Approximately 7% of the population are Muslim and 2% of the population are Protestants, including 9,924 Adventist members. France enjoys significant religious freedom, but Adventists are restricted in their right to observe religious days of rest. Pastors are also restricted as to their ministry within the armed forces, and Adventists do not have access to the public through television and radio programming. France has generally respected religious freedom as it is outlined in its constitution. Recent events in France, however, caused considerable concern for religious minorities.

In 1996, the government developed a list of 173 religious groups that were identified as “sects” or cults. Included in the list were Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Theological Institute of Nimes, which is an Evangelical college. In 1998, the government created an “Inter-Ministerial Mission in the Fight Against Sects” (MILS), which became very aggressive towards religious minorities and cultivated intolerance towards religious minorities within the population.

On June 14, 2001, the National Assembly passed the first anti-sect law to restrict and dissolve “dangerous” sects or cults. France played an important role in trying to export its anti-sect model to the former communist countries and to South America. Although not listed as sects, Adventists faced hostility in some public schools, universities, and businesses. Several were expelled because they did not work on Saturday. Pressure from public school authorities on children and teachers has been reported. The population, in spite of constant media attacks against religious minorities, has remained mostly indifferent to the issue. Only a few leaders, such as French Protestant Federation Pastor Jean-Arnold de Clermont, reacted against the politics of the government. The official publication of a list of 172 religious groups which were labeled sects would have been considered a fundamental violation of religious

freedom and human rights in other democratic countries. But, intolerance has always raised a reaction in the French population which tends to detest fanaticism.

There is some reason for hope for future improvement in the state of religious freedom in France. With the reelection of President Jacques Chirac and a new government of the center right, many observers expect an amelioration of the anti-sect policy of France, although the anti-sect movement enjoyed some support from both the left and the right. The media has been hostile to religious minorities and anti-American feelings, particularly among the French elite, can translate to a suspicion of US-based faiths. The anti-sect policy of the new government may become less aggressive, less ideological, and less itself sectarian. However, it will take time before the policy is abandoned altogether. The priority after September 11 has switched from “sects” to a concern over Muslim extremists. It can now be seen that France’s focus on peaceful “sects” distracted the nation from recognizing the serious danger of terrorism.

Unfortunately, the French policies of discrimination and harassment of religious minorities has become a welcome model for some of the most repressive countries in the world. These nations are using the French model to wrap a cloak of western democratic respectability around their suppression of fundamental human rights. Religious freedom activists hope that the new French government will recognize the damage caused by past policies, and will stand up for the robust protection of human rights, principal among which is freedom of conscience and religion.



Kyrgyzstan

On February 15, 2002, Kamzt Januzakov, the deputy state commissioner for youth policy, warned against religious sects that are propagating intolerance and terrorism and that seduced young people into joining them. According to Kabar news agency, Jamuzakov targeted

mainly non-state sponsored Islam close to extremist Muslims, but he also mentioned Baptists and Seventh-day Adventists. (*KNS, February 21, 2002*)



Macedonia

There continued to be reports of some difficulty for religious minorities in Macedonia.



Moldova

The population of Moldova is 4,264,000, of which 90% are Orthodox Christians. There are 11,630 Adventist members in Moldova. The Moldovan constitution guarantees religious freedom and the government respects it, but some religious groups face problems from time to time. The following report from our correspondent illustrates that point:

Some students have problems with taking examinations on their Saturday-Sabbath, while some congregations have problems registering: our congregation in the village of Vornicheny is an example of this. We wrote petitions in every case to help our brothers and sisters. We also applied to Mr. Ar-mashu, head of the Religious Affairs Department of the Moldova government. He could not help us and advised us to consult a lawyer. The lawyer checked all the prepared documents and found that everything was in order and that the refusal of the government to register the church was against the law. He advised us to prepare all the documents and apply for registration once more. If we were refused again, then we could apply to the court.



Romania

The population of Romania is approximately 22.4 million. There are 73,097 Adventists in Romania. Since 1995, a draft for a Religious Freedom Act has been under discussion. The main deterrent is always the lack of consensus from the Orthodox Church.

Adventists in Romania have played a leadership role in promoting religious freedom. Pastor Viorel Dima has organized many symposiums, seminars, and conferences which have included both national and international experts on religious freedom. The Romanian Association Conscience and Liberty, which is affiliated to the International Religious Liberty Association, has done outstanding work interacting with the Romanian government and advancing the cause of liberty of conscience.

Russian Federation

The population of the Russian Federation is 147.5 million, of which 54% are Russian Orthodox, 39% are atheists and agnostics, 3% are Muslims, and 1% are Protestants, including 57,914 Adventist members. About 500 Adventist communities have been registered with the government. Relations between Adventists, the government, and the Russian Orthodox Church are good. In spite of that, difficulties have been reported in several parts of the country.

Sociologist Sergei Filatov, authored an important book on Religious life in Russia entitled *Religion and Society: Aspects of Religious Life in Russia Today*. The book went on sale in Russia on March 12, 2002. Findings in the book include:

Russia is a country where very few follow one faith systematically and many shop and change between faiths. (*KNS, April 26, 2002*)

Problems Experienced by Adventists

The following report of violations of religious freedom was sent by Victor Krushenitsky, director of public affairs and religious liberty for the Seventh-day Adventist Church for the territory that includes the Russian Federation:

In Lyskovo city in the Nizhny Novgorod region, the Volgo-Byatskaya Conference of Seventh-day Adventists wanted to hold a drug-prevention program and Bible course for youth, but these programs were forbidden by local authorities.

In Kotovo city in the Nizhny Novgorod region, the Orthodox priest accused the Seventh-day Adventist Church of acts of infanticide. We had some conversations with this priest, and later, an article about our Church in the local newspaper was written which helped to clarify the situation and change people's minds and misconceptions about our Church.

In the Tatarstan Republic, we have problems renting halls for worship and mission outreach. Officials of the Palace of Culture state that they have been given orders from the authorities not to rent us halls.

In the city of Volgograd, some adult members of the church and children have problems keeping the Saturday-Sabbath at work and at school. In some cases, people chose to leave their jobs rather than compromise their religious convictions. In other cases, we were able to reach acceptable agreements with administration of workplaces and schools.

In the city of Penza, we had an agreement to hold a baptism after a mission at the local university, but then we weren't allowed to. In the local newspaper there was a false article about our church, and during the evangelistic outreach, the city authorities pressured the director of the Palace of Culture to refuse to rent the hall to us. We applied to the Penza Region Justice Department to permit the evangelistic outreach to continue for seven more days.

In the Ural area, some church members have problems at work keeping the Saturday-Sabbath. Some children have problems at school keeping the Sabbath, especially when exams are held on Saturdays. The Adventist Public Affairs and Religious Liberty (PARL) director discussed these problems with the directors and teachers, and also applied to the local and regional authorities concerning these problems. Many cases were resolved positively.

There are some problems registering the congregation in the city of Naryan-Mar. The Department of Justice constantly requires new documents so that it is very easy to postpone or deny registration. The local authorities forbid holding public evangelistic meetings in the cities of Pskov, Kimry, and Rzhev. The PARL director applied to the Justice Department without getting a positive result. The Adventist leaders in the region applied to the Commissioner on Human Rights of the Russian Federation to rectify the problem.

In the cities of Kimry and Valday, some false articles about our church were published in the local newspapers. The pastor of the Adventist church in Valday appealed to the editor-in-chief of the local newspaper who apologized for the incident. In Kimry, our pastor wrote a full-page article about our church which was published in the paper.

In the city of Kostroma, a pastor used to visit a correctional institution. One day, an officer gave him a letter from the Ministry of Justice stating that “sects” are not allowed to minister in the institution and that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is considered to be a “totalitarian sect.” We appealed to the Commissioner on Human Rights of the Russian Federation over the matter.

We have had some problems renting halls for worship in Moscow. Some church members and children have problems keeping the Saturday-Sabbath at school and at work. In the cities of Aleksandrov in the Vladimir region and Kineshma in the Ivanovo region, it is not possible for us to rent halls for public evangelism. The authorities say that the Palaces of Culture are not designated for Adventists. We applied to local authorities, but it was not helpful, and their reply was, “build your own houses of prayer and hold your program there.”

In the cities of Oryol and Kursk the lesson “*Foundations of the Orthodox Culture*” was introduced as an obligatory subject in the schools. The reason given for this was the formulation of a national awareness for the children. We applied to the Regional Department of Education which answered that they had established an agreement with the Russian Orthodox Church to hold these classes.

In the city of Lipetsk, it is not possible to rent halls for church meetings. We applied to the local authorities to have this resolved.

In the city of Ryazany, one of the journalists exhibits hostility towards religion on local television. We wanted to meet with the journalist, but he has not agreed to meet with us yet. We wrote petitions in every case to help our brothers and sisters in the area, and sometimes it was helpful, sometimes it was not.

New Proposed Russian Religion Law Raises Concern

According to *Keston News Service*:

A draft law would introduce into Russian legislation the term “traditional religious organization,” which will be subdivided into the categories: “traditional religious organization of individual peoples of the Russian Federation;” “historical traditional religious organization;” and “representation of a foreign traditional religious organization.”

The draft law “*On Traditional Religious Organizations*” would allot state preferences but “would not limit freedom of conscience for anyone else,” its author has claimed in an interview with Keston. At a conference chaired by President Putin’s representative, Georgi Poltavchenko, at which the only religions represented on the praesidium were Orthodoxy, Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism, Poltavchenko said “Traditional religious

organizations are ones which have been present in the Russian state for many centuries and have contributed to Russian statehood that's Orthodoxy, Islam, Judaism and Buddhism. Protestantism is not traditional for the Russian Federation—for England, maybe.”

A new draft law would ban religious organizations found to have committed “extremist activity” including “violation of the rights and freedoms of citizens on account of their race, nationality, language or attitude to religion or convictions.” An accompanying bill includes amendments and additions relating to Russia's 1997 law on religion, which lists grounds for liquidating or banning a religious organization. There is also a proposed amendment to the Criminal Code, by which leadership or participation in a banned extremist organization is punishable by a fine up to 1000 times the minimum wage or confiscation of received or other income for up to ten months or arrest for up to six months or deprivation of freedom for up to five years.

(KNS, February 5, 2002)

Tensions Between the Orthodox and Catholic Churches

Catholics have been the target of several attacks which has led some to ask the questions: “Who is behind this?” The reaction of the Russian Orthodox Church against the Catholic administrative move that created a new diocese may be the answer. The opposition to the visit of the pope and the tension between the two churches has not helped to improve the climate of religious freedom in Russia.

The anti-Catholic climate resulted in a draft law initiated by Viktor Alksnis. It stated: “Insofar as these actions by the Roman Catholic church presents a threat to the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation, the activities of the Catholic Church dioceses should be prohibited...” It received 169 votes of

support in the state Duma, and 37 deputies voted against it. 226 votes were necessary necessary to pass it. (*Institute on Religion and Public Policy, May 16, 2002*)

Protestants Get Single Voice

Baptists, Pentecostal, and Seventh-day Adventists have united for the first time to give a voice to the traditional Protestants in Russia. The group, called “The Consultative Council of the Heads of Protestant Unions,” is focused on religious freedom and humanitarian activities, and is not designed to form a legal, doctrinal, or political association. Adventist Vasily Stolyar, head of the West Russian Seventh-day Adventist Union Conference stated, “We are planning to improve cooperation in social projects such as customs clearance of foreign humanitarian aid and coordination of our position in the field of religious freedom.”

The first action of the new council was to condemn a bill proposed by the State Duma Deputy Alexander Chuyev that established a difference between “traditional” and “non-traditional” churches. Stolyar said, “Russia is a secular society and it should not be divided among those who are presumably better and worse believers.” (*Moscow Times, March 12, 2002*)

In order to have a voice in the public life in Russia, Adventists, Baptists and Pentecostals organized a Consultative Board of the Protestant church leaders in Moscow on January 23, 2002. The purpose of the Board is to protect religious freedom, to introduce issues before the government and religious organizations and promote some moral and social agenda. Representatives of the coalition have met the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church and President Putin several times since January. Under the leadership of Pastor Victor Krushevsky, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Russia is playing a major role in developing religious freedom and in developing interchurch relations.



Ukraine

The population of the Ukraine is 49,066,000, of which about 45% are Orthodox Christians, 40% are atheists, and 12% are Catholics. The Adventist membership in the Ukraine is 59,997. Adventists have experienced some difficulties in the Ukraine. In five cases Adventists were fired because of keeping the Saturday-Sabbath. In the Lviv region, the subject of “Christian Ethics” is an obligatory class in the schools. Students have to perform Catholic ceremonies, and in Lviv city in many of the public schools it is compulsory to cross oneself. At the beginning of the lessons, a teacher places an icon, burns a candle, and all the students have to pray. Vasily Leonidovich Kovalevsky, a student of the Agriculture College in Gorohovsky city, Volyn region, was threatened to be excluded because he keeps the Saturday-Sabbath and does not study for classes on the Sabbath.

With a strong proportion of atheists or non-practitioners, the division of the Orthodox in three different churches and the presence of a significant Catholic population, the Ukraine is more open to religious pluralism than many former Soviet countries.

The Ukraine has experienced some hostility towards the new religious movements and against so called aggressive proselytism. In ten years the number of religious organizations has multiplied 3.5 times. The concern about dangerous sects gave a negative image to religious freedom among the population. In this context, the request for Saturday Sabbath off by the Adventists is not understood. The authorities have also intervened in some interchurch conflicts. According to the Chairman of the State Committee on Religious Affairs, Dr. Bondarenko, the new amendment of the law should improve the issue of restitution of church buildings and harmonize the legal status of religious organizations with the European legislation.

Dr. John Graz visited the Ukraine in April 2002 as Secretary General Secretary of the IRLA. He gave lectures on religious freedom at the Philosophical Department of TARAS Shevchenko Kiev National University, and at the Department of Law of the Christian University. A meeting with Dr. Bondarenko was organized and on April 30 there was a press conference. The Ukrainian Religious Liberty Association plans to organize an international Congress in Kiev in 2004.



Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

The population of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is 10,662,000. More than 65% of the people are Orthodox, 4% are Catholic and about 1% are Protestants including 7,032 Adventist members.

The government is still working on a new legislation which does not have the full support of religious minorities. They feel that the reference to the Orthodox Church in the Preamble may encourage discrimination towards religious minorities. Outside of the main cities the hostility against non-Orthodox continues.

On March 8-9, 2002, in the city of Sremska, Mitrovica, west of Belgrade, a Catholic office was attacked. It was the latest tragedy in a series of attacks against Adventist, Methodist and Nazarene churches. According to a human rights activist:

Attacks on smaller churches and religious communities are becoming more intense again ... for a variety of reasons. The Serbian ministry for religious affairs issued a short statement condemning the attacks: "These constitute attacks on the harmony of society."

(KNS, March 21, 2002)

Category 4



Armenia

The population of Armenia is 2 million, of which 90% are Orthodox Armenians. The few hundred Adventists face difficulties as do other religious minorities

such as Jehovah's Witnesses and Pentecostals. It is difficult for Adventists to keep the Saturday-Sabbath and to rent public halls for church meetings. However, the authorities have at times been helpful on a personal level.

There is some good news from Armenia. On March 7, 2002 the Armenian Appeals Court upheld a not guilty verdict handed down to Levon Markaryan, a Jehovah's Witness, last September by a regional court. The *Keston News Service* reported:

The appeal court found that his religious teaching ... is not criminal and is protected by the guarantees of freedom of religion in the Constitution of Armenia,' a Jehovah's Witness statement declared. The head of the Yerevan office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe also welcomed the ruling, commenting to Keston News Service that 'It is a pity the case was ever brought in the first place.' The chairman of the State Council on Religious Affairs (which is in the process of being wound up), denied to Keston any involvement in Markaryan's unsuccessful prosecution. He declined to comment either on the verdict or on whether it was time for Armenia to remove the Khrushchev-era article of the Criminal Code under which prosecutors had attempted to imprison Markaryan. (*KNS, March 7, 2002*)



Georgia

Georgia has a population of 5 million, of which 70% are Georgian Orthodox, 5% are Muslims, and 2% are Protestants. Religious freedom is accepted by the federal government, but it is not always respected by local authorities. In addition, elements of the Orthodox Church have attacked non-Orthodox worship services.

In the city of Kutaisi, in April 2001, a crowd of people stopped the Adventist worship service and forced worshippers from the church building. Adventist leaders applied to local authorities to resolve the situation.

Felix Corley reported in *Keston* that:

Two Orthodox priests led a three-day attack on a Russian-language Pentecostal church in the Nadzadzevi district of the Georgian capital Tbilisi over the weekend (5-7 July), witnesses have told *Keston News Service*. ‘They arrived to blockade the house on Friday evening,’ the daughter of Pastor Nikolai Kalutsky told *Keston* on 8 July. ‘On Saturday, incited by the priests, the mob of about thirty or forty people burst into the house, beat people, frightened the children, stole Bibles, rummaged through people’s bags and uttered very many threats—to the believers and to our family. It was a pogrom.’ Unlike in previous attacks on religious minorities in Georgia—which have plagued the country for the past three years—the local police did come to the help of the Pentecostal. In a separate incident, two Orthodox priests were reportedly behind attacks on a Catholic pilgrimage in eastern Georgia in which the apostolic administrator was taking part.

Oleg Khubashvili, head of the Pentecostal Union, said the attack on the Tbilisi Russian-language Pentecostal church was the first on any member congregation of his union since last year. ‘We rang government structures about this attack and the police are informed,’ he told *Keston* from Tbilisi in 8 July. ‘We are working to stop such attacks.’ He said it had not yet been established whether the two priests who led the raids were from the Georgian Orthodox Patriarchate, as some reports reaching *Keston* had claimed. ‘No one knows which jurisdiction they were from they didn’t give their names. The police should know.’ (*KNS July 8, 2002*)

EBPS/APD reported that:

Religious minorities have been suffering harassment and persecution from Orthodox fundamentalists which target Baptists accusing them to be ‘traitors.’

They also accused Americans of interfering in religious affairs in Georgia. On February 3, 2002 the Baptist Bible Warehouse was burned. Letters of protest were sent from leaders of many countries including Senator Hillary Clinton, Edward Shevardnadze, President of the Republic of Georgia, published two articles in Sakaryuelos Respublika calling for human rights and religious freedom. *(EBPS/APD, May 22, 2002)*

There have also been serious attacks on Jehovah's Witnesses by extreme elements in Georgia.



Greece

The population of Greece is 10 million, of which 97% are said to be Orthodox. There are about 50,000 Catholics, and 30,000 Protestants, including a few hundred Adventist members. There continue to be reports of some difficulty for religious minorities in Greece. The Greek Constitution provides that all religious minorities can have religious freedom. But in fact, the Orthodox Church, being the state church, creates many difficulties for the religious minorities.



Kazakhstan

The population of Kazakhstan is 14,859,000 of which 80% are Muslims and 8% are Christians. Religious freedom is accepted by the government, but now traditional religions face difficulties and discrimination. There are cases of authorities refusing to register religious organizations, delaying registration, and developing legislative amendments to make the activities of religious organizations more difficult. Children of Adventist members have problems keeping the Saturday-Sabbath at school, since Saturday is a regular school day. Threats of excluding and withholding diplomas from these children have been reported in the cities of Taldy-Kurgan and Almaty. Adventist administration took part in a round-table discussion of new religious laws of Kazakhstan, which was organized by the government. Adventists also

took part in the Assembly of Nations of Kyrgystan, which was dedicated to the problems of extremism and religious intolerance. Adventists collaborated with the Keston Institute, OSCE, and the Helsinki Commission and took part in discussing the new law on military service requirements.

On January 31, 2002 the Parliament passed a new restrictive law on religion, which in part was attributed to the need for post 9/11 greater security. The law was passed over the objections of human rights and religious liberty groups. The law will banish unregistered groups. The law increased the number of people necessary to form a religious association from 10 people to 50 people. Unregistered groups have no right to ask for missionaries. The law has been identified by the US Commission on International Religious Freedom as moving Kazakhstan away from democracy (*APD, 4/4/002*). Fortunately, the Constitutional Council ruled that some of its provisions violated the constitution.

According to *Keston News Service*:

A Baptist family has been denied access to its home and a local Baptist congregation, which used to use their home for services, has been deprived of its regular meeting place, as the Kazakh authorities continue their crackdown on unregistered religious communities, Keston News Service has learned from local Baptists. The Nizhegorodtsev family, who live in the village of Georgievka in Zharma district of eastern Kazakhstan region, have already been fined by the authorities for leading the church. The judge who sealed their house on 16 May also confiscated the family's washing machine as the parents refused to pay a six dollar fine imposed last February for refusing to halt the church's activity. A local official told Keston that the family were not registered to live at the house, while a court official defended the court's ruling. (*KNS, June 12, 2002*)



Liechtenstein

No Report



Monaco

No Report



San Marino

No report



Tajikistan

The population of Tajikistan is 6.4 million, of which 95% are Muslims and 3.5% are Christians. Significant religious liberty violations were reported in Tajikistan. The few hundred Adventist members in Tajikistan have some difficulties, and the government does not oppose discrimination.



Turkey

Turkey is a secular state, but the population is overwhelmingly Muslim. 97 percent of its territory is in Asia and 3 percent is in Europe. Turkey is a member of NATO and its government has pushed for the European Union to accept Turkey as a member. There is significant division in Turkish society, however, between those who are pushing European integration and those who prefer a path towards greater Islamic solidarity. Tensions exists between secular and religious forces in Turkey. The change in government in late 2002 will likely impact the balance between these movements.

Religious freedom is a constitutional right in Turkey, but religious minorities and especially Christians are often harassed and persecuted when they share their faith or when they attempt to build or buy buildings. The secular status of Turkey has also been used by the past govern-

ment to suppress some Islamic practices in some circumstances, including the wearing of the veils by women.

In order to join the European Union, Turkey will need to bring its human rights practices—including religious freedom—into line with EU standards. Its willingness/ability to so, will impact its chances of joining the EU.



Uzbekistan

The population of Uzbekistan is 24.8 million, of which 85% are Muslims; 15% are Russian Orthodox, and Adventists number a few hundred. In May of 1998, the government passed two very restrictive laws which resulted in the persecution of religious minorities. Adventist churches exist, but the church members are oppressed. On May 24, 2000, ten Adventist congregations were registered.

According to *Keston News Service*:

There is a Protestant congregation of about 50 people in Muinak. However, the Christians are today denied practically any opportunity to meet together. About two months ago the town's hakim (mayor), Jarylkan Tursunbekov, handed local Christian pastor Salavat Sergabaev an official written warning that the activity of an unregistered Christian congregation was not permitted. Tursunbekov believes that in view of the difficult social conditions in Muinak Christian activity is not acceptable. Pastor Seregabaev's home is under surveillance: the police and the national security service record who visits him. In effect the local Christians are forced to live like the first 'catacomb' Christians in the Roman Empire. They have to secretly hold their services in the desert several miles from the town. Even so, no more than ten gather for a service since a large group of people leaving the town would arouse the suspicions of the authorities. (*KNS, June 7, 2002*)

Category 5



Turkmenistan

Turkmenistan has a population of 5 million, of which 90% are Muslims, 6.7% are Russian Orthodox, and 500 are members of the Adventist Church. The nation's constitution guarantees religious freedom, but the government persecutes religious minorities. Only Islam and Orthodox churches are permitted to exist in Turkmenistan. Marina Ismakaeva, an Adventist member in the city of Turkmenistan, lost her apartment because she was holding small group meetings on Fridays in her home.

On December 20, 2001, in Washington DC, United States Helsinki Commission Co-Chairman Rep. Christopher H. Smith (R-NJ) said, 'Turkmenistan has the worst record in religious freedom in the entire 55 nation Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.'

According to our correspondent, since the authorities demolished the only Seventh-day Adventist church building in November 1999, persecution has continued against Adventists. A group of 10 Adventist has been under oppression the past five years in the city of Turkmenabat. Several times Adventists were arrested, and their literature and tapes confiscated. They have also been fined for meeting together. Our correspondent mentioned the case of Maryam Ismakaeva:

In November 2001 Maryam Ismakaeva and five other members were arrested while sitting in the kitchen for tea. Their documents, including Maryam's document of ownership of her apartment, were seized. Later the city authorities sent a statement of claim to the court, officially accusing Maryam of holding religious meetings of Adventist members in her apartment. The statement of claim states that Ms. Ismakaeva should be evicted from her apartment without providing her any other place to live.

In its decision dated December 21, 2001, the city court accused Maryam of holding illegal religious meetings of the Adventist 'sect' in October 2000 and November 2001 as well as spreading propaganda for the Adventist religious organization.

According to *Keston News Service*:

Turkmenistan's political police (KNB) have forced a group of Protestants in the small village of Deinau to renounce their faith publicly, after a Christian magazine was posted to a village resident. Christian sources in Turkmenistan told Keston News Service that three Protestants who refused to comply with the police were expelled from the village and are now subject to a manhunt ordered by the central Ashgabad office of the KNB. Protestants from Deinau have previously been imprisoned, beaten and threatened with expulsion for their faith.

The following is a report issued by Victor P. Krushenitsky, Euro-Asia International Religious Liberty Association Chapter, Secretary General:

Turkmenistan is one of the former USSR republics. The capital is Ashgabad. The main nationality is Turkmen and the main religion is Islam. The president is Saparmurad Niyazov, who was elected in 1991 and reelected for life in 1999. He developed a special concept of life for citizens, which is published in his book *Ruhnama*, which means: teaching of the Great Saparmurad Biyazov about man's spiritual perfection.

Before 1996 there functioned different religious and Christian branches, which had their congregation and religious buildings (Muslims, Orthodox, Baptists, Adventists, Pentecostal, Hare Krishna, etc.). Most of these were registered during the atheistic regime. In 1996 a new law on religious organizations was adopted and each religious organization had to go through

re-registration. The law required 500 followers in order to legalize a religious organization. In spite of the fact that some religious minorities were able to collect 500 signatures, the Ministry of Justice refused them re-registration.

President Niyazov appointed a State Committee on Religious Affairs, which consists of a Muslim leader, an Orthodox priest and a state official. In order to obtain registration, each religious organization has to get approval from the Committee. As a result of such law and the work of the State Committee none of the religious minorities were able to obtain registration. For Turkmenistan this means that none of these groups and congregations can meet together to worship. Those who continued to hold worship services were fined, their leaders were arrested and beaten: some were imprisoned for 10-15 days and some for several years (like Baptist pastor Atakov).

As a result of such persecution, several houses of worship were demolished (one nontraditional Mosque, an Adventist Church and a Hare Krishna temple) and some were confiscated; active members and leaders were fined and some lost their apartments. The most recent case took place in a city Chardjou. The police arrested a young lady for hosting a small group of Seventh-day Adventist members in her apartment. A court confirmed the action, noting that she had used her apartment for improper purposes (holding a small, peaceful, Bible study that did not disturb the peace).

There also were a few cases when police authorities demanded new Christians from Muslim backgrounds to renounce their Christian faith publicly. The most recent case took place in a small village of Deinau, in the east of the country. *(KNS, May 19, 2002)*

Unfortunately, to date, the Organization for Security and

Cooperation in Europe Mission and the United Nations Human Rights Committee in Turkmenistan, and foreign Embassies have had little success in influencing the situation. Letter campaigns to the President, which were organized by the International Religious Liberty Association (IRLA) and its chapters did not resolve the problem.

The IRLA officers and its Russian Chapter leaders repeatedly asked Turkmen Embassies to meet together and discuss the religious liberty situation in the country, but were ignored each time. Due to the fact that Turkmenistan imposed restrictive visa laws, IRLA officials have not been permitted to visit Turkmenistan for the last few years.

I believe that the international community must react more actively against such flagrant discrimination against religious minorities in Turkmenistan.