



European Federation of Centres of Research and Information on Cults and Sects
Participant in the Fundamental Rights Platform of the European Union since 2010
NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations since 2009
INGO with participatory status at the Council of Europe since 2005

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Religious freedom is one of the foundations of civil consensus and a pillar of co-existence in liberal and democratic societies. However, other freedoms and rights that are regularly violated in violent groups are not subordinate to it. The paradox is that religious leaders claim freedom for themselves in the name of the liberal, open society principle, only to suppress it in others in the name of the religious principle. A logical contradiction that leads to a double standard of valuation (and downgrading of the rights of group members).

What appears to be respect and tolerance is not always really the case.

It is unacceptable that an NGO such as FECRIS, which is represented in the Fundamental Rights Platform, sometimes has to defend itself against the accusation of being a threat to religious freedom when it denounces the crimes, abuse and harassment that occur in certain cult/sects or religious groups.

Some self-proclaimed civil rights activists, whose links to controversial groups are not particularly hidden, called this year for the revocation of FECRIS' consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

FECRIS brings together a number of European and non-European associations whose main mission is to help the victims of cultic undue influence. It deeply respects the freedom of each individual to choose his or her philosophical or religious views: it is politically, philosophically, and religiously neutral but firmly rooted in Western values.

These self-proclaimed defenders of civil liberties, who are often far from the open society and ecumenism they appeal to, are right to denounce the totalitarian leadership of non-democratic countries, as FECRIS does, but they want to conceal the fact that some cults/sects are non-territorial (though sometimes transnational) versions of that same totalitarianism. No democratic society based on reason should be fooled.