



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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Declaration by the representative of The European Federation of Centres of Research and Information on Cults and Sects

Democracy is equality, hence the universalisation of rights and the defence of the individual against abuse of power. FECRIS was born to actively participate in this defence, and it is therefore no coincidence that it enjoys special consultative status in ECOSOC, the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (UN). On the contrary, those who defend anti-democratic groups that are authoritarian and insensitive to the rights of their followers, only use the slogans of liberal democratic society instrumentally. This leads to two paradoxes: the first is that they defend closed societies by invoking the principles of open society, i.e., they invoke those external principles that they deny internally. One could call this a kind of cultural parasitism because they draw nourishment from the body of democracy to feed totalitarianism.

The second paradox is that the demand to protect anti-democratic groups without subjecting them to critical judgement corresponds to the defence of the 'right to be different' of all cultures promoted by the so-called « Identitarianism». In both cases, they want democracy to allow non-democratic islands within it, a democracy with holes, on the basis of respect for different identities, both cultural and spiritual. In both cases, the "ethnopluralists" and "cult apologists" seem to be animated by respect and tolerance, but the coexistence they seek is a clear "differentialism", that is, the same rejection of the universalisation of rights. This is, clearly, the rejection of democracy.

Finally, in an open society, there is no reason to defend 'new religious movements', because, in a liberal democratic context, freedom of religious practice is already

guaranteed. So those who feel in need to be defended, claiming to be attacked, are the abusive and totalitarian organisations. This defence becomes necessary precisely because they operate in a liberal democratic system that condemns abuse and harassment. Let us not be confused by hypocrisies and word puns.

Luigi Corvaglia