

2010 OSCE Conference Warsaw

Working session 2: Fundamental freedoms I, including:
Freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief
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European Federation of Centers for Research and Information on
Sectarianism (FECRIS)
Intervention by Friedrich Griess

I represent FECRIS, a federation of more than 50 organisations in about 30 countries in Europe and beyond, having the objective to help people and families who have been damaged psychologically, socially and financially by totalitarian organisations, commonly called cults, and to do preventive work.

Those totalitarian organisations claim to be discriminated or even persecuted because of their religious believe. In reality, they are rarely discriminated or persecuted here in Europe, but only criticised, and not because of their believing but because of their damaging activity, which is directed against human rights and often also against laws. They especially act in various ways against resolutions of the United Nations, of the Council of Europe and of the European Union. They claim that their right to religious freedom is violated. In reality, they continuously violate the religious freedom of those who want to leave their group, by putting strong social pressure on them, and they discriminate everybody who is not a member of their group, wishing them to be annihilated.

The paradox lies in the fact that cults, within the scope of their group structure, demand the benefit from the protective freedom, designed for individuals, for themselves as a social group, thus demanding an inversion of the same values which are protected by international resolutions.