

# PRACTICING RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE

**T**o prevent a repetition of the persecution of religious minorities in Germany in the 1930s and 1940s, the country's post-war Constitution *guarantees* the right to religious freedom and practice. However, to circumvent the Constitution and justify their attempts to deprive members of the Church of Scientology of their civil rights, German officials have bluntly asserted that Scientology is not a religion.

Those who know little or nothing about Scientology may wonder what is wrong with this assertion. The answer is, everything.

Founded by writer and philosopher L. Ron Hubbard, Scientology is a religion in the oldest sense of the word. Like all true religions, Scientology helps man to realize his inner divinity.

It has been recognized as a religion by courts, scholars and agencies in numerous countries, including the United States, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Portugal, Italy, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and many others. In all, the religious bona fides of Scientology have been upheld in more than 100 courts, including the United States Supreme Court, the Italian Supreme Court and the Australian High Court. There have been more than 30 court decisions in Germany acknowledging the religious nature of Scientology. Twenty-eight internationally renowned expert authorities in religion conducted their own studies and independently came to the conclusion that Scientology is without question a religion.

Furthermore, the United States government decided in 1993, after an examination of Scientology, unprecedented in scope, that Scientology is a bona fide religion and that its churches and social reform organizations are fully tax-exempt.

But this is not the impression that certain German Government officials would want the world to have. Because the Constitution makes discrimination against the Scientology religion illegal, these officials simply ignore the court rulings, scholarly expertises and governmental acceptances. In this way, they think they can make their assaults on Scientologists appear justifiable and evade their responsibilities under the Constitution and the European Convention on Human Rights.

As a dozen international religious scholars recently pointed out in a public

## GERMANY



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statement directed at German Government leaders, these arbitrary decisions are based not on an impartial study of the facts, but on irrationality and prejudice.

You may wonder why German officials discriminate against Scientologists. There is no legitimate reason, but then there was none that justified the persecution of the Jewish people either. Followers of the Jewish faith had other than Christian beliefs and a strong culture. Hardly justification for the campaign of hatred that was levelled at them. Yet it was because their

beliefs were different that they were a convenient scapegoat, which led in the end to their senseless destruction.

Considering the events of World War II, most would agree that Germany is the last country that should make governmental pronouncements on what is or is not a religion. It has no tradition of championing religious freedom or human rights. Quite the contrary. It is the only country in the world that has embarked on a systematic campaign of discrimination against Scientologists, attempting to deny them a livelihood by excluding them from the civil service, professions and the arts.

Whether or not you agree with Scientology, that it is a religion is not only known to its millions of adherents, but has been decided time and again by scholars, officials and courts all over the world. That German officials take a radically different stance should set alarm bells ringing in anyone's head.

And indeed it has. Since 1993, the United States State Department, the United Nations, the Helsinki Commission, U.S. Congressmen and Senators, religious scholars and historians have cited Germany for human rights abuses against Scientologists.

Fortunately, Scientologists are resilient and energetic. They come from all walks of life and every profession. They have close, happy families and enjoy raising children, while taking active roles in their communities. A truly democratic government would value such resources in the nation.

If it sounds impossible that a supposed democracy would deny the bona fides of a genuine religion in order to persecute it, let's not forget that the Nazis did precisely that to the Jewish people in the 1930s. Their pronouncements, "The Jews are not a true religion" justified their persecution, which began with denial of basic human rights and dignities.

"Never again" must not be an idle thought, it must be a promise we keep. History has taught us that we must not stand by and ignore the alarming similarities between the 1930s and today. Had voices been raised in 1930, some would have scoffed, but had they been loud and long enough, it might have made a difference.

**If you don't agree with what is happening in Germany today, make your voice heard.**

**Write to Jose Ayala Lasso, UN High Commissioner For Human Rights, Palais Des Nations, 8-14 Ave. De La Paix, CH-1211 Geneva 10.**

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For more information and a free booklet about discrimination in Germany, call 1-202-667-6404 — or write to:  
Office of Public Affairs, Church of Scientology, 1701 20th St., NW, Washington, D.C. 20009