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Human Rights Without Frontiers Int'l

Newsletter "Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief"

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FRANCE

Members of the Opus Dei to be taken to court in Paris

Accusations of sectarian drifts and abuse of the state of weakness could now be used against Catholic institutions

HRWF (10.07.2011) - A young woman, Catherine T., is taking the Opus Dei to court on the grounds of labor exploitation. The first court hearing will take place in Paris on 22-23 September.

Catherine T. was introduced into the movement without her knowledge in 1985. At the age of 14, she was advised to enroll in a Catholic catering technical school in Dosnon about at the end of the school year she realized she was in a school linked to the Opus Dei. She now says she was indoctrinated by the Opus Dei as she was put under the authority of a "conscience director who was regulating all her life. In 1987, she was pressured to join a religious order, she told the press agency AFP. Obedience, poverty and chastity were part of her daily life. She was then in charge of housekeeping tasks. During 13 years, she was given labor contracts by associations linked to the Opus Dei.

The "Association de culture universitaire et technique" (ACUT/ Association of university and technical culture) which is prosecuted claims to only have a "spiritual link" with the Opus Dei. Catherine T. says she was working every day from 7 am to 9 pm, she did not have any day of rest and any vacation, and she was badly paid. She also complains that she had no freedom of movement and she was always accompanied by a member of the Opus Dei, even to the doctor's. In 2001, her parents discovered that she was in a disastrous physical state: at the age of 29, she only weighed 39 kilos. Their family doctor needed two years and a half of treatment to improve her health.

After nine years of investigation, two members of the Opus Dei and ACUT will appear at the correctional court in Paris on the grounds of "salary contrary to human dignity" and "hidden work".

Her lawyer, Rodolphe Bosselut who was hired on several occasions by the anti-sect movement UNADFI, invoked "mental manipulation", "mind-destroying work conditions" and "situation of economic dependence" in the complaint that he filed at the end of

2011.

Whatever the court decision in this case, it is now clear that Catholic institutions and religious orders may tomorrow become the victims of the laws against sectarian drifts, including the abuse of the state of weakness.

Links to articles in French:

<http://www.lextimes.fr/6.aspx?sr=48>

http://actu.orange.fr/france/exclusif-afp-l-opus-dei-au-coeur-d-un-proces-inedit-en-septembre-a-paris_153154.html

<http://www.ccm.asso.fr/spip.php?article3472>

Some activities in 2011

Histoire et Liberté (France): Publication of Willy Fautré's and others' interventions at the Festival des Libertés in 2010 under the title "La Corée du Nord: Kimjongilia" (June 2011)

One World Human Rights Documentary Film Festival: Granting the Award to the film THE GREEN WAVE at the Czech Permanent Representation (26 May)

Roundtable about human rights in Bahrein at the embassy of Bahrein in Brussels (25 May)

One World Human Rights Documentary Film Festival: Organizing the screening of the film THE PROSECUTOR and a debate with the ICC Chief Prosecutor, Mr Moreno Ocampo, at the European Parliament (24 May)

One World Human Rights Documentary Film Festival: Organizing the screening of the film RAINMAKERS and a debate with Vincent Metten (ICT) and Leah Strauss (HRWF/ Denmark) at the Czech Permanent Representation in Brussels (24 May)

One World Human Rights Documentary Film Festival: Setting up and chairing a jury for the Best Film (May)

Publication of an article entitled "Trafficking in human beings and sexual exploitation: the criminalization of the clients and the reduction of the demand in Sweden" (in English and in Ukrainian) in Mitna Sprava Nr 1 (73) 2011 (Magazine of the Academy of Law, University of Odessa), pp 48-56 (May 2011)

EU Fundamental Rights Agency (Vienna): Organizing a workshop on the topic "Broadening the scope of religious intolerance and discrimination by the EU Fundamental Rights Agency" (14 April)

European Parliament: Presentation of the book "Madame Chiang Kai-shek" by Philippe Paquet, journalist at La Libre Belgique and sinologist (12 April)

See <http://taiwaninfo.nat.gov.tw/ct.asp?xItem=159804&ctNode=467&mp=4>

Publication of an article entitled "Belgium : Political (mis)management of linguistic diversity" in the English and the Russian issues of the Ukrainian daily newspaper DEN (22 March)

Guest-speaker at a conference in Paris: FECRIS, freedom of religion and human rights (22 March)

Article in New Europe: IDPs in Azerbaijan call upon the EU to speed up their return to Nagorno-Karabakh (7 March)

Interview by Turkish Radio and Television (17 February)

Presentation of HRWF report on IDPs in Azerbaijan (9 February)
Fact-finding mission du Azerbaijan (27-31 January)

Major conferences organized by HRWF at the European Parliament

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DEBATE ON THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT (ICC)
after the screening of the film THE PROSECUTOR (24 May)
(Guest-speaker: Mr Moreno-Ocampo, Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court)

LAUNCHING OF THE BOOK "MADAME CHIANG KAI-SHEK" (2011)
(Guest-speaker: Philippe Paquet, journalist at La Libre Belgique and sinologist)

AZERBAIJAN: INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS (2011)

RUSSIA: MISUSE OF THE LAW ON EXTREMISM AGAINST RELIGIOUS MINORITIES (2010)
(Major guest-speaker: Head of the OSCE/ODIHR Advisory Board on Freedom of Religion or Belief)

HUMAN RIGHTS IN NORTH KOREA (2010)
(Major guest-speaker: Pierre Rigoulot, author of the book "The Aquariums of Pyongyang")

NORTH KOREA: SCREENING OF THE FILM KIMJONGILIA (2010)
(With the participation of the film maker, N. Heikin)

HUMAN RIGHTS IN CAMBODIA (2009)
(Major guest-speaker: U.N Special Rapporteur on Cambodia)

HUMAN RIGHTS IN CHINA (2008)
(With the participation of 4 Sakharov Prize Laureates)

Some recent academic publications

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2010

The Sect Issue in France and in Belgium,

Linguistic diversity and linguistic minority issues in Belgium, by Willy Fautre, pp 51-54, in Mitna

Sprava Naukovo-Analytishnii Journal, nr 5/2009 published by the Academy of Law, Odessa, Ukraine (2009)

Religious Freedom Advocacy Opportunities at the European Parliament, by Willy Fautre, pp 391-400, in Religion - Staat - Gesellschaft, Journal for the Study of Beliefs and Worldviews, 10th Year, Issue 2

2009

On Religious liberty in a democratic society - Aspect of law, religion and philosophy in constitutional theory and reality, published by Gerhard Besier and Hubert Seiwert, Technical University Dresden (Germany), 407 p. (2009)

Models of State-Church Relationships in the Modern World, by Willy Fautre, *in Russian language, published by Tula State Pedagogical University on 24 February 2009. Contributions pp 106-136*

- 106-110, "Political Regulation of the Religious Sphere in EU Member-States: Positive and Negative Experience. A human rights perspective"
- 111-115, "Judicial Status of Religious Communities"
- 115-117, "Sects: Does Democracy Need Laws of Exception?"
- 117-119, "The UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and the Sect Issue"
- 120-136, "Non-state Actors and Religious Freedom in Europe"

Legal Regulations of Religious Communities in EU Member States: A Human Rights Perspective, by Willy Fautre, pp 67-74, in *Mitna Sprava Naukovo-Analytishnii Journal, Academy of Law, Odessa, Ukraine (2009)*

European Perspectives on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace and Human Rights, by Willy Fautre, pp 24-27, in *Interreligious Cooperation and the Promotion of Human Rights and Peace*

List of experts

HRWF network of experts covers more than 20 countries, including
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Electronic Newsletters

Democracy, Rule of Law and Human Rights in China
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in Nepal
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Trafficking in Human Beings
Religious Discrimination and Intolerance
EU News

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