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Religious freedom in Russia

Written declaration No. 647

This written declaration does not reflect the position of the Assembly; only of those members that have signed it. It will not be considered further by the Assembly.

Whilst the Russian Constitution guarantees every citizen the right to freedom of religion or belief, this fundamental right is at risk as the Russian authorities continue to foster an atmosphere of intolerance, discrimination and persecution against religious minorities throughout the entire Federation. Recently, Jehovah's Witnesses, a Christian denomination that rejects violence, have been banned as "extremist" by a decision of the Supreme Court.

Evangelicals, Lutherans, Baptists, Pentecostals, Methodists, Presbyterians, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Scientologists and others have been targeted, with some of their members sentenced to pre-trial imprisonment based on the 2002 Extremist law, while in reality being held for simply engaging in peaceful religious beliefs and activities.

The 2002 Extremism Law laid the foundation for an alarming trend in repressions against civil society and the "non-traditional" minority religions. The law was initially passed to combat terrorism after 9/11 but it provides no clear definition for the term "extremism," thus rendering virtually any group or individual vulnerable to political and legal harassment.

With all due respect, we urge the Russian government to intervene and put an end to these violations of the right to freedom of religion or belief of members of religious minorities in Russia.

Signed (see overleaf)

Signed[1]*:*

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CORLĂŢEAN Titus, Romania, SOC
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Total = 29

1. ALDE: Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
EC: European Conservatives Group
EPP/CD: Group of the European People's Party
SOC: Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group
NR: Representatives not belonging to a Political Group