

**FECRIS (Federation of Centres
of Research and Information on
Cults and Sects)
Is Almost
Entirely Financed by the
French State : GONGO or NGO**

*Two decades dedicated
to Freedom of Conscience*



FECRIS (Federation of Centres of Research and Information on Cults and Sects) Is Almost Entirely Financed by the French State : GONGO or NGO

First, the NGO Branch should be apprised that FECRIS is in actuality not an NGO because it is almost entirely financed by the French State in order to forward France's policies to "combat" minority belief groups in international forums.

Under [Article 70](#) of the UN Charter, the ECOSOC may make arrangements for representatives of the « specialized agencies », established by intergovernmental agreement, to participate without a vote in its deliberations, while under [Article 71](#) it may make suitable arrangements for consultation with « non-governmental organizations » which are concerned with matters within its competence. Hence, under the UN Charter « specialized agencies » (governmental) and « NGOs » (private) are two distinct categories.

[Resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996](#) regulating the consultative relationship between the UN and NGOs indicates clearly that NGOs must be independent from governments. It also reproduces provisions regulating the financing of NGOs adopted in 1968 following revelations that the CIA had been funding some NGOs (without their knowledge). These provisions are as follows:

United Nations Economic and Social Council Resolution 1996/31, 25 July 1996

Consultative relationship between the United Nations and non-governmental organisations

13. The basic resources of the organisation shall be derived in the main part from contributions of the national affiliates or other components or from individual members. Where voluntary contributions have been received, their amounts and donors shall be faithfully revealed to the Council Committee on Non-Governmental Organisations. Where, however, the above criterion is not fulfilled and an organisation is financed from other sources, it must explain to the satisfaction of the Committee its reasons for not meeting the requirements laid down in this paragraph. **Any financial contribution or other support, direct or indirect, from a Government to the organisation shall be openly declared to the Committee through the Secretary-General and fully recorded in the financial and other records of the organisation and shall be devoted to purposes in accordance with the aims of the United Nations.**

The normal financing of NGOs is through the contributions of individual members to reflect their representation of civil society. As an exception to this rule, State funding should be transparent and comply with the aims of the United Nations.

Yet, as the table below shows, FECRIS has been financed almost entirely by the French State since 2001 – *the ratio of public funding by the French State for FECRIS has averaged 92% since 2001.*

ANNEX

FECRIS FINANCING 2001 – 2016 (in Euros) (up dated the 30th June 2017)

2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006*
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Private

Memberships/Donations

Donations	2 317	2 604	2 936	3 024	2 782	3 200
Membership fees		1 911		1 728	2 000	2 000
Total	2 317	4 515	2 936	4 752	4 782	5 200

Public Funding

Funding from the Prime Minister	45 735	54 000	40 000	40 000	40 000	50 000
Others		11 977				
Total	45 735	65 977	40 000	40 000	40 000	50 000

Ratio Public Funding/Private Membership and Donations **95,18%** **93,60%** **93,16%** **89,38%** **89,32%** **90,58%**

2007	2008	2009	2010	2011*	2012*
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Private

Memberships/Donations

Donations	2 957	2 498	3 144	2 630	3 800	0
Membership fees		232		25		0
Total	2 957	2 730	3 144	2 655	3 800	0

Public Funding

Funding from the Prime Minister	45 000	38 000	36 000	35 000	35 000	32 200
Others		4 100				

Total	45 000	42 100	36 000	35 000	35 000	32 200
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Ratio Public Funding/Private Membership and Donations **93,83%** **93,91%** **91,97%** **92,95%** **90,21%** **100 %**

2013	2014	2015	2016*	Total
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Private Memberships/Donations

Donations	2 995	1 794	2 135		
Membership fees		60	1 604		
Total	2 995	1 854	3 739	3000	51 376

Public Funding

Funding from the Prime Minister	32 200	32 200	25 000	20 000	
Others					
Total	32 200	32 200	25 000	20 000	616 412

Ratio Public Funding/Private Membership and Donations **91,49%** **94,56%** **86,99%** **86,96%** **92,31%**

Note :

**Budget Forecast only as regards memberships and donations*

FECRIS has three member associations in France:

- 1) Union Nationale des Associations de Défense de la Famille et de l'Individu (National Union of Associations of Defense of the Family and the Individual) (UNADFI);
- 2) Centre Contre les Manipulations Mentales (Center Against Mental Manipulations) (CCMM) ; and
- 3) Groupe d'Etude des Mouvements de Pensée en vue de la Prévention de l'Individu (Study Group on Movements of Thought for the Prevention of the Individual) (GEMPPPI).

All three of these organizations are also almost entirely funded by the French State:

- UNADFI has averaged 97% public funding by the French State over the last ten years;
- CCMM has averaged 93% public funding by the French State over the last years; and
- GEMPPI has averaged 91% public funding by the French State over the last years.
(tables attached)

While these associations pretend to defend human rights and to protect the interests of individuals against “sectarian organizations” they deem objectionable, this is not the case. In reality, they are not representative of civil society as their extremely low support from members of the public shows. They only survive through financial support by the French State.

Moreover, NGOs almost totally funded by States are extremely suspect when they operate in the human rights field. Such organizations are labeled as Government Organized NGOs or “GONGOs”, a phenomenon detailed in the recent state-of-the-art Encyclopedia of Life Support Systems of UNESCO:

NGOs and their Independence from Governments

The most difficult question about the independence of NGOs is whether they come under governmental influence. **Individual governments do at times try to influence the NGO community in a particular field, by establishing NGOs that promote their policies. This has been recognized by quite common use of the acronym GONGO, to label a government-organized NGO.** Also, in more authoritarian societies, NGOs may find it very difficult to act independently and they may not receive acknowledgment from other political actors even when they are acting independently. **Beyond these unusual situations, there is a widespread prejudice that government funding leads to government control. In the field of human rights, it would damage an NGO for such a perception to arise, so Amnesty International has strict rules that it will not accept direct government funding for normal activities.** On the other hand, development and humanitarian relief NGOs need substantial resources, to run their operational programs, so most of them readily accept official funds. While these NGOs would like the security of a guaranteed budget for their administrative overheads, governments generally only want to support field costs for projects.[\[1\]](#)

So, contrary to development and humanitarian relief NGOs who yearn for government funding, true human rights organizations are very reluctant to accept it in order to preserve their independence. They are so aware of the problem that on June 6, 2006, eleven prominent NGOs adopted the International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGO) Accountability Charter.[\[2\]](#) Stressing the need for civil society legitimacy, accountability and transparency of NGOs, they invited other INGOs to undertake the same commitment in order to promote and garner support for the highest common standards of conduct for NGOs working trans-nationally.

In the Charter, the signatories expound that they are independent non-profit organizations and they commit to the following:

We aim to be both **politically and financially independent**. Our governance, programmes and policies will be non-partisan, independent of specific governments, political parties and the business sector.

According to these international standards, an NGO pretending to act for human rights should be politically and financially independent.

Not only is it suspect to find government funding in NGOs which pretend to combat violations of human rights by the States, it is also suspect, in case of an NGO fighting against human rights violations purportedly committed by private groups as FECRIS pretends to do, that this NGO is almost entirely government funded and is in essence a camouflaged government organization.

This indicates that the NGO is used by the government to fight against certain targeted groups of civil society. This phenomenon of GONGOs has been very well described at the 58th Annual DPI/NGO Conference (United Nations Department of Public Information), New York 7-9 September 2005, when Mrs. Shirin Ebadi, Iran lawyer, Nobel Peace Prize 2003, explained it in the following terms:

A central attribute of an NGO is its independence from government. This characteristic, when combined with popular appeal, is the guarantee of its authenticity and effectiveness. Independence does not mean that NGOs cannot receive assistance from their own or other governments, but rather acceptance of such assistance should not influence their autonomy and non-partisanship. (...)

Another method undemocratic governments use to undermine the credibility and effectiveness of NGOs is to use the name for groups of their own creation. **Members of such government controlled NGOs are then sent to international gatherings to issue false reports and raise irrelevant questions in order to distract public attention from the dismal human right record of those in power.** Such groups, which are in fact government NGOs known as GONGOs, actually present the agenda of the autocratic state while pretending to be non-partisan and by doing so, prevent the true voice of the people to reach the international community.

GONGOs are present in Africa supported by autocratic States.[\[3\]](#) But this situation has also been developing in Western democracies, where governments control NGOs by financing them quasi-entirely so that they forward their policies.

This growing and alarming global trend has been roundly criticized by NGOs, human rights groups and the media. As reported in an article of 21 April 2007 by the Washington Post:[\[4\]](#)

Democracy's Dangerous Impostors

Gongos are sprouting everywhere; they're in China, Cuba, France, Tunisia and even the United States.

Gongos are government-organized nongovernmental organizations. Behind this contradictory and almost laughable tongue twister lies an important and growing global trend that deserves more scrutiny: Governments are funding and controlling nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), often stealthily.

Some Gongos are benign, others irrelevant. But many, including those I mentioned, are dangerous. Some act as the thuggish arm of repressive governments. Others use the practices of democracy to subtly undermine democracy at home. Abroad, the Gongos of repressive

regimes lobby the United Nations and other international institutions, often posing as representatives of citizen groups with lofty aims when, in fact, they are nothing but agents of the governments that fund them. Some governments embed their GONGOS deep in the societies of other countries and use them to advance their interests abroad.

This description precisely fits the case of FECRIS, which pretends to fight for human rights, but has been nearly entirely subsidized from the very beginning by the French government to promote its policies and to participate in international forums such as the Council of Europe, the OSCE and the United Nations to masquerade as an independent NGO while supporting the environment of religious intolerance promoted by French government officials who work for MIVILUDES.[\[5\]](#)

This worrisome situation has been exposed by the UN Special Rapporteur for Religious Freedom in her report following her visit to France from 18 to 29 September 2005 in the following terms:[\[6\]](#)

108. However, she [the Special Rapporteur] is of the opinion that the policy and measures that have been adopted by the French authorities have provoked situations where the right to freedom of religion or belief of members of these groups has been unduly limited. Moreover, the public condemnation of some of these groups, as well as the stigmatization of their members, has led to certain forms of discrimination, in particular vis-à-vis their children.

And the Special Rapporteur pointed out the role played by government subsidized organizations, i.e. FECRIS' affiliates UNADFI, CCMM and GEMMPI, in the stigmatization campaigns which lead to violations of minorities' rights:

113. Moreover, she recommends that the Government monitor more closely preventive actions and campaigns that are conducted throughout the country by private initiatives or Government-sponsored organizations, in particular within the school system in order to avoid children of members of these groups being negatively affected.

Nevertheless, FECRIS and its affiliates continue to go forward with their derogatory campaigns to denigrate religious minorities on behalf of the government. Yet, what the government may not do directly because it violates human rights treaties mandating religious pluralism and tolerance, it may not do indirectly by almost entirely subsidizing GONGOS like FECRIS to engage in activities in contravention of religious neutrality and tolerance. This violates the letter and spirit of human rights treaties and contravenes UN NGO standards.

FECRIS Is Devoted to Purposes Contrary to the Aims of the UN

At the last Human Dimension Implementation Meeting of the OSCE on 29 September 2009 in Warsaw, FECRIS stated:

We do not believe that cults have any role to play in a body such as OSCE whose aim, among others, is the protection of those persecuted for their religious beliefs. Cults are rarely persecuted. **They are not religions or even belief systems.**

This denial of the most basic rights to minority belief groups and the lobby of FECRIS in international forums so that their voice would not be heard is totally contrary to the aims of the UN as expressed in the Charter, of practicing tolerance and dialogue and of *promoting and*

encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.

While FECRIS portrays itself as a collection of national associations protecting the family, the individual and democratic society against “sectarian” activities, in reality, this group fosters and fuels discrimination and intolerance directed at minority religious organizations and their members in Europe through the dissemination of false and misleading information about them and through actions which interfere with their right to freedom of religion, freedom of association and freedom from discrimination.

Examples of civil condemnations and criminal convictions regarding improper and illegal actions in violation of fundamental United Nations human rights principles taken by FECRIS member groups or individuals associated with such groups include the following.

- **Deprogramming.** One of the most reprehensible and illegal activities utilized by certain representatives from FECRIS member groups in the past in violation of fundamental Council principles is the technique of «deprogramming», which corresponds to the kidnapping and forced reconversion of the follower. In a decision rendered by the European Court of Human Rights in 1999 against Spain regarding false imprisonment and deprogramming, the Human Rights Court determined that the FECRIS member group AIS/Pro Juventud had a « direct and immediate responsibility for ... the applicants ... loss of liberty » (37680/97, *Ribera Blume and others v. Spain*).
- **Deprogramming.** Cyril Vosper, at the time an executive board member of FAIR, a FECRIS member group from the United Kingdom, was convicted in December 1987 in Germany for false imprisonment and causing bodily harm in a deprogramming case. He was not expelled from FAIR.
- **Deprogramming.** In 1990, two members of SADK, the FECRIS member group in Switzerland, were sentenced to prison in connection with a violent deprogramming attempt on a member of the Hare Krishna movement. Mr. Rossi, the spokesman for SADK in 1990, spoke out on behalf of SADK in favor of the deprogramming in which the victim had been subdued with tear gas, saying “We support and approve of the deed.”
- **Deprogramming.** Members of Swedish FECRIS member group FRI have been convicted in connection with a deprogramming attempt on a member of a Christian group in Gothenburg Sweden.
- **Promotion of “Sect” filters.** The German FECRIS member group AGPF has promoted and disseminated so-called « protection clauses » – clauses inserted into employment contracts that attest that the applicant is not associated with Scientology – to companies in Germany for their use.
- **Defamation.** Mr Friederich Griess is the President of FECRIS and a Board Member of Austrian FECRIS group GSK. On approximately six occasions, Austrian Courts have determined that Mr. Griess defamed Norweger, a Christian religious group present in over 60 countries, by disseminating false and derogatory information to the public regarding this religious group.

- **Defamation.** Courts in France have determined that UNADFI and individuals and groups associated with UNADFI have engaged in defamation by disseminating false and derogatory information on targeted minority religious groups and individuals associated with such groups in approximately eight cases.
- **Defamation.** In a final judgement on 19th December 2001 rendered by the Munich State Court (Case Az: 908736/99), Ms. Heide-Marie Cammans, founder of the German FECRIS member group Sect-info Essen, was ordered to stop circulating falsehoods about the religious group Takar Singh. Sect-info Essen was also forbidden from circulating a book it had been distributing about Takar Singh (*Die Neuen Heilsbringer, Auswege oder Wege ins Aus*)

FECRIS, under the guise of fighting against violations of human rights by minority belief groups which it labels “totalitarian groups” to make its activity look in alignment with the UN purposes, actually encourages activities contrary to fundamental human rights and the Rule of Law.

In 2007, a budget of 45,000 Euros was granted by the French Prime Minister to FECRIS to organize conferences, mainly their annual conference which took place on 28 April 2007 in Hamburg and was entitled “Cults and Esotericism: New Challenges for Civil Societies in Europe”.

In the preamble to that conference, FECRIS President Friedrich Griess first acknowledged that FECRIS was “particularly grateful to the French government that makes [its] work possible by its subsidies and confidence”. He then explained the subject of the conference:

In the title of the conference, the expression “Esotericism” appeared for the first time. The practice of esoteric knowledge which has become more and more popular and which hitherto was believed to be harmless is dangerous inasmuch as it can be used as a basis for the totalitarian influence of gurus of all kinds. In the same way as it has proven false that scientific and technological progress is a solution to everything, the idea which seems now dominant is that everything can be tackled in the “spiritual” way, throwing overboard thousands of years of human experience. A “change of paradigm” in this field would result in a total loss of reality.

Even if the concerned beliefs or practices are not favored by FECRIS or the French authorities, it is not the State’s role to finance an ideological and intolerant fight against minority belief groups.

For the following year 2008, the French Prime Minister allocated an amount of 38,000 Euros to FECRIS for conferences, mainly their annual conference which took place on 12 April 2008 in Pisa, Italy and was entitled “State responsibility to protect citizens against destructive cults: analysis of present and possible future models”.

During that conference, one of the first speeches was by Catherine Katz, Secretary General of MIVILUDES. After insisting on the role played by MIVILUDES at the annual conferences of FECRIS each year, she explained the French policy to fight against “undue influences” or “mental subjection”:

It is important to be watchful, to inform people, the public in general, but also to inform the services in charge of investigations. In that sense, French policy is original because it puts the pressure wherever risks of digression exist. I do not pretend that all has been done; despite everything there is still much work to do because **it is very difficult to make people understand that an individual may in fact not be free. It is, furthermore, an area where one actually transfers one's personal convictions.** (...)

In France, a certain number of cultic/sectarian risks have been detected. Undue influence is the first of these risks with regard to the problem of cultic aberrations.

Here we have the core of the French policy which the Secretary General of the MIVILUDES presents as original and which is forwarded by the GONGO FECRIS. Under this policy, conversion to new religious movements is considered an undue influence or mental subjection and the followers are considered as not having their own free will.

The President of MIVILUDES in his report to the French Prime Minister in July 2008 explained that the followers of new religious movements are *“followers who are not yet conscious of being victims”*, that these followers *“do not consider themselves as victims and they even demonize those who want to help them as they are under psychological subjection.”*^[7]

This concept of undue influences or psychological subjection is further explained in MIVILUDES' annual report 2008 at page 59:

Mental subjection is characteristic of sectarian deviations. Repression by the State must be initiated as soon as (...) one or several persons start adopting ideas that are being spread and are different from the ideas usually shared by the social consensus.

In order to organize this repression of minority beliefs, the President of MIVILUDES recommended in his 2008 Report systematic police interventions on denunciations and, during custody, a special support organized with a psychologist and anti-sect associations (FECRIS' affiliates UNADFI and CCMM) to try to reconvert the arrested followers to “normal” ideas as *“followers who are not conscious of living in a situation of dependency”* are *“susceptible of strong emotional reactions at the time of their arrest and in the following hours”*.

These views and recommendations which are shared and pushed forward by State funded FECRIS violate the rights of minority belief groups as revealed by the numerous convictions of members of FECRIS mentioned above.

UNADFI openly proclaims, in its applications for funding by the French Ministry of Defence, that it “behaves as an auxiliary to the de-concentrated services of the state”, including acting as an auxiliary to police and intelligence services.

The ideological fights lead by FECRIS and MIVILUDES and organized and financed by the French government should not be endorsed by the United Nations.

The United Nations, religious experts, and UN treaty-based bodies have consistently found that the expression « religion or belief, » as well as the individual terms « religion » and

« belief, » must be construed broadly to include non-traditional religions and all forms of belief.

Likewise, the Human Rights Committee has found that freedom of religion is not limited in its application to traditional religions and that any tendency to discriminate against any religion or belief for any reason, including the fact that they are newly established, or represent religious minorities that may be the subject of hostility by a predominant religious community, contravenes Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Article 18 protects theistic, non-theistic and atheistic beliefs, as well as the right not to profess any religion or belief. The terms belief and religion are to be broadly construed. Article 18 is not limited in its application to traditional religions or to religions and beliefs with institutional characteristics or practices analogous to those of traditional religions. *The Committee therefore views with concern any tendency to discriminate against any religion or belief for any reason, including the fact that they are newly established, or represent religious minorities that may be the subject of hostility by a predominant religious community.*

General Comment No. 22 on Art. 18 (Para 2).

Under international human rights standards, States have no business repressing minority religious beliefs. And the arrangements for consultations with NGOs were not designed to forward the interests of States, as was recently reminded by the European Union representative at the UN. Ambassador Hans Dahlgren made the following official statement on behalf of the European Union at the ECOSOC substantive session 6 – 30 July 2009 in Geneva:

In the view of the European Union, these and other cases reflect a negative trend in the working of the NGO Committee, giving cause for concern that the guiding principles for granting ECOSOC consultative status are gradually being undermined. **The arrangements for consultations with NGOs were not designed to forward the interests of States; on the contrary, they were designed to allow civil society actors to support and enrich the work of the UN by providing a perspective which very often differs from that of States.** The EU values this, at times challenging, contribution and would therefore respectfully urge States on the NGO Committee to work together to defend and uphold the guiding principles agreed by us the Member States in resolution 1996/31.[\[8\]](#)

[\[1\]](#) Article 1.44.3.7: expertise by Professor Peter Willetts, City University of London, “What is a Non-Governmental Organization?”

[\[2\]](#) [ActionAid International, Amnesty International, CIVICUS World Alliance for Citizen Participation, Consumers International, Greenpeace International, Oxfam International, International Save the Children Alliance, Survival International, International Federation Terre des Hommes, Transparency International and the World YWCA.](#)

[\[3\]](#) See Professor Carole Rakodi University of Wales, Cardiff, *The Urban Challenge in Africa: Growth and Management of Its Large Cities*, 1997, as part of the United Nations University Programme on Mega-cities and Urban Development.

“Another strategy is the creation by governments of their own NGOs favourable to state positions in specific sectors such as the environment and, as noted above, women’s movements. These new phenomena have been aptly christened by observers as GONGOs (government-owned NGOs).”

[4] <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/04/20/AR2007042001594.html>

[5] MIVILUDES is the acronym for the Interministerial Mission of Watch and Fight against Sectarian Drifts; it is a French government interministerial entity under the Prime Minister.

[6] E/CN.4/2006/5/Add.4

[7] Report page 42.

[8] **Ref:** PRES09-225EN, **EU source:** EU Presidency