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YOU ARE IN:

Under Secretary for Democracy and Global Affairs > Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor > Releases > International Religious Freedom > 2009 Report on International Religious Freedom > [Europe and Eurasia](#)

France

BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND LABOR

International Religious Freedom Report 2009

October 26, 2009

[...]

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government generally respected religious freedom in practice. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom by the Government during the reporting period, but **the treatment of minority religious groups considered dangerous sects or cults remained an issue of concern.**

[...]

On June 15, 2009, the public prosecutor in a high profile fraud trial against seven of the Church of Scientology's top officials and two of its branches asked the Paris Correctional Court to designate Scientology a criminal enterprise that would result in an effective ban in the country, which could be followed by bans in other EU countries. Maud Coujard, the lead prosecutor in the case, recommended that fines of \$2.77 million (€2 million) and suspended multiyear jail terms be levied against the leaders, a Scientology center, and its French bookstores if convicted on charges of organized fraud and illegally practicing as pharmacists. The trial stems from a complaint made in 1998 by a woman who claimed Scientologists recruited her outside a Paris metro station and misled her into paying some \$30,000 for books and materials. A judicial decision was expected in the fall. Fenech noted that if the court upholds the prosecutor's recommendation, "it could be possible to also order dissolution of other structures of the [Scientology] movement in France."

Ook de Jehova Getuigen en de Sikhs worden in het rapport met voorbeelden genoemd als minderheidsgroepen die door de Franse overheid bemoedigd worden.

Net als België hanteert Frankrijk een 'sectenlijst' die tot wantrouwen en discriminatie leidt:

In 1996 a parliamentary commission studying "cults" publicly released a report that identified 173 groups as "cults," including the Raelians, the Association of the Triumphant Vajra, the Order of the Solar Temple, Sukyo Mahikari, the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Theological Institute of Nimes (an evangelical Christian Bible college), and the Church of Scientology. The Government has not banned any of the groups on the list; however, members of some of the groups listed have alleged instances of intolerance because of the ensuing publicity. **Minority religious groups indicated that the allegations in the report were unsubstantiated and often false, thereby adding to public mistrust of the organizations involved.**

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127310.htm>