



General Assembly

Distr.: General
24 February 2025

English only

Human Rights Council

Fifty-eighth session

24 February–4 April 2025

Agenda item 4

Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by Coordination des Associations et des Particuliers pour la Liberté de Conscience, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[23 January 2025]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Religious Freedom Violated in the Republic of Korea

Coordination des Associations et des Particuliers pour la Liberté de Conscience would like to bring to the HRC's attention a recent incident in the Republic of Korea that has impacted on the religious liberty, freedom of assembly, and freedom of expression of a religious organization called Shincheonji Church of Jesus, the Temple of the Tabernacle of the Testimony (Shincheonji).

We are aware of the fact that certain Christian groups of the Republic of Korea consider Shincheonji "heretic." Trading accusations of heresy is as old as religion and we do agree that theological criticism is also protected by religious freedom. It is, however, another matter when religious groups ask democratic states to limit the liberty of the "heretics."

Shincheonji rented Imjingak Pyeonghwa Nuri Park in Paju for a religious event from October 29 to 31, 2024. The rental was approved on July 22, and fully paid on October 2 to the Gyeonggi Tourism Organization. The event, which was non-political and focused solely on religion, did not include discussions about the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and local authorities were informed of this.

Approximately 100,000 individuals were anticipated to participate in the event, including international attendees and dignitaries. Shincheonji is reported to have expended around \$7 million on the occasion.

On October 16, Paju was labeled a "danger zone" for potential the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's propaganda via balloons or drones. Despite this, Shincheonji met with local authorities who confirmed their event followed the "danger zone" regulations. Gyeonggi-do authorities reiterated on October 23 and 28 that they had no plans to cancel the event. A safety review also confirmed Shincheonji's compliance.

Meanwhile, a group of fundamentalist Christians submitted a petition to the local authorities, requesting the cancellation of the event organized by the "heretic" group.

On October 29, as the event was about to start and most attendees had arrived in Paju, Gyeonggi-do Governor Kim Dong-Yeon canceled it, citing concerns it could "provoke North Korea." The reason given was clearly a pretext, with other mass events regularly taking place in Paju.

The United States of America Commission for International Religious Freedom and other international religious freedom watchdogs have previously noted instances of discrimination against Shincheonji in the Republic of Korea .

Coordination des Associations et des Particuliers pour la Liberté de Conscience respectfully asks that the Paju incident be investigated, and the government of the Republic of Korea be encouraged to take measure to prevent any further instances of discrimination against Shincheonji and other minority groups and to compensate Shincheonji for the significant loss suffered because of the unfair treatment received.
