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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Joint written statement submitted by United for Human Rights, Coordination des Associations et des Particuliers pour la Liberté de Conscience, non-governmental organizations 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.

[25 May 2026]

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



Discrimination against “ArtExtasia” and the Need to Protect Artistic Freedom, Freedom of Expression, and Freedom of Religion

United for Human Rights and Coordination des Associations et des Particuliers pour la Liberté de Conscience (CAP LC) submits this statement to draw the attention of the Human Rights Council to a growing pattern of discrimination affecting ArtExtasia, a Budapest based artistic collective whose members include students of MISA, the Movement for Spiritual Integration into the Absolute. CAP LC has observed comparable dynamics in other contexts where artistic expression intersects with esoteric or unconventional forms of spirituality. In such cases, suspicion frequently replaces evaluation of artistic merit, and prejudice substitutes for informed assessment.

ArtExtasia’s work explores themes of beauty, embodiment, and what the group describes as “pure Eros.” None of the objections raised in recent years concerned the artistic content. Instead, pressure campaigns targeted the artists’ real or presumed association with a spiritual movement that has long been the focus of anti cult activism.

In several countries, anti cult networks have contacted cultural institutions, festival organizers, and venue managers, urging them to exclude ArtExtasia from artistic programs. In 2023, organizers in Czechia received emails warning that ArtExtasia was linked to a “sex cult.” These communications relied on allegations about MISA and its founder, without any evaluation of ArtExtasia’s performance. A notorious anti cult activist, Jakub Jahl, contacted festival organizers and provided personal information—some of it distorted or false—about individual artists associated with MISA. This directly contributed to the cancellation of shows at VENIO in Prague.

In Portugal, similar emails by anti-cultists and the publication of a hostile article by Observador in 2026 produced immediate and measurable harm. According to information provided to CAP LC, the consequences included:

- Severe reputational damage affecting the trust of students, collaborators, venues, sponsors, and the public;
- Loss of domestic and international credibility and disruption of future artistic, educational, and cultural projects;
- Cancellation of festivals at the Camões Auditorium in Lisbon, eliminating significant artistic opportunities;
- Emotional distress among directors and collaborators;
- Delays in artistic and educational activities;
- Diversion of substantial time and resources to address concerns, correct misinformation, and manage the crisis;
- Financial and administrative costs related to legal counsel and reputation management.

Yoga schools affiliated with MISA also suffered discrimination due to these campaigns against ArtExtasia. They had to suffer the withdrawal of students who believed the allegations and pressure on remaining students, who were compelled to justify their participation to families and social circles.

These consequences demonstrate that the cancellations were not isolated incidents but part of a broader pattern of discrimination by association. The venues did not object to ArtExtasia’s choreographies or performances. They objected to the artists’ perceived affiliation with a spiritual movement regarded as controversial. Excluding artists on this basis is incompatible with the principles of freedom of expression, artistic freedom, and freedom of religion protected under international human rights law. Unverified allegations against third parties cannot justify restrictions on artistic participation, nor can artists be denied access to cultural life because of their spiritual background.

CAP LC is aware that the founder of MISA, Gregorian Bivolaru, is currently detained in France and awaiting trial. The presumption of innocence applies to all defendants, and CAP LC takes no position on the charges. What concerns CAP LC is the extension of suspicion from an individual defendant to an entire spiritual movement, and from that movement to artists who have never been accused of any wrongdoing. ArtExtasia is a cooperative venture that includes MISA students among its members. None has been found guilty of any crime. Yet, they have been denied access to cultural spaces solely because of their association—direct or indirect—with a spiritual tradition that incorporates elements of “sacred eroticism”.

The stigmatization of “sacred eroticism” has a long history. Artistic or spiritual practices that engage with embodied symbolism or esoteric understandings of the human body are often met with alarm rather than analysis. This reflex has repeatedly produced exclusion and censorship. When cultural institutions yield to pressure from anti cult activists, they legitimize a form of private censorship incompatible with democratic values and contribute to a climate in which minority spiritual movements are treated as inherently suspect.

The Human Rights Council has repeatedly affirmed that states must protect individuals and groups from discrimination based on religion or belief, including discrimination by private actors affecting access to public or publicly supported institutions. CAP LC urges the governments of Portugal and Czechia to ensure that artistic freedom, freedom of expression, and freedom of religion are fully respected in their jurisdictions. Decisions about artistic programming must be based on the content of the work, not on the artists’ spiritual identity. States have a responsibility to protect cultural spaces from campaigns that seek to impose ideological conformity or to exclude minority spiritual traditions from public visibility.

We also calls on all states to reaffirm that freedom of religion or belief includes the right to participate in cultural and artistic life without discrimination. Artists associated with minority spiritual movements must not be penalized for their beliefs or those of others within their communities. Diversity of expression is essential to a democratic society. Ensuring that ArtExtasia and similar groups can present their work without fear of exclusion is part of this commitment.
