Input for the Report on International Solidarity and Faith Based and Humanist Organizations

Submitted by Coordination des Associations et des Particuliers pour la Liberté de Conscience (CAP Freedom of Conscience, CAP LC)

Non governmental organization in special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), registered in France under No. W751082307

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Purpose: input for the report of the Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity, to be presented at the 65th session of the Human Rights Council

Introduction

CAP Freedom of Conscience is a secular, non confessional and independent humanist organization founded in France in 1995. It defends freedom of conscience, religion and conviction for everyone, without distinction between majority and minority beliefs, and it has held special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council since 26 July 2016. For more than thirty years it has organized hundreds of conferences and actions devoted to persecuted religious and belief minorities, intervened before national and international institutions, and provided legal expertise in international protection proceedings. It is a member of the European Federation for Freedom of Belief and of the European Network on Religion and Belief. We welcome the initiative of the Independent Expert and answer the questionnaire below.

I. Identity and understanding of international solidarity (questions 1 to 4)

Question 1. Our organization is not affiliated with any religious or belief community or denomination. It is a humanist organization whose reference is not a faith but a freedom: the freedom of every person to have, keep, change or manifest a religion or conviction. Our independence from all communities is constitutive of our identity and allows us to defend each of them.

Question 2. For our organization, international solidarity is the concrete commitment, across borders, that this freedom becomes effective for everyone, beginning with the most isolated and least popular communities. Solidarity is not an abstract value for us: it means documenting persecution and discrimination wherever they occur, giving victims access to legal expertise and to international remedies, and carrying their situation before the institutions capable of acting on it. This understanding informs our values, which place equal dignity of all

beliefs above any preference; our objectives, which are the protection of persons rather than the promotion of any conviction; our policies, which exclude any partnership conditioned on the beliefs of those we defend; and our activities, which combine advocacy, legal work and public information.

Question 3. Our solidarity work is primarily international in scope. Based in Paris, we act mainly before the United Nations in Geneva and within European networks, and our documentation and interventions concern Europe, Asia and other regions.

Question 4. Participation in interfaith coalitions is a structural part of our solidarity contribution. We are a member of the European Federation for Freedom of Belief and of the European Network on Religion and Belief, which gather organizations of different convictions and none. We conduct joint advocacy: at the 62nd session of the Human Rights Council we submitted, jointly with United for Human Rights, a written statement on discrimination affecting members of Shincheonji, a Korean Christian movement (document A/HRC/62/NGO/236), and on 7 August 2026 we organized jointly with Human Rights Without Frontiers, FOREF, CESNUR and other organizations a press conference at the Seoul Foreign Correspondents' Club on the detention of an elderly religious leader in the Republic of Korea.

II. Engagement in wider society (questions 5 and 6)

Question 5. Our empowerment initiatives are primarily legal and institutional. We prepare expert opinions used in asylum and international protection proceedings concerning members of persecuted religious and belief minorities, documenting the country situation and the risks faced by the applicants. We guide victims of discrimination toward the international remedies available to them. We defend before the Human Rights Council communities whose members face discrimination: at its 58th, 61st and 62nd sessions we submitted written statements on the situation of Shincheonji members in the Republic of Korea, and on 18 September 2026 we delivered an oral statement calling for alternatives to detention, an independent medical assessment and a fair trial for its 95 year old leader. In France, our actions have led courts to sanction false or unsupported information published about Jehovah's Witnesses and other minority movements.

Question 6. Our solidarity actions comprise legal assistance to persons in vulnerable situations; advocacy before international mechanisms; education and public information, through the hundreds of conferences we have organized over thirty years and through our publications; monitoring of public policies affecting freedom of conscience; and community support through our partner networks. As an example of the last categories, in 2026 we published a documentary brochure assembling court decisions that had sanctioned false or unsupported information disseminated about religious minorities, refusals of access to administrative documents, and ongoing financial investigations, so that officials, journalists and researchers can judge on the record rather than on reputation.

III. Solidarity activities (question 7)

Question 7.1. We teach and promote the principles of international solidarity by making United Nations standards on freedom of religion or belief accessible to the communities concerned, to scholars, to journalists and to officials, through our conferences, our publications and our statements, all made public on our website.

Question 7.2. We collaborate with other organizations through joint statements, joint events and shared documentation, and our conferences provide platforms for dialogue and listening between community representatives, academics, lawyers and institutional actors who would otherwise rarely meet.

Question 7.3. We create opportunities for women and youth in the field we know. We submit written statements to the Commission on the Status of Women on the situation of women belonging to religious or belief minorities, and our events associate women and young members of the communities concerned, who speak for their own communities rather than being spoken about.

Question 7.4. We are not a mediation or conflict resolution service, and we do not present ourselves as one. Our contribution to peace between communities is the defense of equal treatment and of dialogue: experience shows that stigmatization of a minority is the first step toward its exclusion, and that documenting and correcting it serves social cohesion.

Question 7.5. Our organization cooperates with faith based and belief based institutions to combat antisemitism, Islamophobia, anti Christian discrimination and discrimination against humanistic and non religious organizations. The equal defense of all convictions is our founding principle, and our membership of the European Network on Religion and Belief, which associates religious and non religious organizations, is its practical expression. Our public actions denounce discrimination whatever community it targets.

IV. Collaboration with the authorities (questions 8 and 9)

Question 8. Our organization does not provide social welfare services and does not collaborate with local government in such provision. It receives no government funding: its resources are private, which guarantees its independence, including when it monitors the action of public authorities.

Question 9. Our organization does not replace local government in providing social welfare support. That is not its role.

V. Restrictions on our activities (questions 10 to 14)

Our experience is directly relevant to this section of the questionnaire. As a humanist organization monitoring the French public policy on religious minorities, we have faced obstacles that we document here because they illustrate the risks the report seeks to identify.

Question 10. Our organization has not been subject to penalties, sanctions or prosecution. It has, however, faced administrative obstruction linked to its watchdog activity. When we requested from the French interministerial mission in charge of monitoring cultic deviations the documents showing how public subsidies granted to associations of its network had been used, the national commission for access to administrative documents recommended communication, but the mission refused and described our repeated requests as abusive. By judgments of 16 May 2025 and 28 May 2025, the administrative court of Paris annulled these refusals, held that nothing demonstrated any abusive character, and ordered the communication of the documents. In the same period, the court found that the mission's own presentation of the right of access to administrative documents contained errors of law liable to deter citizens from exercising a right guaranteed by the Constitution.

Question 11. We promote international solidarity through digital communication: our website publishes our statements, reports and articles and makes our documentation available to communities, researchers and journalists worldwide.

Question 12. Beyond the refusals of communication described above, which were annulled but absorbed significant time and resources, we have not been subject to surveillance, defunding, fines or comparable measures.

Question 13. Our organization has been the target of actions by other organizations adversely affecting its activities and reputation. An association financed almost entirely by public funds refused to publish the right of reply that the press law guarantees to any designated organization. By order of 2 December 2024, the judicial court of Marseille ordered the insertion under financial penalty; by decision of 9 January 2025, the court of appeal of Aix en Provence confirmed that opposition between organizations is no ground for refusing a right of reply; and on 12 March 2026 the same court recalled that this right is general and absolute. More broadly, stigmatization campaigns by organizations presenting themselves as fighting cults regularly seek to discredit those who defend minority beliefs, including our organization. No intra group division affects our functioning.

Question 14. No member of our organization has been subjected to violence on account of their work. The risk in our field is reputational: being discredited for defending unpopular minorities. Our experience is that the protection of the space in which humanist and belief based organizations act requires judicially enforceable guarantees of neutrality, methodology and transparency for the public mechanisms that assess religious and belief groups.

Conclusion and recommendations

On the basis of the experience above, we respectfully suggest that the report consider three directions. First, mechanisms set up by states to monitor religious or belief groups should be bound by clear obligations of neutrality, methodology and transparency, as courts have begun to recall. Second, access to administrative documents concerning the use of public funds in this

field should be effectively guaranteed, since watchdog organizations depend on it. Third, the right of reply, a simple and effective remedy against stigmatization, should be protected as the general and absolute right that courts have recognized.

We remain at the disposal of the Independent Expert for any further information or documentation.

Coordination des Associations et des Particuliers pour la Liberté de Conscience (CAP Freedom of Conscience, CAP LC)

117, rue de Charenton, 75012 Paris, France

https://freedomofconscience.eu/