



SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

Religious Extremism—A Danger to Religious Liberty

Since the Church's inception, Seventh-day Adventists have recognized their Christian responsibility as active promoters of religious liberty, believing that every person has freedom of conscience and the right to religious expression, subject to the equal rights of others. Adventists have and will continue to cooperate and network with other people and organizations in order to defend the religious freedom of all people, particularly in conjunction with the International Religious Liberty Association, founded in 1893.

While the United Nations in its declarations and conventions has clearly set out the principles of religious freedom, and while many countries have adopted these principles in their constitutions and laws, in practice this freedom is often under attack in an increasing number of countries, especially as regards religious minorities.

Two dangerous opposing forces are at work in the modern world, both of which have the capacity to infringe on religious freedom.

First is an anti-religious kind of secularism which wants to squeeze religion out of public and social life. Lists of supposedly "dangerous" religious groups, almost always minorities and referred to as "sects," have been published in several countries. Such religious bodies may be denied access to the public media and at times experience press hostility.

Secondly, there is the growth of religious fundamentalism—that is religious extremism—which is currently on the rise in many world religions. In its worst forms, this religious extremism engages in violence aiming not just at restricting religious liberty, but at eliminating those having different beliefs. Religion-based hate crimes and discrimination are also on the rise. This extremist outlook expresses opposition to beliefs and believers deemed in error and tramples on fundamental human rights. Such attitudes are rightly condemned by all people of good faith.

We call on everyone, both inside and outside our faith community, to work wisely and effectively to reduce religious intolerance and extremism. Education should play an increasingly significant role in teaching respect for the religious rights of every person and help establish a culture of peace and religious tolerance. The dignity of all human beings, created in the image of God, requires respect as Christians seek to witness to those of other faiths. Terminology should be used which is truthful, transparent, and is not deliberately offensive.

World Headquarters
Office of Media Relations
12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600, USA
phone: +301 680 6307; fax: +301 680 6312
e-mail address: media@gc.adventist.org; web address: www.adventist.org

Seventh-day Adventists remain fully committed to the worthwhile cause of upholding religious freedom, wishing to serve their fellow human beings by proclaiming the “everlasting gospel” of truth which will make human beings fully free (see Rev. 14:6; John 8:32). In this endeavor, mutual respect, humility, and honesty are of the essence.

This statement was voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee (ADCOM), for release at the time of the General Conference Session in St. Louis, Missouri, USA, July 5, 2005.