

THE INTERNATIONAL SAKHAROV COMMITTEE

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President:
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Bundeskanzlerin Angela Merkel
Bundeskanzleramt
11044 Berlin
Federal Republic of Germany

Date 2006.06.26

Dear Chancellor Merkel,36

I am writing to you in my capacity as President of the International Sakharov Committee, a Human rights monitoring organisation that I set up in the Soviet era together with the renowned Soviet physicist and human rights campaigner, Dr Andrei Sakharov.

My own background is as a Lutheran Minister and author of over 30 books. In the communist era I worked to free Soviet dissidents and to bring the bible to those who sought to practice their Christian faith when it was largely suppressed behind the so-called "iron curtain". In more recent years I have been well known internationally for being active in promoting human rights in Denmark and around the world and I retain a strong sense of the great importance of being vigilant to protect any erosion of our hard won religious freedom.

Having pursued my studies in theology in Germany, I must tell you that I am a great admirer and friend of Germany and a lover of the German language, which I speak fluently. It is therefore in a spirit of sincere friendship towards the German people that I am writing to you.

In the past 2 years I have come to know of Germany's listing of Dr and Mrs. Sun Myung Moon under the Schengen Information System. This precludes them from entering not only Germany but also fourteen other European nations. This disturbs me greatly. Please allow me to explain briefly why.

I have examined the available evidence about the Moon couple and the movement which they founded and also now have considerable personal experience with the members of this movement. Nowhere can I find credible evidence that they or their movement are a danger to any society, let alone to Germany, which cites this allegation as the basis for listing them.

On the contrary, I find that although, as a Lutheran I disagree with a number of aspects of their theology, they are doing very valuable work for world peace such as in their strong efforts to bring about interreligious cooperation and harmony and their efforts to bring about peace in the Middle East based on that interreligious work. Their members have as high moral standard.

Furthermore, my researches reveal that others whose views must command respect, have reached similar conclusions to my own. Your own Parliament's "Enquete Commission" found that the Moon movement and other new religions in Germany constituted no danger to society. Many eminent international figures including then Secretary of State Powell and former Secretary of State Haig have urged that the ban be rescinded. The U.N. special rapporteur on Religious Freedom, after examining the ban and other circumstances faced by the Moon movement in Germany reported his concern about the climate of intolerance and hostility that it and other new movements faced.

With real sadness and some reluctance I have concluded that in this matter Germany is unfortunately responsible for a serious violation of human rights. I have also concluded that Germany is abusing the Schengen system in such a way as to limit the religious freedom of those in many other nations, like Denmark, that are members of it. As a result I and others have had to go to great lengths to persuade our government that they should grant an exception to the Moon couple. Happily we have now been succesful two times, but in other nations the German ban has been repeatedly cited as a reason to refuse any exception.

This is unfortunate - not only because of the personal injustice it represents, but because it sets a precedent for further violations of religious freedom through abuse of the Schengen system in the future. It also seriously tarnishes Germany's growing reputation as a defender of human rights.

For all these reasons I respectfully but strongly urge you to see that this most unfortunate matter is resolved as quickly as possible.

I sincerely appreciate your willingness to take the time to re-examine this matter.

Most respectfully yours,

HANS KRISTIAN NEERSKOV
Rev. Author

cc. Jose Manuel Barosso President of the European Commission

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His Excellency Jose Manuel Barroso,
President the European Commission
1049 Brussels Belgium

Dear President Barosso,

I am writing respectfully to call your attention to a matter, which I believe can only damage the reputation of the EU in the eyes of the people of Europe and to urge you to act to prevent it doing so. It concerns the misuse of the Schengen Immigration system to limit religious freedom, something which this organization and I personally have spent a great deal of time and effort trying to protect.

The matter is set out in the enclosed letter, which I have sent to Chancellor Merkel of Germany, since it was Germany that triggered the matter by listing Dr and Mrs. Sun Myung Moon under the Schengen Information System in 1995. However, it has implications for most of The EU because it is mostly EU nations that are affected by it. At the moment this applies to 13 EU nations but early next year it will apply to a further 10. It also seems to me to call in question the very integrity of the Schengen system.

I would urge you to try to ensure that this unfortunate matter is resolved as soon as possible by Germany's removal of the listing and commitment not to use it for any similar purpose in the future.

I commend my letter to Chancellor Merkel to your attention and want to thank you very much for your attention in this matter.

Yours very truly,

HANS KRISTIAN NEERSKOV
Rev Author