

High-Level Conference on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination

Astana, 29-30 June 2010

Session 3

Speech of Galina Golous

International Society for Krishna Consciousness

Ladies and gentlemen,

It's am very grateful and honored to have the opportunity to participate in the meetings of the OSCE Conference. We have had a chance to speak at the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meetings more than once, and we sincerely hope that we will be heard by those who are authorized to resolve our drawn-out issue.

The world public has become well aware of the activities of the Kazakh authorities against the farming community of the Krishna Society, which has been evicted from their property in the Karasai district, Almaty province. Although the general situation around the Society for Krishna Consciousness is quite tolerable, the situation of the community in the Karasai district, Almaty province, remains an area of serious concern because of the elements of open and hidden religious discrimination.

Let us remind you that in November of 2006 the Government of Kazakhstan confiscated 48 hectares of privatized farm property owned by the Krishna Society and destroyed 26 houses of the members of the Society without any compensation. These activities severely violated international standards of forced evictions, including the General comment #7 adopted by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which Kazakhstan as a nation that joined the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was supposed to follow.

For the last three years negotiations have been going on between the Government and the Society to try to settle the conflict. We have suggested that the Government would give us the plot of land with the area of 15 hectares which is presently occupied by the temple and other utility structures of the Society.

However the Government's promise to allot a plot of land to Krishna Society has never been fulfilled.

The plots of land offered to the Society for the last years (such as an active landfill, an old cemetery, and a piece of steppe 70 km away from the city) is a factual indication that the Society is being sent to a reservation for destruction.

Although the relations of the Society with the local, district and province Hakimats have improved, unfortunately, they can't resolve our land issue because only the Government seems to be competent to do it.

2010 is a remarkable year for the Republic of Kazakhstan. It is the year of Kazakhstan's chairmanship of OSCE. And, 2010 is the sixth year since the Kazakhstan Government started the campaign to liquidate the farm community of the Society for Krishna Consciousness in Kazakhstan. And who knows what will be coming in 2011.

We request the Acting Chairman of the OSCE, Mr. Sadabayev, to take this drawn-out issue under his control. We also hope that the question of allotting the Society the plot of land with the area of 15 hectares will be resolved positively, because our community has occupied,

cultivated and developed this property for 10 years and the faithful continue to conduct worship on this property.

And the second disturbing question is connected to the printing of the textbook *Basics of Religious Studies, For The Students of the 9th Year*. Echoing the Government, the authors divide the religions on traditional and non-traditional and use terminology which can't be found either in the RK Constitution or the normative documents, or the RK Law on Religious Freedom and Religious Associations. In this way the Vienna Convention of 1989 has been violated (sec.16.2: "foster a climate of mutual tolerance and respect between believers of different communities as well as between believers and non-believers.").

Thank you for your attention.

Press-service of the Society for Krishna Consciousness in Kazakhstan

Telephone numbers:

+7 701 785 94 87

+7 701 716 49 67

e-mail:

iskcon.almaty@gmail.com