

Romania

Response to Information Request Number:	ROM01001.ZSF
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Subject:	Romania: Information on Pentecostals and other Religious Minorities
From:	INS Resource Information Center, Washington, DC
Keywords:	Romania / Pentecostals / Jehovah's Witnesses / Religious Minorities / Nationalism /

Query:

How are Pentecostals and other religious minorities treated in Romania?

Response:

Article 29 of the 1991 Constitution guarantees freedom of religion as a fundamental human right. According to the Center for Religious Freedom, however, Romania remains on the low end of "religiously free" countries (CFR, 2000). The Romanian Government recognizes 15 "religious denominations" which enjoy a higher level of freedom than the numerous "religious associations and foundations." This legal distinction restricts the freedom of minority faiths by denying them state financial support, and restricting their ability to build churches and perform rites of marriage, baptism and burial. Local authorities and the clergy of the Romanian Orthodox Church sometimes cooperate to restrict the propagation of minority faiths, and registration of "religious associations" is often subject to lengthy bureaucratic delays (Dept. of State, 1999).

New and minority religious movements, such as the Jehovah's Witnesses and others are often met with hostility. In 1996 an international conference of Jehovah's Witnesses scheduled to take place in Bucharest was moved to the provinces after protests from the Romanian Orthodox Church and a demonstration of 4,000 Orthodox believers (RFE/RL, 7 February 1996). According to Amnesty International in 1999-2000, 29 Jehovah's Witnesses were tried and sentenced to prison for their conscientious objection to military service (Amnesty International, 2000).

Pentecostals constitute one of the largest minority religions in Romania. The Apostolic Church of God alone claims 220,051 members and has been a recognized denomination since 1948 (Dept. of State, 1999). Since the fall of Communism numerous smaller Pentecostal Churches have been active in Romania, and their proselytizing efforts have often met with hostility from the established Churches and local authorities. However, a survey of the major human rights organizations, and an internet media search have produced no reports of human rights abuses in Romania resulting from membership in a Pentecostal Church. The assistant director of world missions at the International Pentecostal Holiness Church, which is active in Romania, knew of no cases of harassment of Pentecostals (International Pentecostal Holiness Church, 30 January 2001).

References

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Attachments

Amnesty International. "Romania - Conscientious objectors face imprisonment." 6 October 2000. [Internet] <http://web.amnesty.org/ai.nsf/Index/EUR390062000?OpenDocument&of+COUNTRIES/ROMANIA> [Accessed 13 December 2001].

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