

2014-10-14

Fråga-svar

Baptister i Vitryssland

Fråga

Hur påverkar den vitryska religionslagstiftningen baptistförsamlingar och hur agerar staten gentemot baptister?

Svar

United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (2014):

Central to the web of restrictions is the 2002 religion law, which includes compulsory state registration of all religious communities and geographical limits on religious activity. Religious meetings in private homes must not be regular or large. Houses of worship and any public exercise of religion must have state permission, which is rarely granted for disfavored groups, particularly Protestants. Orthodox and Catholic communities are less affected, partly due to the state's more positive attitude towards them, but also because they are more likely to occupy historic churches. Unregistered religious activity is usually treated as an administrative offense punished by a fine. Since registration is compulsory, the religion law makes no provision for those who do not wish to register, such as the Council of Churches Baptists. A religious group found to have violated the law must correct the alleged violation within six months and not repeat it for one year, or face closure. There are no legal provisions to challenge such warnings. In April 2007, the Constitutional Court noted the Religion Law's failure to give religious groups the legal right to challenge warnings. (s. 153)

Forum 18 (2014):

Before the April 2015 United Nations Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Belarus, Forum 18 News Service has observed the government's continuing desire to keep

religious communities within an invisible ghetto of regulation, even though in recent years the regime has been less inclined to obstruct people exercising their religious freedom. However, people meeting together to exercise their religious freedom are still subject to state control. Officials are hostile towards followers of faiths they see as a political threat, particularly Protestantism.

While harsh actions against individuals and communities exercising their right to freedom of religion or belief have reduced in the last few years, people fear that without change to the legal framework and the attitudes of officials harsh actions could resume more widely.

State registration being compulsory, the Religion Law makes no provision for those who do not wish to register. This primarily concerns the Council of Churches Baptists, who believe registration leads to state interference.

The Council of Churches Baptists reported 12 fines for unregistered religious activity from June 2009 to January 2014 (see below). Some were substantial.

However, some religious communities of differing backgrounds say the authorities are turning a blind eye to groups that meet for worship without having compulsory state registration.

U.S. Department of State (2014):

On February 24 [2013], 20 police officers raided a service held by a Baptist community of the unregistered Baptist Council of Churches at a private residence in Homyel. They reportedly questioned all community members, including children, without the consent of their parents. On April 10, authorities fined Pastor Mikalai Varushyn four million rubles (\$421) on charges of violating regulations for holding demonstrations or other mass public events. On April 26, a higher court turned down his appeal to challenge the fine.

On April 14 [2013], a dozen police officers broke into another private home in Homyel where Pastor Pyotr Yashchanka, a representative of another unregistered Baptist community, was holding a service. Police interrupted the worship, recorded the meeting on tape and interrogated those present, including writing down their passport information and home addresses. The police also confiscated religious literature. According to the human rights group Forum18, the security services launched the raid to “reveal criminal groups of the unregistered Baptists.” On May 31, a Homyel district court fined Yashchanka and his associate Valyantsin Shchadronak 200,000 rubles (\$21) each. The two were found guilty of organizing unsanctioned mass public events. On the same day, local authorities summoned home owner Andrei Tupalski and

warned him that he could be held criminally liable for hosting religious services in the future.

On December 22 [2013], 10 police officers entered a private home and interrupted a pre-Christmas service of the local Evangelical Christian Baptist community in Homyel. Police confiscated a Bible, wrote down names of all members of the church, and selectively interrogated a number of them. Three community leaders were charged with organizing an unsanctioned service; however, no indictments followed at year's end.

Denna sammanställning av information/länkar är baserad på informationssökningar gjorda av Migrationsverkets landinformationsenhet under en begränsad tid. Den är sammanställd utifrån noggrant utvalda och allmänt tillgängliga informationskällor. Alla använda källor refereras. All information som presenteras, med undantag av obestridda/uppenbara fakta, har dubbelkontrollerats om inget annat anges. Sammanställningen gör inte anspråk på att vara uttömmande och bör inte tillmätas exklusivt bevisvärde i samband med avgörandet av ett enskilt ärende. Informationen i sammanställningen återspeglar inte nödvändigtvis Migrationsverkets officiella ståndpunkt i en viss fråga och det finns ingen avsikt att genom sammanställningen göra politiska ställningstaganden. Refererade dokument bör läsas i sitt sammanhang.

Källförteckning

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