

## INFORMATION

on the religious situation in the Republic of Bashkortostan and the observance of Laws on freedom of conscience in 1996

On the territory of the Republic of Bashkortostan as of 1 January 1997 are active: 5 religious headquarters (the Spiritual administration of Muslims of the Republic of Bashkortostan, in the town of Ufa, the Central Spiritual administration of Muslims [CSAM] of Russia and the European countries of the CIS [Commonwealth of Independent States], in the town of Ufa, the Spiritual administration of Muslims of the Republic of Bashkortostan attached to the CSAM, in the town of Salavat, the Ufa Diocesan administration [of the Russian Orthodox Church], in the town of Ufa, and the Association of Churches of Evangelical Christians/Baptists, in the town of Ufa).

More than 700 religious organisations are active, including 490 Muslim, 116 Orthodox, 5 Old Believer, 17 Evangelical Christian/Baptist and 28 other associations, a higher Islamic institute attached to the CSAM, the Ufa branch of the Moscow Orthodox St Tikhon theological institute, the Ufa Exaltation of the Cross and Annunciation convent, 6 secondary madrassahs of the SAM of the Republic of Bashkortostan, a printing house of the CSAM, restoration workshops of the Diocesan administration, a sewing workshop of the Diocesan administration, 12 deaneries and 20 mukhtasibat boards.

Changes in the number of religious organisations:

No.	Type of religious organisation	No. as of 1 January			Change in 1996 compared with 1995 (+,-)
		1990	1996	1997	
1.	Religious headquarters	2	5	5	-
2.	Associations of Muslims	30	430	490	+60
3.	Associations of ROC	32	107	116	+9
4.	Old Believers	4	5	5	-
5.	Evangelical Christians/Baptists (Union of ECB of Russian Federation)	6	10	12	+2
6.	Evangelical Christians/Baptists (UC [Union of Churches] of ECB)	4	5	5	-
7.	Lutherans	1	4	4	-
8.	Catholics	-	1	2	+1
9.	Seventh Day Adventists	2	3	4	+1
10.	Jews	-	1	1	-
11.	Jehovah's Witnesses	-	1	1	-
12.	Church of Christ	-	5	6	+1
13.	Church of Moon	-	1	1	-
14.	Krishna Consciousness	-	1	1	-
15.	New Apostolic Church	-	3	6	+3
16.	Mormons	-	1	1	-
17.	Bahai faith	-	1	1	-
18.	Monasteries of the ROC	-	1	1	-
19.	Higher educational institutions	-	1	2	+1
20.	Secondary madrassahs	1	6	6	-
21.	Others (mukhtasibats, deaneries, business organisations etc.)	2	34	38	+4
	Total:	82	623	708	+85

The number of so-called "non-traditional" religious organisations continues to grow (Protestant, Eastern,

interdenominational etc.). However, their proportion as a whole is not great. Thus, if in 1990 their proportion was 21.2%, in 1995 it was 6.2% and in 1996 it was 6.1%.

The attitude to the activity of such religious organisations as the Moon church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons), the Church of Christ, the Jehovah's Witnesses, Krishna Consciousness and the New Apostolic Church on the part of many public associations and of leaders of associations of the ROC are highly negative. There have been many negative articles recently in the media, especially in the pages of the Molodezhnaya Gazeta [Youth Paper], about the activity of such religious organisations.

At the same time, there are no reasons to refuse registration of the Statutes of such religious organisations.

These organisations are gradually strengthening their material and technical base. Thus, the New Apostolic community in the town of Sterlitamak built a typical prayer building using funds from Germany, the Catholic community of the village of Alekseevka in Blagovar district received a prefabricated prayer building from Germany, the Catholic community in the town of Ufa acquired two three-roomed apartments on one yard as a home-made church, the Krishna Consciousness community acquired a free-standing building for a prayer house, the Church of Moon acquired an apartment etc. The Mormons and New Apostolic Church in the town of Ufa are intending to build prayer houses using funds from their foreign religious headquarters.

There are no missions active on the territory of the Republic of Bashkortostan, but some 60 missionaries from the Church of Jesus Christ of latter day saints, the Church of the Association and the Church of Christ are conducting active work. Their composition changes constantly. They are, basically, visitors from the USA, Germany, the Baltic countries, Moscow, St Petersburg and Samara.

The leadership of the republic constantly keeps an eye on the religious situation, the activity of religious organisations and the observance of the Law on freedom of conscience and regularly meets the leadership of religious organisations and believers. Thus, in April and May, meetings took place in the State Assembly between representatives of religious organisations and leaders of the house of the State Assembly, public associations and the press. In November a meeting was held between hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Chairman of the State Assembly, M.A. Zaitsev, where questions of the mutual relations between state organs and religious organisations were discussed.

Apart from Christmas Day, the festivals of Uraza-Bairam [Id al-fitr] and Kurban-Bairam [Id al-Adha] are also declared non-working days in the republic.

Given the desire of a range of public associations worried by the activity of so-called non-traditional religions in the Republic of Bashkortostan (the Mormons, New Apostolic Church, Church of Christ, Jehovah's Witnesses, Krishna Consciousness etc.), the Chairman of the State Assembly of the Republic of Bashkortostan, M.A. Zaitsev, issued instruction No. 172 of 17 October 1996 on the formation of a working group to prepare a draft Law "On the introduction of amendments and additions to the Law of the Bashkir SSR of 20 June 1991 'On the freedom of conscience and religious organisations in the Bashkir SSR'". At the beginning of December, the working group held its first session. Initial suggestions centred around proper regulation of their activity in educational, cultural and medical institutions and military units, as well as the regulation of the activity of foreign missions and missionaries, right up to a ban on them in the territory of the Republic of Bashkortostan.

In accordance with the Decree of the President of the Republic of Bashkortostan "On the creation of historical/cultural centres in the Krasnokamsky and Baymak districts and measures for the fuller satisfaction of the cultural and religious needs of the peoples of Bashkortostan" and the decree of the Cabinet of Ministers "On the transfer of cult buildings to religious organisations", the process of the transfer of former cult buildings to religious organisations is continuing in the republic. Thus, in the period 1993-6, a total of 96 former cult buildings were transferred to believers, including 26 which are registered as monuments of history, architecture and culture. Among the buildings handed over were: the Khakimiya mosque and the

Nativity of the Mother of God church in the town of Ufa, the church of the Sorrowing Mother of God in the village of Andreevka in Aurgazinsky district, the church of the Kazan Mother of God in the village of Verkhotor in Ishimbai district, the St Nicholas church in the village of Nikolo-Berezovka in Krasnokamsky district, the St Sophia church in the village of Ira near the town of Kumertau, the Trinity church in the village of Krasny-Yar in Ufa district etc., all of which were built in the 18th and 19th centuries and are monuments of culture. Great help in restoration work is being given them by the administrations of towns and districts, enterprises and various other organisations. The Ministry of Culture alone allocated more than 300 million roubles to the restoration of these buildings in 1996.

The leadership of districts and towns of the Republic of Bashkortostan are providing whatever help they can to religious associations in construction and the transfer of prayer buildings to believers without charge. This help is being provided together with enterprises and organisations located on the given territory. In this way the mosque in the village of Ayuchevo in Sterlitamak district, the madrassah in the town of Sterlitamak, the mosque in the village of Urazbakhtino in Chishmy district, the mosque in the village of Zirgan in Meleuz district etc. were constructed. In all over the past few years, 48 prayer buildings were built or handed over to believers.

At the request of believers buildings that never previously belonged to religious organisations are being handed over free of charge. For example in the villages of Chingizovo and Yaratovo, former club buildings have been handed over to the Muslims, in the settlement of Tubinsk the building of the former library and in the village of Verkhne-Yarkeevo the building of the former people's court etc.

The Spiritual directorate of Muslims of the Republic of Bashkortostan has been handed free of charge a building in Ufa which is a monument of culture, for use as a residence. 540 million roubles were allocated from the republic's budget for restoration of this building. In all, 78 such buildings have been handed over free of charge. All of these are being restored and repaired with the help of the administrations of districts and towns.

The Diocesan administration has been allocated a subsidy of 400 million roubles from the republic's budget for the purchase of a building as a country residence.

The administration, enterprises and organisations of Beloretsk district have given financial help in the sum of more than 2,000 million roubles, in Belokatai district 110 million roubles have been allocated for the restoration of the church building and 100 million roubles for the restoration of the mosque etc. In all, the financial help alone to religious organisations from various sources of finance has come to some 6,000 million roubles.

In addition, many organisations have allocated building materials and designs, transport and construction machinery for the building of new buildings and the repair of existing ones free of charge and, also free of charge, are undertaking improvement works, are searching for possibilities and providing subsidies for the payment of communal services, and are buying and handing over equipment and property.

At the same time, 85 former cult buildings remain at the present time which have not been handed over to religious organisations, 16 of them monuments of culture, which basically house institutions of culture, education and medicine, while 12 are empty. Apart from in the town of Ufa and the settlement of Tabynsk, there are no demands for the return of these buildings, as in the other regions either there are no religious associations, or the new buildings that have been constructed are satisfactory.

The situation within religious associations is on the whole normal. However, in individual associations conflict situations arise. Thus, in the association of Old Believers in the town of Salavat a schism arose in the leadership on organisational grounds, as a result of which the community itself also split, forming a parallel association. A similar situation, aggravated by the conflict between supporters of the CSAM and the SAMRB, occurred in the Muslim association in the town of Tuymazy. Both cases were investigated by officials of the Council for religious affairs with the participation of the leaders of the administration of the

towns and representatives of the religious organisations, as well as, in Tuymazy, with the participation of representatives of the Interior Ministry.

With the aim of attracting attention to their activities, religious organisations have begun to use mass measures more frequently. Thus, the Diocesan administration organised the ceremonial installation of the bells on the restored church in the village of Nikolo-Berezovka with the attendance of some tens of thousands of people; the Muslims organise the ceremonial opening of mosques; the Seventh Day Adventists conducted a large meeting in the town of Neftekamsk with invited guests from many regions of Russia; the Jehovah's Witnesses held a congress in the town of Ufa, which some 700 people attended; there was the [Hare Krishna] Vaishnava Vedic festival "Worshipping Govardhan hill" etc. At such gatherings the majority of those attending are students or workers in education or health.

Certain religious organisations also resort to forbidden methods of attracting attention to their activity. Thus, in connection with the noticeable democratisation towards the activity of supporters of the "Council of Churches", attention has clearly weakened towards their activity on the part of the public, especially on the part of their protectors. In order to revive this interest, and partly also to receive financial support, supporters of the "Council of Churches" held an event they had planned earlier in the town of Neftekamsk. Representatives from Tatarstan, Udmurtia and Mari-El were particularly active in this.

On 13 August 1996 representatives of these republics, without having informed and received permission to hold this event from the administration of the town, put up a tent in the centre of the town and began to conduct a service, giving out religious literature, stopping passers-by and talking to them. Representatives of the Interior Ministry [the police] and the administration of the town explained to the believers that by their actions they were grossly violating the decree of the Supreme Soviet of the Republic of Bashkortostan on the introduction of amendments and additions to the decree of the Supreme Soviet of the Bashkir SSR of 20 June 1991 "On the rules for the organisation and holding of gatherings, meetings, street processions and demonstrations in the Bashkir SSR". It was suggested to the believers that they should register their event officially on a legal basis, but the visitors demonstratively and categorically refused this suggestion. After that a decision was taken by the local authorities to halt the given event by methods within the bounds of legality (the confiscation of the tent, the removal of the participants beyond the bounds of the town with notification of their identity to the Town Department of Internal Affairs).

Literally the next day a flood of telegrams arrived with identical text about the "illegalities conducted by the authorities in the town of Neftekamsk" from many towns in Tatarstan, Udmurtia, Chuvashia, Mari-El, Buryatia, Ashkabad, Kirov region, etc. addressed to the Presidents of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Bashkortostan and other senior officials. In all more than 180 such telegrams and letters arrived.

The given situation was analysed by the leadership of the town, officials of the central apparatus of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Bashkortostan and the Ministry of Security of the Republic of Bashkortostan, who travelled to the location and gave appropriate explanations, but the believers returned dozens of times to the town. The Council for religious affairs informed the leadership of the republic in detail, notified the state organs of the Republics of Tatarstan and Udmurtia, where the given questions were circulating. There were consultations three times with senior specialists from the department for links with denominations and religious organisations of the Department for mutual relations with the Federation Council and public organisations of the Office of the Government of the Russian Federation. They gave an evaluation that the actions of the administration of the town and the law-enforcement agencies had been lawful.

Over the past few years there have been no cases of theft from mosque and church buildings. Back on 15 September 1995 the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Bashkortostan sent all organisations concerned a letter, No. 499-962, "On the state of safety of cultural valuables in religious organisations and measures to achieve this". A commission of inspection of these objects was established.

In 1996 20 cult buildings, including 11 Orthodox churches and 9 mosques, were equipped free of charge by units of the extra-departmental protection by way of rendering help. The costs reached more than 80 million roubles.

Further work is being organised to prevent theft from cult buildings, to equip them with technical means of defence and to bring them under centralised protection at subsidised tariffs.

In connection with the growth in the number of religious associations, religious leaders have devoted considerable attention over the past few years to the preparation of cadres.

The Spiritual administration of Muslims of the Republic of Bashkortostan has established six secondary madrassahs in which some 150 people study (in the towns of Agidel, Baymak, Beloretsk, Oktyabrsky and Sterlitamak). Some 20 people are studying abroad.

By decision of the Plenum of 15 January 1996, the Central Spiritual Administration of Muslims turned a madrassah into the Rizaetdin Fakhreddin Higher Islamic Institute with a five-year programme of study. Some 50 students are studying in the institute at the present time. The CSAM has sent 31 people to study in various educational establishments in Jordan, Turkey and Kuwait.

The Ufa branch of the Moscow St Tikhon Orthodox theological institute has been operational in Ufa since 1995 and at present there are 37 people studying in two classes. In addition, the Diocesan administration has sent 57 people to study in educational establishments in Moscow, St Petersburg, Greece, Tobolsk, Saratov, Kursk, Tomsk, Belgorod and Volgograd, 20 of whom are studying externally.

Two people from the association of Churches of Evangelical Christians/Baptists of the Republic of Bashkortostan are studying at the Moscow Bible institute.

In order to study the bases of religion, courses operate in the biggest mosques for the study of the bases of Islam and seven church/parish schools operate in associations of the ROC with some 1,000 children. The communities of the ECB and Krishna Consciousness have likewise opened one such school each in the town of Ufa.

#### Conclusions:

1. On the territory of the Republic of Bashkortostan the Law of the Russian Federation "On freedom of confession" and the Law of the Bashkir SSR "On the freedom of conscience and religious organisations in the Bashkir SSR" are being observed. In the Republic of Bashkortostan there were no cases which came to light in 1996 of violations of these Laws.
2. In the Republic of Bashkortostan there were no cases which came to light of inter-denominational conflicts.
3. In the Republic of Bashkortostan there were no cases which came to light of inter-ethnic conflicts with a religious cause.
4. There is the possibility of a worsening of mutual relations between organisations of the ROC and Muslim organisations on one side and the so-called "non-traditional" religious organisations on the other if the Law of the Russian Federation on questions of freedom of conscience with a much firmer regulation of the activity of the latter is not adopted soon.

#### Proposals:

1. To adopt a new Law of the Russian Federation “On freedom of conscience and religious organisations” with firm definitions of such concepts as “a religious organisation”, “religious activity”, “a religious sect” etc., with a definition of the boundaries of the activity of various missions and missionaries, including foreign ones.
2. To adopt a Law of the Russian Federation “On alternative military service”.
3. To prepare informational, reference material on the religious situation in the Russian Federation with an objective evaluation of the activity of all religious movements and to provide such material free of charge to the subjects of the Russian Federation.

Chairman of the Council for religious affairs attached to the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Bashkortostan

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