

Table of Contents

- ***Currently there is no imprisoned conscientious objector***
-

Currently there is no imprisoned conscientious objector

Interview with Tigran Harutyunyan, "Jehovah's Witnesses" Christian Religious Organisation, Armenia, Head of Public Relations

Religions in Armenia (29.01.2014) -

T.H. (29.01.2014) - We faced some challenges with the construction of worship sites. In particular, we applied to the Mayor's office for the construction of three halls in different areas of the city, however they provided the same answer for all three cases, rejecting the applications.

Stepan Danielyan - *Mr. Harutyunyan, last year changes were made to the RA Law on Alternative service, after which members of Jehovah's Witnesses applied for alternative labour service. Can you express your opinion on how many people applied for alternative service; how did the Republican Committee work; in what establishments do they serve? Also what do you think about the current law?*

T.H. - To date, 99 Jehovah's Witnesses have applied for alternative labour service. The Republican Committee has now made decisions on the applications of 57 people; the remaining applications are pending. The people assigned to alternative labour service were assigned to the locations mentioned in the Government decision provided to you. Those are nursing homes, orphanages, psychiatric centres, and rescue services, where the objectors must perform different works. They started their service on January 13, 2014. We do not have the complete picture on how their service works. Everything just started and time will show how things will work out. As for the new Law on ACS we have a positive opinion so far due to the fact that currently there is no imprisoned conscientious objector.

Stepan Danielyan - *What challenges do you have to face with regard to construction of worship sites? As far as we are aware, you have had issues with building halls in Yerevan.*

T.H. - We faced some challenges with construction of worship sites. In particular, we applied to the Mayor's office for construction of three halls in different areas of the city, however they provided the same answer for all three cases, rejecting the applications. They stated that those sites are located in residential neighbourhood which could cause the discontent of neighbours, whereas you can see worship sites of different religious organisations or churches even in densely populated areas. This approach is discriminatory, and for that reason we applied to the Court. We hope that the resolution of this issue will bring positive results.

Stepan Danielyan - *Do children face opposition and pressures at school? Please explain.*

T.H. - This matter has not been fully explored yet. The main problems arise during Church History Classes at school because teachers start the lesson with a prayer. Children are able to defend their beliefs showing respect toward the teacher. And that

has led to positive results such as teachers' respect and understanding. However it is not always the case.
