

Information Network on Religious Movements



2010 Annual Report

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Inform is a registered charity (No. 801729) and is incorporated in England as a company limited by guarantee under the Companies Act (No. 2346855).

Introduction

Inform staff and governors are deeply saddened by the loss of the Very Reverend Colin Slee, Dean of Southwark, who died aged 65 on the 25th of November 2010. For many years, he had been one of Inform's two Co-Vice-Chairmen. He was a valuable and dynamic member of Inform's Board of Governors, and will be fondly remembered and greatly missed by all of us.

Throughout the year Inform continued its work of helping enquirers by providing reliable, up-to-date information about minority religions. Enquirers included the UK government, professional academics, the media, church networks and chaplains (especially university chaplains), relatives of converts, students and the general public.

In 2010 several legal cases dealing with religion and belief concluded. Some of these had a role in the subsequent creation of a Libel Law Reform Committee. Simon Singh, who had been accused of libel for referring to chiropractic treatment as a 'bogus treatment' won his case in April. A charitable trust (Sense About Science) that supported Singh in his case and two other organisations championing free speech (English PEN and Index on Censorship) came together to form the Libel Reform Campaign (www.libelreform.org) with the support of a cross-party parliamentary group convened by Dr Evan Harris, Vice Chair on the Liberal Democrat's Federal Policy Committee. In a different case, Hardeep Singh was sued for libel for referring to His Holiness Sant Baba Jeet Singh ji Maharaj as a 'cult leader' and for stating that his teachings are out of line with mainstream Sikh doctrine. On 17 May 2010 Mr Justice Eady stayed the action arguing that secular courts have no grounds to make judgments on issues of religious doctrine (*HH Sant Baba Jeet Singh Ji Maharaj v Eastern Media Group & Anor*). But in October the right to an appeal was granted, and the case continues into 2011. Hardeep Singh has joined the efforts of the Libel Reform Campaign.

For Inform, 2010 was very much taken up by the retrial of a 2009 case in which Inform had been involved at a number of levels. Michael Lyons is a self-proclaimed healer, with bases in Miami (USA) and London, who had acquired an international following. Inform had been aware of him since 1997, and from the start enquirers had reported 'healing' practices involving sexual contact. In 2006 an issue arose that led Inform to contact the police. Following this, Inform was closely involved in the criminal investigation, Lyons' arrest, and the ensuing court case, in which Professor Eileen Barker was called as a witness by the prosecution. The first trial ended with a hung jury.

Before the 2009 trial, Inform was summonsed by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) for full disclosure of all information relating to Michael Lyons. Inform fought this, arguing that enquirers to Inform have the right to anonymity and confidentiality. The Judge ruled for Inform, arguing that we had given significant help to the police officers working on this case, and that the CPS was merely on a 'fishing expedition' for more information. For the retrial, which began in April 2010, no such complications arose. The retrial ended in July with a conviction. Michael Lyons was found guilty of rape and sexual assault, and sentenced to ten years in prison. He will be on the sexual offenders' register for life.

Other notable events involving minority religions included radical changes in The Family International following the dissemination of their 'Reboot' documents (which contain the teachings that accompany the restructuring of the movement). Meanwhile, the Church of Scientology has been in the news regularly due to a significant number of high profile members who had held leadership positions leaving the organisation and speaking to the

media. But, perhaps not altogether surprisingly, none of these events generated as much column space as the Pope's visit to the UK.



Left to right: Amanda van Eck, Sibyl Macfarlane, Silke Steidinger in the new Inform office.

The Inform office has been quite a busy place. There were four interns over the summer, two of whom stayed on as research assistants. The extra staff were welcome as we were updating our database with new information from a membership questionnaire (in cooperation with the BRIN project and website, see <http://www.brin.ac.uk/>). Furthermore, Inform had to move offices, as well as our archive, to another building within the LSE. This was a major endeavour that took several months of planning, organising, packing and, eventually, unpacking.

Governors and Patrons

Bishop Paul Hendricks, who had resigned as a Governor after his ordination as a Bishop, was confirmed as one of Inform's Patrons in February 2010. Baroness Sally Greengross agreed to become a Patron in May 2010. Sir John Allison and Professor Mary Kaldor stepped down as Governors in order to join the Inform Advisory Panel, with Sir John being joined by his wife Gill. These changes were confirmed at the February 2010 meeting of the Board.

Under the chairmanship of Professor Eileen Barker, Inform's Board of Governors held two meetings during the year. The Management Committee met formally on four occasions under the chairmanship of Professor James Beckford. However, most of its work was conducted on a weekly or, often, daily basis by email, which enabled quick responses to issues arising over the practical running of Inform. For a full list of Governors and Patrons and the membership of the Management Committee, see Appendix I.

In light of the new Coalition Government's cutbacks, which hit the DCLG particularly hard, Inform's future, like that of many other small charities, has been under review. The Director spent many hours preparing a series of lengthy Business Plans outlining various possible futures for Inform once the Secretary of State reaches a decision about its funding.

Staff



Pictures clockwise from left: Rosalyn Velds and Silke Steidinger; Suzanne Newcombe; Amanda van Eck, Sarah Harvey, Sibyl Macfarlane; Rosalyn Velds, Gita Subrahmanyam.

The core of Inform's staff remained unchanged; Dr Amanda van Eck Duymaer van Twist (Deputy Director), Sarah Harvey (Research Officer), Dr Suzanne Newcombe (Research Officer), Silke Steidinger (Assistant Research Officer), Jane Cooper (Administrator), and Rosalyn Velds (Assistant Research Officer) continued their work as in previous years.

Ms Velds temporarily increased her days to 4 days a week in February and continued her work of updating the database. Later in the year she was accepted for a conversion course in law, and reduced her days at Inform to one day a week from September to devote more time to her degree in law.

Other staff also undertook further studies. In October Ms Steidinger began a four-year Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy training course at the Bowlby Centre in London, leading to UK Council for Psychotherapy registration. Mrs Harvey continued work on her PhD, which she began in 2009 with funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council. Ms Steidinger and Mrs Harvey continue to work three days a week at Inform.

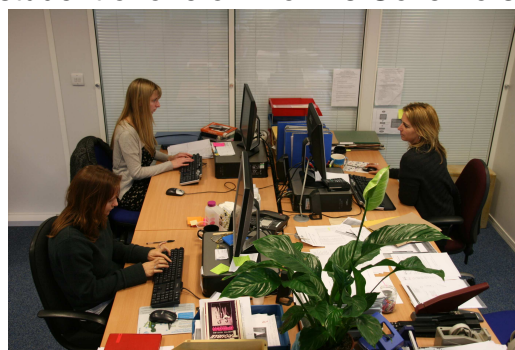
Dr Newcombe worked on the proposed new Inform website (which we hope will go live sometime in early 2011), and on the membership questionnaire until early March, when she began her maternity leave. On the 24th of March, she gave birth to a healthy daughter.



Throughout the year, however, quite a few new faces have joined the team – some of these to make up for Dr Newcombe going on maternity leave. In February, Dr Gita Subrahmanyam joined staff on a part-time basis. Her main responsibilities were to take over the running of the questionnaire and help with general research. Her first

research responsibility was to update the file on the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God.

Over the summer we were joined by some new interns. Rebekah Welton a second-year undergraduate at Kings College London (KCL) and a student of one of Inform's Governors, Dr Marat Shterin, and Sibyl Macfarlane, studying for an MA in Religion in Contemporary Society under Dr Shterin, joined Inform as summer interns. Both Ms Welton and Ms Macfarlane spent their time at Inform filing incoming information into our archive and adding details to the database, as well as attending the court case of Michael Lyons at Wood Green Crown Court, rotating with Dr Subrahmanyam, Ms Velds and Ms Steidinger. Ms Welton's internship with Inform ended in August, but later that month we were joined by Hannah Lindsay, who had recently completed her



undergraduate degree at Durham University and had heard about Inform from her supervisor Dr Charlotte Hardman, an erstwhile Research Officer at Inform. Ms Macfarlane and Ms Lindsay integrated the new data from the completed membership questionnaires into the Inform database and conducted, along with Dr Subrahmanyam, follow-up interviews for further information. Later in the year Stephen Abrahams, another undergraduate student at KCL, joined the team as an intern.

Ms Lindsay and Ms Macfarlane have stayed beyond their internships as occasional research assistants. Ms Lindsay worked one day a week while studying for a Masters Degree in the Anthropology department at LSE, and Ms Macfarlane worked two days a week.

Enquiries

As usual, Inform received a variety of enquiries about minority religions and related issues. Through the expansion of Inform's network, people can access our information through indirect channels – for example, the media or their local chaplain – rather than approaching Inform directly. As direct general enquiries from members of the public have decreased over the years, enquiries from other bodies have required more in-depth analysis and research, hence more time and resources. And those who are personally affected continue to contact Inform, and this year we have received a significant number of enquiries from former members, current members and relatives of members of particular religious groups. The gentle decline of enquiries has enabled Inform to increase its work on research and other projects.

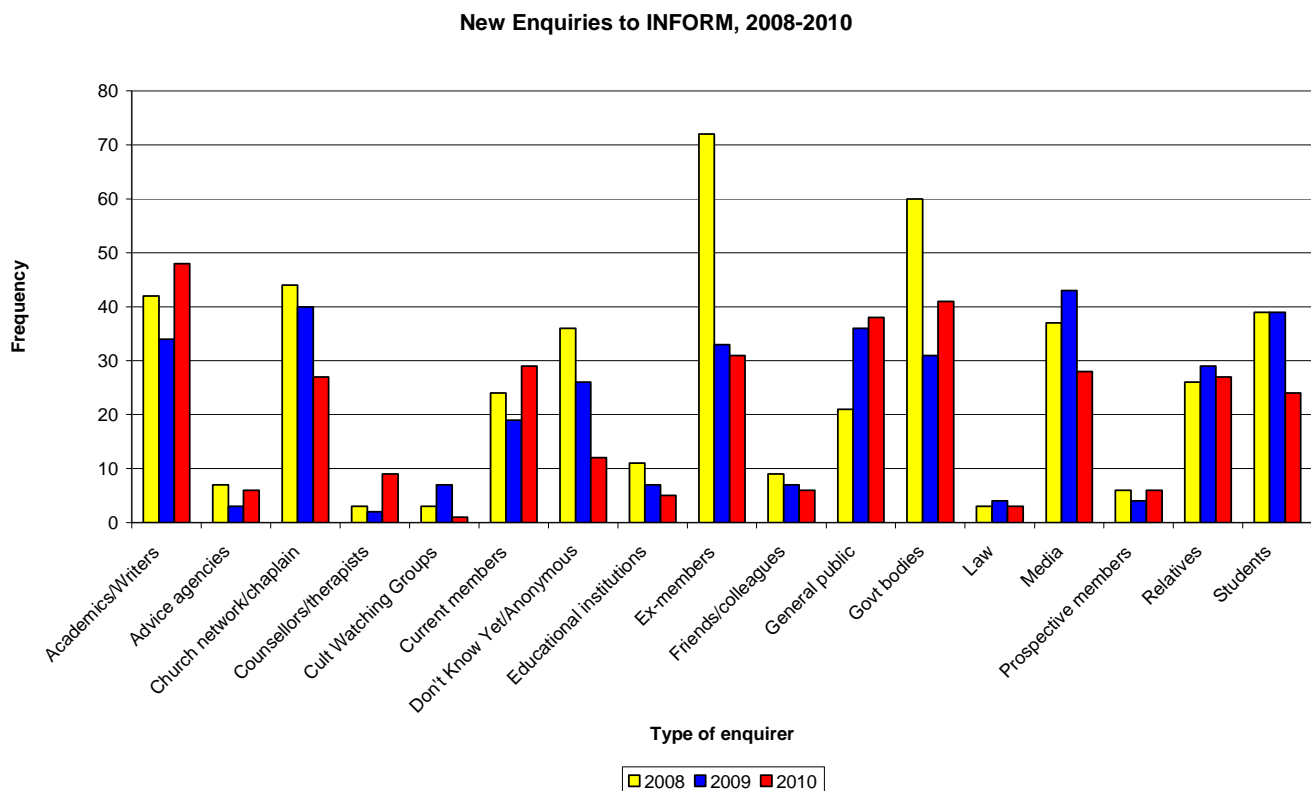
Some enquiries can be responded to relatively swiftly (sometimes taking less than an hour to answer), but many others require in-depth analysis, research, and contextualisation (which may entail several days' or even weeks' work). Some enquirers are undergoing a variety of emotional problems, and in such cases, the staff try to help so far as they can, but Inform policy has always been clear that it does not engage in counselling. However, those seeking therapy or counselling will be helped to find someone with accredited professional training. As ever, all enquiries are treated in the strictest confidence and, although Inform is not protected by law from disclosure, as already intimated, it will and has been prepared to fight against court orders for disclosure of information regarding the enquiries it receives.

In 2010, Inform received 341 separate new enquiries (if an individual has an ongoing enquiry dating from a previous year, or reconnects with Inform about an enquiry logged in a previous year – which happens frequently – this is not included in the count). Of all enquirers, 202 were making their first contact with Inform, whereas 139 had contacted us sometime in the past about a different issue. In 2010, the number of anonymous enquiries decreased substantially to 10 (from 36 in 2008 and 26 in 2009), reflecting – we hope – an increasing feeling of security regarding Inform's confidentiality policy.

Inform acts as an important source of information for governments, academic researchers and the media. The largest proportion of the total enquiries in 2010 came from the UK government (41) including 15 from the Home Office and 10 from the Metropolitan Police Service's Counter Terrorism Command. Inform was also approached for information by government bodies from the USA, Slovenia, Estonia and Belgium. Professional academics (34), students (20), non-affiliated researchers (14), and educational institutions (9) also approached Inform for information in 2010, and there were 28 enquiries from those

working in the media. The proportion of enquiries from government agencies and other professionals reflects the changing nature of Inform's work; as the amount of information on the Internet increases, Inform is increasingly called upon to offer more in-depth analysis and contextualisation.

Inform also continues to perform an important service for the general public. There were 38 new enquires from individuals not declaring any personal connection to the religions about which they wanted information. There were also 33 new enquiries from relatives and friends of members, 31 from former members and 29 from current members, and 6 prospective members of new and alternative religions or spiritualities. Members of our Diocesan network accounted for 29 enquiries, often contacting us in connection with their pastoral care for individuals in their area. Nine counsellors or therapists contacted Inform about groups that had come up in the course of their professional work.

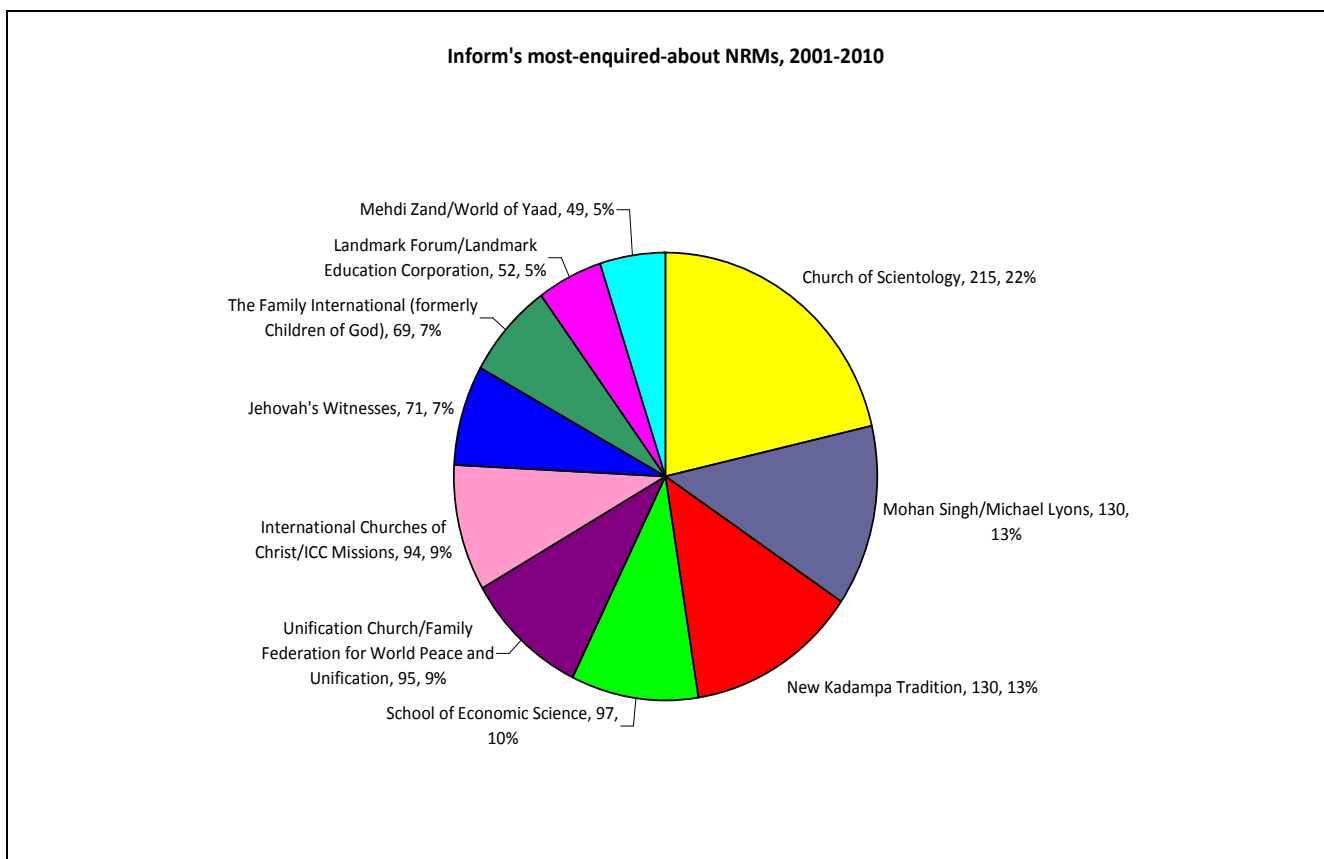


There were 48 enquires in 2010 that were known to originate from outside the United Kingdom, the largest number of these being from the USA (11) and Canada (5). Inform also received enquires from Australia (3), Belgium (3), Bulgaria (1), Denmark (3), Estonia (1), France (2), Germany (1), Ireland (1), Japan (1), Malta (1), Nigeria (1), Norway (1), Poland (2), Portugal (1), Slovenia (1), South Africa (3) and Sweden (4). Of course, many enquiries by email from Internet accounts could be coming from anywhere, and it is difficult to locate enquirers geographically if they don't volunteer the information.

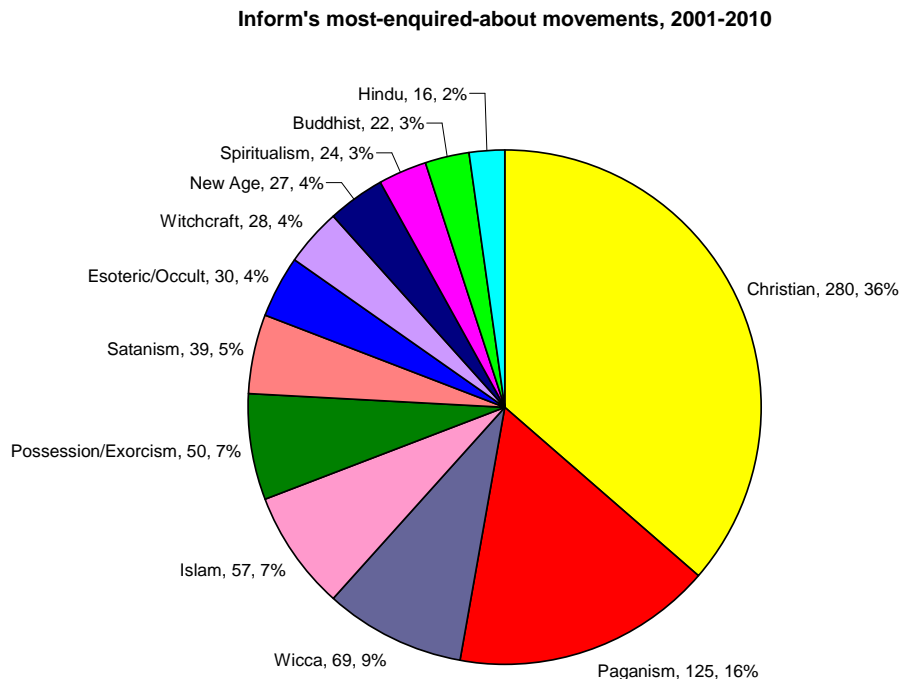
The range of movements about which Inform is asked continues to be extensive – 74 different groups were enquired about during 2010, 16 of which were not previously on Inform's database but were, as a consequence, added to our files. Of the specific groups, those about which Inform received the most enquiries were:

New Kadampa Tradition	28	Diamond Way Buddhism	3
Mohan Singh	27	HDSK (Prem Rawat)	3
Church of Scientology	13	Hizb-ut-Tahrir	3
Falun Gong	9	Jehovah's Witnesses	3
Rigpa	6	Landmark	3
Exclusive Brethren	5	New Frontiers	3
Adidam	5	Rastafarianism	3
Friends of the Western Buddhist Order	5	Sahaja Yoga	3
School of Economic Science	5	Schiller Institute	3
Unification Church	4	Universal Church of the Kingdom of God	3
Brahma Kumaris	3	Mehdi Zand	3

The list of the groups most enquired about changes over the years according to particular events, changes within a group, news articles and various other factors. However, analysis of the groups most enquired about over the past ten years does suggest that some groups are more visible than others and are, consequently, generating more enquiries than others (see pie chart below).



Apart from enquiries about particular groups, Inform also receives more general enquiries about particular religious traditions and their beliefs and/or practices. This year there were 88 enquires dealing with general topics or themes concerning minority religions (see pie chart below) and 34 enquirers seeking more information about the work of Inform in general.



Throughout the year, Inform staff undertook several speaking engagements at the behest of enquirers: Professor Eileen Barker gave numerous talks at universities and conferences in the UK and around the world; Dr Amanda van Eck spoke to students at King's College, University of London about the work of Inform; and Inform's Treasurer, the Reverend Andrew Maguire, spoke at an open meeting for the Faiths Forum for the East Midlands, the umbrella body that brings together faith and religious organisations from across Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Lincolnshire, Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire. Sarah Harvey gave a talk to the Gay and Lesbian Humanist Association (GALHA) at Conway Hall about Inform's research into the Alpha Course. Dr Suzanne Newcombe and Rosalyn Velds spoke to A-level Sociology of Religion students at St. Marylebone School in London, and Ms Velds also spoke at GlosCat College in Cheltenham, giving a talk to A-level Sociology of Religion students on the topic of 'Who Joins New Religions?'

There were about 30 visitors to the Inform office in 2010 including members of the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG), officers from the Metropolitan Police Service's Counter Terrorism Command, academic and student researchers, members of the media, as well as current and former members of minority religions (visitors are discussed in more detail below).

At the start of the new academic year, as in previous years, we distributed information about Inform and our *Searching?* poster to chaplains and Student Union welfare officers in higher education institutions throughout Britain. The *Searching?* poster (which can be downloaded from our website <http://www.inform.ac/node/11>) alerts students to potential problems and dangers related to new religious, spiritual and related groups and movements, encouraging the students to make informed decisions, and telling them where

they might turn for information and help. Another method by which Inform alerts people to potential problems is through its “Travelling Abroad” information on the website, and to which there are links on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office’s website.¹

Information resources

Inform has continued to add to its library, and by the end of the year its bibliographic records on the topic of alternative religions and related issues held over 14,000 entries, with around half of the books and articles being housed in the Inform office.

By the end of the year, Inform’s electronic database held files on 4,017 organizations. Of these, 164 were classified as ‘old religious movements’, 59 as ‘19th century sects’, and 1,828 as new religious movements. Some entries cannot be classified as religious organisations *per se*, examples being the 216 different cult-watching groups of various types, 38 journals and other types of publications, groups that are as yet ‘other’ (119) and ‘do not know’ (195), and offshoots of one of the other previously mentioned types and which are classified as ‘affiliates’ (224), thus ensuring that they are not counted as separate religions.

The Inform website was updated regularly and work continued on finalising the information for a redesigned new website which we hope to have on the Internet during 2011. The London School of Economics also provides a website for Inform on its LSE Experts page. The Inform website has now been included in the British Library’s web-archive of UK websites selected for their research or cultural value, and Inform staff met with the Curator for Web Archiving for the Modern British Collections at the British Library to finalise details of archiving arrangements.

The physical location of the Inform archives moved with the office to a new location within the LSE in October 2010. The archive room provides more security for the rare materials in our collections and has allowed new material to be transferred into Inform’s collections from part of Professor Barker’s personal collections. Inform also received a generous donation of several dozen books from Dr Elizabeth Puttick, relating to eastern spirituality and sexuality.

Research

In November, Professor Barker and Dr van Eck attended a meeting organised by the Swiss Centre d’Information sur les Croyances (CIC) in Geneva. The meeting consisted of representatives of research centres (the Belgian CIAOSN, Canadian Info-Secte, CIC and Inform) and representatives from five minority religions (Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Community of Saint-Jean, The Family International, Sukyo Mahikari, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) who discussed issues surrounding expulsion and exclusion, which in some groups can include the shunning of former members. This meeting was the successor to one organised by Inform the previous year when representatives of research centres and minority religions had discussed the topic of ageing in new religions.

¹<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/travel-advice-by-country/asia-oceania/india> and <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/newsroom/latest-news/?view=News&id=2035641>

While recognising the central role of providing objective information about those religions that are of concern to enquirers, Inform staff are encouraged, whenever time permits, to be pro-active in conducting original research on movements and related issues of interest to them, with the aim of their developing expertise in special areas, and producing publications for peer-reviewed journals, thereby disseminating more of the very considerable experience and knowledge they have been gaining to a wider audience than those who have direct contact with Inform. To this end, seminars were held for the staff to present 'work-in-progress' papers to each other in January, February, June, August and September.

Dr van Eck prepared an expert opinion for a court case relating to child custody and a minority religion. On 29 March 2010, Dr Van Eck presented a paper on 'The methodological complexities of being a research and information centre' at a conference on 'Innovative Methods in the Study of Religion' organised by the AHRC/ESRC Religion and Society Programme and the Relemerge Research Programme.

On July 1st, Dr van Eck and Mrs Harvey attended a conference at the British Library organised by the AHRC/ESRC Religion and Society Programme with the Faiths and Civil Society Unit, Goldsmith's, entitled *Faith and Policy- Where Next for Religion in the Public Sphere?*² In August, Dr Van Eck met with Jamie Bartlett, head of the Violence and Extremism programme at the think-tank Demos, and Carl Miller, a research intern there, to discuss conspiracy theories and related issues for their publication *The Power of Unreason*.³ That same month, Dr van Eck and Mrs Harvey met with two members of The Family International to learn about the recent changes that had just been announced in the movement's literature. The changes affect all levels of the membership, so it will be interesting to see how they affect the group over the next few years. In September Dr Van Eck gave a talk about minority religions in Britain at the annual conference of the International Cultic Studies Association held in Rome.⁴

In March Sarah Harvey attended an AHRC funded research seminar on 'The Sacred Senses: Religious Forms of Visual, Media and Auditory Culture', part of a series organised by Professor Gordon Lynch, one of Mrs Harvey's PhD supervisors. That same month, Mrs Harvey helped Professor Eileen Barker gather material on the relation between government and interfaith in the UK, which Professor Barker presented at a conference in Ghent, Belgium. On 22nd March, Mrs Harvey and Professor Barker attended the annual conference of the Religious Archives Group at the British Library. In May, Mrs Harvey attended a seminar on 'Legitimate Forms of Knowledge' organised by the Cambridge Centre for Western Esotericism, and in July, she attended a British Academy-sponsored conference on 'Positive Action and Community Cohesion in the UK'. In December 2010, Mrs Harvey and Dr Newcombe presented a paper titled 'Apocalypse and its Discontents' (on 2012 prophecies) at the 16th University of Westminster Colloquium. Mrs Harvey spent time during the year researching religious movements that use the hallucinogenic drug ayahuasca. She also attended a Sunday service of the Jesus Fellowship at their London centre.

²http://www.religionandsociety.org.uk/events/programme_events/show/faith_and_policy_where_next_for_religion_in_the_public_sphere

³<http://www.demos.co.uk/publications/thepowerofunreason>

⁴ Details about this conference can be found here
http://www.icsahome.com/infoserv_conferences/2010rome/conf_home.htm.

In early 2010, Dr. Newcombe worked on a questionnaire for Inform to get up-to-date membership figures for a variety of minority religions. When Dr Newcombe went on maternity leave, Dr. Subrahmanyam took over the management of the questionnaire. The demographical data of the questionnaire were shared with the online religious data resource, British Religion in Numbers (BRIN), which contributed to Inform's expenses with a grant.

In October, Dr Newcombe received her Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PGCAP), a nationally-recognised qualification for teaching and academic practice in Higher Education, from the Open University. Dr. Newcombe also prepared several papers for publication including a report on the relationship between religion and education in the United Kingdom, a chapter about the relationship between modern yoga practice and contemporary magical practices, and a chapter on Complementary and Alternative Medical practices of an 'Eastern origin' as practiced in the 'West'.

Silke Steidinger presented a paper entitled "Death in New Religious Movements: ISKCON, the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order and Scientology - A Comparison" at the Death Day conference at Winchester University in May. In preparation for the Pope's visit to England, Ms Steidinger wrote a report on Roman Catholic religious groups that reject, or have been rejected by, the Pope. In July Ms Steidinger attended the Jehovah's Witness Convention at Twickenham Stadium, and in August she attended a meditation class and live screening of leader Ole Niedahl at the Diamond Way Buddhist Centre in Holborn.

As a follow-up to the membership survey responses, Dr Subrahmanyam and Ms Lindsay visited the International Society for Krishna Consciousness and the Buddhapadipa temple. Ms Lindsay and Ms Macfarlane also conducted interviews with representatives from Adidam, the Brahma Kumaris, the Greater World Spiritualist Association, the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Jesus Army, Golden Dawn Occult Society and Subud. Ms Lindsay and Ms Cooper went to a book launch of the founder and leader of the Movement of Spiritual Integration into the Absolute; Ms Lindsay has since done further research into the MSIA movement. Ms Macfarlane updated Inform's files on polygamy and polygyny within minority religions, particularly focusing on legal cases surrounding the breakaway Mormon groups.



For several years Inform has been producing leaflets on specific movements. The leaflets cover topics such as beliefs, background, movement structure, membership and controversies, as well as providing references for further information. Previous leaflets were updated, and drafts for new leaflets written and refined. By the end of 2010, Inform had over 30 leaflets in either completed or draft form.

Inform Publications

Following the success of *The Devil's Children* (2009), Ashgate publishers agreed to publish an Inform-Ashgate Series on Minority Religions and Spiritual Movements, loosely based on Inform's public seminars. The series editor is Professor Eileen Barker and the editorial board for the series consists of internationally renowned scholars:⁵

- Afe Adogame, *University of Edinburgh*
- Madawi Al-Rasheed, *Department of Theology and Religious Studies, King's College, London*
- François Bellanger, *Avocat - Professeur à l'Université de Genève, President of the Information Centre on Beliefs in Geneva (CIC)*
- Irena Borowik, *Jagiellonian University, Krakow*
- Douglas E. Cowan, *University of Waterloo, Ontario*
- Adam Possamai, *University of Western Sydney*
- James T. Richardson, *Director, Grant Sawyer Center for Justice Studies; Director, Judicial Studies Program*
- Fenggang Yang, *Purdue University; Director, Center on Religion and Chinese Society.*

There are currently volumes in preparation on the themes of 'New Movements within Islam', 'Intentional Communities', 'Prophecy in the New Millennium' and 'New African Religions in the West' (the topic of Inform's 2011 Spring Seminar).

Publications by Inform Staff and Governors

Eileen Barker

'Misconceptions of the Religious "Other": The Importance for Human Rights of Objective and Balanced Knowledge', *International Journal for the Study of New Religions*, Vol. 1 (1) 2010: 5-25,.

(with Suzanne Newcombe) 'Financing of Churches and Religious Societies in England' in Michaela Moravcikova and Eleonóra Valová (eds) *Financing of Churches and Religious Societies in the Twenty-first Century*, Bratislava: Institute for State-Church Relations. 2010: 109-121.

'Preparing the Way: Conceptual Descriptions and Understandings of Religion and Spirituality in Contemporary China' in Fenggang Yang et al (eds) *From the Armchair to the Field: Selected Articles of the Beijing Summit on Chinese Spirituality and Society*, Library of Religious Studies, 2010: 31-42.

'Bryan Wilson's Contributions to the Study of the New Religious Movements' in Bryan S. Turner (ed) *Secularization*, London: Sage, 2010: 297-302. (Originally published in *Social Compass* 53(2) 2006: 147-153.)

'David Brandt Berg' in Hans-Josef Klauck, Bernard McGinn, Choon-Leong Seow, Hermann Spieckermann, Barry Dov Walfish, Eric Ziolkowski (eds) *Encyclopedia of the Bible and its Reception*, Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010.

James A. Beckford

'Foreword', in Sylvia Collins-Mayo and Pink Dandelion (eds) *Religion and Youth*. Ashgate, 2010: 71-83.

'"Cults" and "Normal" Religions', *Sociology Review* 19 (3) 2010: 23-6.

⁵ See <http://www.ashgate.com/default.aspx?page=4188>

- 'Religious Pluralism and Diversity: Response to Yang and Thériault' *Social Compass* 57 (2) 2010: 217-23.
- 'Constructing Religion in Unexpected Places: Phishers of Men and Women.' *Implicit Religion* 13 (1) 2010: 71-83.
- 'The Uses of Religion in Public Institutions: the Case of Prisons', in A. Molendijk, J. Beaumont and C. Jedan (eds) *Exploring the Postsecular: The Religious, the Political and the Urban*, Leiden: Brill, 2010: 381-401.
- 'The Return of Public Religion? A Critical Assessment of a Popular Claim' *Nordic Journal of Religion and Society* 23 (2) 2010: 121-36.
- 'Controverses Religieuses', 'Nouveaux Mouvements Religieux' and 'Postmodernité' in R. Azria & D. Hervieu-Léger (eds) *Dictionnaire des Faits Religieux*, Paris: PUF, 2010.
- 'From religious heritage to conversion in prisons', in Irena Borowik and Małgorzata Zawila (eds) *Religions and Identities in Transition*. Krakow: Nomos, 2010: 32-49.

Amanda van Eck Duymaer van Twist

- 'Children in New Religions: Contested Duties of Care', *International Journal for the Study of New Religions* 1(2): 25-48.

Sarah Harvey

- 'Birth' in J. Gordon Melton and Martin Baumann (eds) *Religions of the World, Second Edition: A Comprehensive Encyclopedia of Beliefs and Practices*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC Clio, 2010.
- (with Suzanne Newcombe) 'Religious Prophecies: The Next End of the World.' *Sociology Review* 19 (2) 2010: 8-11.

Suzanne Newcombe

- (with Sarah Harvey) 'Religious Prophecies: The Next End of the World.' *Sociology Review* 19 (2) 2010: 8-11.
- (with Eileen Barker) 'Financing of Churches and Religious Societies in England' in Michaela Moravcikova and Eleonóra Valová (eds) *Financing of Churches and Religious Societies in the Twenty-first Century*, Bratislava: Institute for State-Church Relations. 2010: 109-121.
- (with David Palmer) 'Energy' in J. Gordon Melton and Martin Baumann (eds) *Religions of the World, Second Edition: A Comprehensive Encyclopedia of Beliefs and Practices*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC Clio, 2010.

Philip Knights

- (with Anne Richards, John Clark, Martin Lee, Janice Price, Paul Rolph and Nigel Rooms Foundations for Mission) *A Study of Language, Theology and Praxis from the UK and Ireland Perspective*. CTBI, London, 2010.

Seminars, Workshops and Public Events

Seminars

On Saturday 24 April 2010 Inform held its biannual public seminar on the topic of *Cults and Crime*, which was attended by about eighty individuals. Speakers included a Falun Gong practitioner who had been 're-educated' in a Chinese detention centre, a former member of the 'World of Yaad', whose leader pleaded guilty to a charge of incitement to violence (violent disorder) in 2009 and a speaker from the London Metropolitan Police. Unfortunately, due to flight disruptions caused by volcanic ash, our speakers from Canada and the USA were unable to get to London but, thanks to Eurostar, speakers from

Switzerland and Belgium were able to be with us. The full programme for the Spring Seminar can be found in Appendix I.

Inform's Autumn Seminar on Saturday 20 November 2010 was on the topic of *State Reactions to Minority Religions* and featured speakers from a number of nations, including two from Canada, and one each from the USA, France, Estonia and the United States. Other speakers spoke about the situation in Muslim-majority states, Japan, and Britain. About ninety people were in attendance, including academics, some overseas government representatives, members and former members of religious movements; the full programme is available in Appendix III.

Workshops

In April, Inform hosted two closed workshops:

- (i) a DCLG 'training day', where several civil servants came to learn about minority religions, rights, related issues and the work of Inform.
- (ii) a day-long seminar where members of MIVILUDES (*Mission interministérielle de vigilance et de lutte contre les dérives sectaires*), the French government's 'cult observatory', came to discuss similarities and differences between French and UK, as well as MIVILUDES' and Inform's views, approaches and methodologies regarding minority religions. This discussion formed the basis of the Secretary-General of MIVILUDES' talk at Inform's November Seminar (see above).

Public Events

Inform collaborated with the Forum for European Philosophy at the LSE to hold a public event entitled *Thinking in Public: Paths Towards Extremism*, which took place on Tuesday 22 June.⁶ This event brought together speakers from different disciplines to discuss 'paths to extremism' and was attended by over 120 people. Dr van Eck represented a sociological perspective on paths to extremism. She shared the platform with Nicholas Royle, Professor of English at the University of Sussex, and Sara Savage, a senior researcher at the Psychology and Religion Research Group at the University of Cambridge. The event was chaired by Dr Simon Glendinning, Reader in European Philosophy and Director of the Forum for European Philosophy at the LSE. A promotional description of the event can be found in Appendix II.



From left: Sara Savage, Amanda van Eck, Nicholas Royle.

Inform has continued to be closely involved with contributions to and the running of LSE's Forum on Religion.⁷ This seminar series meets regularly during term time, show-casing current research in the study of contemporary religion from a variety of national and international scholars.

Inform's Visitors

Aside from the usual visits to Inform from enquirers and members of our network (academics, researchers, students, family/friends of converts, among others), Inform also added some notable individuals and new members to its network. In February, Inform

⁶ <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/forumForEuropeanPhilosophy/events/thinkinginpublicpastevents.htm>

⁷ http://www2.lse.ac.uk/europeanInstitute/Events/2009-10/Forum_on_Religion.aspx

welcomed Shahid Malik, the then Minister for Race, Faith and Community Cohesion at the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).

In April we were also visited by Dr Gregor Lesjak, Secretary of the Republic of Slovenia's Office for Religious Communities. Dr Lesjak is hoping to create a database of religious minority movements in his country modelled on Inform's database. Hence he and Inform exchanged statistics on minority religions, affiliation, and more from both countries – he stayed and used Inform's library for several days.

In May, Baroness Greengross, the Treasurer of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Equalities and Commissioner for the Equality and Human Rights Commission, visited the Inform office. (And, as mentioned above, agreed to be one of Inform's Patrons.)

That same month, Dr Karsten Lehmann, a German academic from the Religious Studies Department at Bayreuth University, visited our office for research.

In June, Alison Hill, the British Library's Curator of Web Collections, came to the Inform office to see our files, archive and database. Inform's website is now part of the British Library's web Collection.

In August, Inform welcomed Fr Alessandro Olivieri Pennesi, who has visited several times before. Fr Pennesi is in the process of creating an information centre in Rome similar to Inform.

While Inform was preparing to move offices, and during the move, the office was closed to visitors, as many of our files were boxed up and out of reach. But once we were somewhat settled and had chairs to sit on, we were visited by two members of Japan's main media body. They wanted to know about the main trends and issues regarding minority religions in the West.

In November, Ringo Ringvee, who works for Estonia's Ministry of the Interior, came to speak at our Seminar. He prolonged his stay in order to do some research at our office.

The Financial Situation

Inform's Board of Governors would like to express its gratitude for continuing financial support from the DCLG and other sources, in particular the Church of England and the Methodist Church. It is also helped by receiving consultancy fees for specially commissioned reports, and some payments for talks and lectures. Details of Inform's income and expenditure are professionally audited and, in accordance with the 1985 Companies Act, lodged at Companies House.

There is still insufficient funding to enable Inform to appoint a salaried Director, or for it to do all the work that it would ideally wish to do. Among the projects that it continues to believe to be particularly pressing are the production of an educational package and the setting up of a more formal system for helping second-generation members who have left the movement in which they were brought up and are having difficulties in adjusting to life 'on the outside'.

In 2010, the new coalition government cut the DCLG's income by 51%. One estimate is that the DCLG's capital spending will be down 74% in 2011/2012.⁸ The impact of these cuts on Inform's future will not be known until 2011.

The Future

Despite financial insecurity, work will continue on Inform's redesigned website, which, when launched, will enable more of Inform's material to become publicly available.

The Spring Seminar in 2011 will be on the theme of *African New Religions in the West* and will be followed with a book on the same topic within the new Inform-Ashgate Series on Minority Religions, edited by Dr Afe Adogame of the University of Edinburgh. The Autumn Seminar will be on the theme of 'Legal Cases Involving New Religions', and will be followed with a book edited by Professor François Bellanger. Meanwhile, work will continue on several other books in the Inform-Ashgate series.

Inform will, of course, maintain its commitment to its principal objective of helping enquirers by providing information that is as reliable and up-to-date as possible, and it welcomes receiving enquiries, information and suggestions from all sources.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Eileen Barker". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Eileen" and the last name "Barker" clearly distinguishable.

Eileen Barker,
Chair of Inform's Board of Governors

⁸ Emma Maier. 2011. 'DCLG Cuts' in *Local Government Choice*. 11 January. <http://www.lgcplus.com/home/blogs/dclg-cuts/5023868.blog>

Appendix I

Patrons

The Right Reverend Graham James, Lord Bishop of Norwich (Church of England)
Commissioner Elizabeth Matear, (Moderator of The Free Churches Group)
Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia (Greek Orthodox Church)
Bishop Paul Hendricks (Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Southwark)
Professor Lord Desai of St Clement Danes
Lord Ahmed of Rotherham

Board of Governors

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Professor David Bartholomew, PhD, FBA; *Department of Statistics, London School of Economics*
Professor James Beckford, PhD, FBA (Vice-Chair); *Department of Sociology, University of Warwick, Nominee of the British Sociological Association Sociology of Religion Study Group*
The Reverend Dr Philip Knights; *Nominee of the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster*
The Reverend Andrew Maguire, MA, BD (Treasurer); *Nominee of the Free Churches Group, Superintendent Minister of the North Hertfordshire Methodist Circuit*
Professor J. D. Y. Peel, PhD, FBA; *Department of Anthropology and Sociology, School of Oriental and African Studies*
Dr Marat Shterin, PhD; *Department of Religious Studies, King's College London*
The Very Reverend Colin Slee, BD, AKC (Vice-Chair); *Dean of Southwark, Nominee of the Archbishop of Canterbury*
Dr Damian Thompson, PhD; *author and leader writer, Daily Telegraph and Catholic Herald*
Dr Robert Towler, PhD; *Former Head of Research, Independent Television Commission*
The Reverend Alan Walker MA, MTh, LL.M.; *Parish Priest*

Observer: Dr Anne Richards, D.Phil, Mission Theological Advisor, Archbishops' Council of the Church of England

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Professor Eileen Barker, PhD, OBE, FBA
Professor James Beckford, PhD, FBA (Chair)
The Reverend Andrew Maguire, MA, BD

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APPENDIX II

INFORM Seminar XLIV **Cults and Crime**

London School of Economics, Saturday 24 April 2010

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/resources/mapsAndDirections/howToGetToLSE.htm>

To register: post cheque to Inform, Houghton St., London WC2A 2AE. (Inform@lse.ac.uk; 020 7955 7654).

Tickets (including buffet lunch, coffee and tea) paid **by 7 April 2010** cost **£38** each (£18 students/unwaged).

NB, Tickets booked **after 7 April 2010** will cost **£48** each (£28 students/unwaged).

PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME (20 April 2010)

*The presence of speakers on an Inform programme does not mean that Inform endorses their position.
The aim of Inform Seminars is to help participants to understand, or at least recognise, different perspectives.
For Inform's codes of practice see www.Inform.ac*

9.30 – 10.00: Registration

10.00 – 10.10: **Welcome and Introduction**

10.10 – 10.35: **Eileen Barker** (Professor Emeritus, LSE; Chair & Honorary Director, Inform)
"Be it a Crime if I Believe?"

10.35 – 11.00: **Annie Yang** (A Falun Gong practitioner)
"The Persecution of Falun Gong in China: A Personal Experience of 'Re-Education'"

11.00 – 11.25: Coffee

11.25 – 11.50: **Jack Kreindler** (Former student of Mehdi Zand)
"From Harmless to Grievous Bodily Harm"

11.50 – 12.15: **Ian Toon** (Metropolitan Police)
"Nrms, a police perspective"

12.15 – 12.50: Group Discussions

12.50 – 13.50: Lunch

13.50 – 14.15: **François Bellanger** (Lawyer, Professor of Law at the University of Geneva
and President of the Swiss Information Center on Beliefs)
"Cults and crime from a legal perspective"

14.15 – 14.40: **Michael Langone**, Executive Director, International Cultic Studies Association, USA) *"Cultic crimes in North America Part 1"* (Presented by **Professor Rod Dubrow-Marshall**)

14.40 – 15.05: **Mike Kropveld**, Executive Director, Info-Secte, Canada)
"Cultic crimes in North America Part 2" (Presented by **Dr Linda Dubrow-Marshall**)

15.05 – 15.30: Tea

15.30 – 15.55: **Henri de Cordes** (President, Information & Advice Center on Harmful Sectarian Organizations, Belgium)
"The 74 corpses of the Solar Temple Order : Sacrifice, Suicide or Crime?"

15.55 – 16.20 **Marat Shterin** (Lecturer in Sociology of Religion, King's College London)
"Cults as Crime... in Contemporary Russia"

16.20 – 16.50 Panel Discussion

Appendix III

Paths To Extremism

This event is jointly organised with *Inform*

Tuesday 22 June, 6.30 – 8.00pm

Wolfson Theatre, New Academic Building, Lincoln's Inn Fields, LSE

[Nicholas Royle](#), Professor of English, University of Sussex

[Sara Savage](#), Senior Researcher at the Psychology and Religion Research Group, Cambridge University

[Amanda van Eck Duymaer van Twist](#), Sociologist and Deputy Director of Inform, LSE

Chair: [Simon Glendinning](#), Director of the Forum for European Philosophy

By 2011 the British Government plans to spend £3.5 billion a year on what it calls "counterterrorism and security measures". The stated reason for such high levels of public spending is the concern that Britain is facing a real and growing threat from "violent extremism" which results from "the process of radicalisation". The measures included in the Government's planning are not, however, all of the same kind. As well as engaging in security activities aiming to minimise the chance of attacks, the Government aims to develop a "new and deeper understanding of how individuals become radicalised". Aware of concerns that the security response may be disproportionate, the Government also wants to "put respect for human rights at the centre of our response". (Source: Home Office)

The language of "extremism", "radicalisation" and "terrorism" that dominates the Government's policy-planning is, today, ubiquitous in contemporary politics and media coverage. Yet, there is clearly an awareness that this language might also bear closer analysis, and the effort to develop a deeper understanding of the situation is not over. Do those who become involved in what are identified as "extreme" groups regard themselves as extremists? And what are the paths that lead individuals to join such groups in the first place? What is radicalisation? Sociologists might be inclined to seek explanations in terms of alienation and other societal pushes and pulls. Psychologists might look at distinctive cognitive frameworks. Lawyers might ask whether the respect for human rights really is at the centre of Governmental responses today. Literature scholars may also wonder whether a "new and deeper understanding" of "radicalisation" and "violent extremism" is likely to be achieved through the disciplines of the so-called human or social sciences alone. Where should we turn to understand what is clearly one of the major questions of contemporary politics and society? In this special event the **Forum for European Philosophy**, in collaboration with **Inform**, brought together thinkers and scholars from across different disciplines to renew and deepen our discussions of "paths to extremism".

Appendix IV

INFORM Seminar XLV **State Reactions to Minority Religions**

London School of Economics, Saturday 20 November 2010

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/resources/mapsAndDirections/howToGetToLSE.htm>

Registration (including buffet lunch, coffee and tea) paid **by 1 November 2010** costs **£38** each (£20 students/unwaged).

NB, Registration received **after 1 November 2010** will cost **£48** each (£28 students/unwaged).

For online registration and payment, visit www.Inform.ac or post cheque to Inform, Houghton St., London WC2A 2AE. (Inform@lse.ac.uk; 020 7955 7654).

PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME

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For Inform's codes of practice see www.Inform.ac*

9.30 – 10.00: Registration

10.00 – 10.10: Welcome and Introduction

10.10 – 10.35: Eileen Barker (Professor Emeritus, LSE; Chair & Honorary Director, Inform)
"Promote, Protect, Prevent or Pay no heed?"

10.35 – 11.00: Ziya Meral (Joseph Crapa Fellow at the US Commission on International Religious Freedom)
"Politics of Religious Minorities in the Muslim-majority States; old challenges and new trends"

11.00 – 11.25: Coffee

11.25 – 11.50: Hervé Machi (Magistrat, Secretary General of MIVILUDES: Interministerial Mission for Monitoring and Combating Sectarian Deviations) *"The Situation in France"*

11.50 – 12.15: Cole Durham (Professor of Law, Brigham Young University)
"Legal overview"

12.15 – 12.50: Group Discussions

12.50 – 13.50: Lunch

13.50 – 14.15: Mike Kropveld (Executive Director, Info-Secte, Canada)
"The Situation in Canada and the USA"

14.15 – 14.40: Lori Beaman (Canada Research Chair in the Contextualization of Religion in a Diverse Canada, University of Ottawa)
"Laws of General Application: The Legal Narrowing of Religious Freedom in Canada"

14.40 – 15.05: Ian Reader (Professor of Japanese Studies at the University of Manchester)
"Japanese State Reactions to New Religious Movements"

15.05 – 15.30: Tea

15.30 – 15.55: Ringo Ringvee (Ministry of the Interior, Estonia)
"Reactions to New Religions by the Baltic States"

15.55 – 16.20: Jamie Bartlett (Senior Researcher with Demos)
"British Reactions to Radicalisation"

16.20 – 16.50 Panel Discussion