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Once again, the activities of religious cults are in the spotlight. While the Ugandan authorities continue to unearth the bodies of members of a religious sect, the followers of another cult in Peru are rescued from death by the police.



But should cults like the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God in Uganda, or Peru's Quillabamba Pentecostal movement, be banned?

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Your comments since the programme

In the name of the democratic freedom to worship, cults should never be banned. They should, however, be monitored. The system should subject questionable cults to public scrutiny and have an early warning system in case of reasonable non-compliance.

The barons of bureaucracy must never be given the licence to curb this basic democratic freedom. Never. Waco was a wake-up call against that.

Stephen B.C. Tan, New Zealand

It seems to me that cult or religion, the result is the same. People accept religion because it is a crutch, a means of escaping reality, harsh as it can be, and an attempt to make life a bit more

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bearable. Jehovah's Witnesses are particularly abhorrent to me (was one formerly) because they impose their views on their supporters on pain of shunning.
Victor Lefrancois, Canada

Unpleasant as the events in Uganda may be, it would be virtually impossible to ban cults without removing the right to free speech, thought, assembly, freedom of conscience, freedom of religious thought and most other human freedoms. And who exactly defines what a "cult" is?
Andy D, UK

Every religion must have started as a Cult and become acceptable latter on. Christianity for sure might have been considered a dangerous Cult by the Roman Empire. I don't think state or religious groups have the right to brand others.
Vinay, USA

You can't discriminate between religions and get away with it. If you want to ban specific religious practices, why not others? Can you ban, for instance, Jehovah's Witnesses while allowing Satanists to practice their religion? If you ban Satanism, what of Christianity? What does it matter who, which god, or what you choose to worship, as long as you practice your rituals within the laws of the appropriate land.
Dream Weaver, England

All religions are madness, based mainly on fear and ignorance of the unknown. It's hard to say whether or not one is 'worse' than the other given the choice!
David Meagor, UK

In my view to attempt to ban groups some people have decided are "cults" would be to open a Pandora's Box of evil. Who decides? You could wind up with an anti-religious fascism, or a state-mandated religion oppressing all others. No, there are existing laws to govern the conduct of individuals. And individuals should be responsible for their actions. This includes

“ They impose their views on their supporters on pain of shunning. ”

Victor Lefrancois, Canada

“ What does it matter who, which god, or what you choose to worship, as long as you practice your rituals within the laws of the appropriate land. ”

Dream Weaver, England

“ In my view to attempt to ban groups some people have decided are "cults" would be to open a Pandora's Box of evil ”

Ben Right, United States

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such people as the defrocked Roman Catholic priest turned mental patient who was responsible for the tragic murders in Uganda. And that is our best compromise: the absolute freedom to believe as one chooses, but to be accountable to one's fellow citizens for one's conduct.

Ben Right, United States

Reading through the comments, I find Josephat Ddungu's question intriguing. Why do people start cults? Do we need new cults? Don't we have enough "brands" to choose from? Is it an investment or a fashion to come up with the latest model?

Mukasa Kabuye, Ugandan in Ireland

Cults take many forms these days from the dooms day cults to the Roman catholic, eastern Orthodox, Mormons, Jehovah witnesses, etc. All of these are cults it is just some are more accepted and have a larger membership than others.

Matthew Taylor, USA

Religion has historically been used to discipline the populace and cults are no exception. Some people need the comfort in belief. But anyone who is foolish enough to harm themselves through religious propaganda shouldn't be part of society and is better suited to the isolated lifestyle within these groups.

Jamie, England

Cults and the like are a test of democratic principles held by the people and or their leaders. Intervention at the level of "banning cults" does not work since for those involved, whether a minority or not it may be viewed as being oppressive! Let us not forget many wars and deaths have been caused by mainstream religions as well!

Yakobo, Canada

“
Let us not forget many wars and deaths have been caused by mainstream religions as well!
”

Yakobo, Canada

You can't lump all religions or cults into one basket and curse them all. Just like you can't lump all political parties together with the extreme parties. Some people in this debate are expressing a lot of atheistic intolerance of religions in their comments! Weren't the greatest slaughters of the 20th Century caused by atheistic movements (Nazis and communists)? P.S. As an evangelical Christian I'm prepared to love and tolerate people I don't agree with - are these so-called enlightened atheists?

Dave Houlton, English expat in Belgium

Who would determine the label of "cult"? Some evangelicals believe LDS Mormons and Catholics are in a cult. Would it be up to a "Majority Rule" per region? Unless they do something illegal and are caught you cannot do much to curb them. Santaria is legal and involves animal sacrifice. Certain Native American religious practices are legal in involve peyote. What do you do about those?

JW, Texas, USA

Why the distinction between religions and cults? They are all part of the same spectrum. When will civilised society relegate all this superstitious mumbo-jumbo to the dustbin of pre-enlightenment history, or put at most on a par with trainspotting or fly-fishing: harmless if kept personal. It is pathetic to see supposedly mature adults - including the leaders of the USA and UK - give such credence to what should, at the very most, be a very private preoccupation.

Peter F.B Pappamikail

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When will civilised society relegate all this superstitious mumbo-jumbo to the dustbin of pre-enlightenment history.
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Peter F.B Pappamikai

I'd like to say that the idea of banning cults seems an extreme step. Objectively it's difficult to set a clear line of demarcation between religions and cults, and established religions have often been guilty of stigmatising not so well established religions by calling them cults, which is just a modern version of the old technique of calling those who subscribe to a different religion "heathens" and "infidels". It's not that I don't recognise the harm done by cults such as the one responsible for the mass suicides/murders in Uganda: it's just that law is a blunt instrument for dealing with the problem and can be unfairly discriminatory.

Anand Doraswami Bangalore

The whole problem behind cults such as the Movement for the Restoration of the 10 Commandments of God is that people too easily listen to power-hungry zealots rather than the truth and light that the Bible provides. I have heard many people calling all religions dangerous and all religions cults, but if people would follow their religions instead of allowing people like this cult's leaders define their beliefs for them, events like these could be prevented. Check out Jesus some time, you might like it.

Joe Grødahl, Norway

I have listened to a number of callers on your program and many have looked at the question, 'why do people join cults?' I would be interested in hearing a discussion and comments on the question, 'why do people start cults? What is really the intention of those leaders who go out to start a cult and later recruit members?

Josephat Ddungu, Ugandan studying in the US.

I am a Bahai living in Belgium where Bahai's have been put on the list of the 1997 Belgian Government report of dangerous groups. I am Australian and in Australia Bahai is recognised as an official religion. So you have a situation where in one country

there is acceptance and in another rejection. I feel that there should be a UN run education/information bureau which would investigate and objectively provide information. From the point of view of the individual I believe that education is the key. That is provide people with information to allow them to make decision for themselves.

Dale Emerson, Belgium

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I believe that education is the key.
”
Dale Emerson, Belgium

If someone, as an adult, wants to join a cult, fair enough; Did those children choose? Governments CAN restrict "the choices" we make, look at libel or slander laws, don't they restrict our freedom of speech?

Simon, USA

What is a cult? Christianity could be defined as a cult along with everyone of the worlds religions. How would you be able to ban a cult? Isn't that an erosion of free speech. Besides that it would be almost impossible to do.

Xavier Cornut, France

Of course banning cults would also have to include banning those who subscribe to the modern cult religions of Socialism, Feminism, Gay Rights, Animal Rights etc. This crazy idea seems to have an up side after all.

Jon Kehrer, Australia

They can be a good support group for some people at a critical point in their life. If the person joins willingly without coercion, no-one has the right to say no to that.

Zainab S. Kabir, US

“
They can be a good support group for some people at a critical point in their life.
”
Zainab S. Kabir, US

A cult is too indefinite, and attempts to ban voluntary groupings tend to defeat the purpose. To the extent that we frown all oddities (such as racism) out of sight, we limit our potential to evolve. This is not to say there are no obviously wrong queer behaviours, but what is obvious to me is not obvious to all.

David de Vere Webb, UK

I do not agree that poverty wholly explains why people join cults, or why people joined the Movement for the Restoration of the 10 Commandments. One of the known cases is that of the mother of a fairly middle class computer software engineer who had been living with him in Kampala and could not have been considered destitute.

We have been continually told that cult members go there to "look for something more" than their mainstream church can

give them spiritually. People also join cults out of ignorance and once in they are manipulated and persuaded to give their belongings and money to the cult leaders. Once they have nothing, they are even easier to control because they are wholly dependent on the cult for their very physical survival.

John Bigyemano, Kampala

I think all religious leaders should accept responsibility for their role in providing a respectable cover for doomsday cults. The best way to protect ourselves against doomsday and other wierd religious cults is to take on board the fact that they are an expression of religion: this means we must take an unbiased look at religion. This would be done by starting from the fact that religion - without reference to the good or harm it does in the community or the world at large

- is something fabricated from the imagination of religious leaders and has no provable basis in fact. Building a mass movement or even a community organisation upon a foundation as unpredictable as someone's imagination is bound to leave enormous scope for enormous mistakes.

John Clements, UK

“ Building a mass movement upon a foundation as unpredictable as someone's imagination is bound to leave enormous scope for mistakes. ”

John Clements, UK

Your comments during the programme

Every religion or church can be a menace to society. Most are or have been at some time.

Attempts to "control" or oppose pernicious cults, beyond the general legal and social controls that apply to all organisations of all kinds, will almost always soon become a tool of political manipulation and oppression. We are witnessing an example of

this in Western Europe right now: moves to oppose the Scientologists have already gone from trying to expose them as a get-rich-quick pyramid scheme, to claiming that they are a threat to the state, and therefore setting the secret police on them, as is now happeny in Germany.

Tim Slater, Bavaria

“ The modern definition of "cult" is all too obvious: a sect I do not approve of. ”

Tim Slater, Bavaria

I was born and raised as a Jehovah's Witness, and when I left the religion I was disciplined by "disfellowshipping" and the rest of my family, all believers, were instructed not to speak to me until I 'returned to the faith'. Couldn't that be called coercion to stay inside a cult?

Lily Paige, USA

I'm very concerned about all the negative opinions being formed these days against anything which is out of the ordinary. There have been some truly horrible examples of groups going completely out of control; that doesn't automatically mean that anyone joining an unusual group is going to be turned into a wild-eyed baby killer or mindless zombie. I'm more or

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Not everyone joining an unusual group is going to be turned into a wild-eyed baby killer or mindless zombie.
”

Wes Sale, US

less the public relations representative for a small group of people struggling to form our own commune in America and we are very worried about the panic and fear mongering going on now - many of our kind came to a very bad end during the inquisition and the last thing we need is to have every hand turned against us now. more trouble.

Wes Sale, US

I was born into a cult called the children of god and I remember a strange and bizarre life. For me the whole experience was very negative and frightening.

Christina Jones, UK

When you look at the conflicts caused by so-called legitimate religions, it is not so difficult to understand the actions of cults. Religion in general creates divisions and isolationism.

Sano

It is a shame, that so many people could have perished in Uganda without anybody noticing. The government should explain how such a tragedy could have happened. People have been betrayed by the government and by the mainstream churches and have been alienated and that's why they turn to cults which promise them relief from their problems. Can the main stream churches get out of their closets and reach out to the perishing with the message of Jesus Christ of love and hope!

Frank Mugisha

I respectfully disagree that cults are the place many go due to impoverished conditions. What I think does entrap someone is that they give people a false sense of community, of a togetherness, and an ability to get to Heaven quicker than the average person. The end result is it's very very scary to think someone can become that enraptured.

Bill Bergadano East Freehold, New Jersey

I wouldn't associate the manipulation, which has been mentioned, only with "cults" - a word which has acquired a negative meaning partly due to media reporting mass suicides etc. How about Roman Catholicism or long-time established denominations in general? New religious movements often

acquire the name of cults because they often represent a menace to these established religions. In the Czech Republic many people consider the Mormons or Jehovah's Witnesses "cult" simply because there are comparatively new here.
Martin Dvorak Czech Republic

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Cults have always existed in "civilised society", that is all grouped persons. They will likely continue as long as there are people.
”

James Acker, USA

All cults are a danger to society, not only in Africa but throughout the world. Remember James Town? Their leaders were undoubtedly scum artists exploiting the unwary and ignorants. They should be brought to a court of justice as soon as they show their ugly heads.

Mohamoud Afrah

“
All cults are a danger to society
”

Mohamoud Afrah

When beliefs are taken to extremes, religious cults become violent, either to themselves or toward others, therefore, it becomes evident that the corollary should also apply; namely, that the less strongly a belief is held. the less likely it is that less violence would be exhibited. Surely, there is enough evidence to demonstrate that the divisiveness of religious belief is one of the worst causes of the conflicts which beset this planet.

Ruth and Owen Fauvel, Canada

Your comments before we went ON AIR

I am deeply concerned with 'who' will decide the definition of a Cult. I'm torn between our very own "Jamestown Tragedy" as well as "The Salem Witch Trials". Religious Freedom is at stake here as well as protection of humanity from the evils of false prophets. I have no answer except to be very, very careful in what we banish.

Michael Fox, United States of America

As a former cult member, I know that simply banning a cult will not produce the desired effect of preventing membership in the group. Instead, cult members often see such things as proof that they are indeed God's chosen. The problem is that those in a cult do not recognise that they are being controlled. They perceive that they have come to their belief of their own free will. Even if that belief denies the basic human right of life.

John Kistler, USA

Can you ban people from being weak and impressionable? Or others from being charismatic and domineering? Would such

prohibition be effective in third world countries? Emphatically no on all counts. As much as destructive cults are a blight on society, banning them would not work.

Chris, Canada

It may not be a good idea to ban cults as such an action will inconsistent with the concepts of

liberty and civil rights. But what can be done is to constantly monitor the activities of such groups and make the people who join the cults aware of the danger they are exposing themselves and others to. Most of the adherents of cults are either illiterate villagers or ignorant people. So, responsibility lies with the Governments concerned to make these more aware.

Mathew Joseph, India

I don't agree with some people, who say, "all religions are cults." I don't know much about other religions but Christianity is not a cult. I don't consider the Ugandan cult members as Christians. True Christians are those who strictly follow the teachings of Jesus Christ without any human modification. True Christianity results in basic changes in ones life and has nothing to do with the mass killings observed in Uganda or anywhere else in the world. True Christianity and Jesus always go together, and wherever Jesus is present there will be peace of mind, a base for social stability. Please try Jesus and check out that true Christianity is not a cult and it has nothing to do with mass killings or suicide.

Endalkachew Bekele, Ethiopian from UK

Religion as we all know, is by and large irrational and can be dangerous both to individuals and society at large. Dispossess, ignorant and poor societies looking for some answers to their predicaments are far more susceptible to the influence of any so call religious organisation. I am not in favour of banning cults, but I am in favour of protecting poor innocent people from falling into this form of tragedy. One way of preventing the repeat of this form of tragedy is through education, and proper scrutiny of so-call religious groups.

Musa, UK

It seems obvious to me that you can not draw up laws to ban cults, because then you would have to prescribe what is a reasonable belief. It has already been said that murder, etc, are already illegal. So how to you distinguish between me going to the Baptist Church on a Sunday, and a cultist living in a commune? Let people do what they want to do, and deal with

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As much as destructive cults are a blight on society, banning them would not work.

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Chris, Canada

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You cannot legislate religion, be it a cult or simply Christianity Vs Islam.

”

Bernard Henderson, USA

those who break the law when they do so. Anything else is beyond the remit of the law.

Tim Jinkerson, UK

Cults religious or otherwise should not be banned. The concept or cult, I believe is not clear. A lot of human activities other than religion are operated in a cultic manner. Such activities include government, (cult of personality) commerce, ideologies and some professions. In cases such of Uganda the cult activities were magnified by the fact that there is no government. How can such a large number of people disappear without the 'government' noticing it.

Charles, Kuwait

I am an evangelical Christian. The pastor of my church has mentioned many times that "one person's cult is another person's religion". The term 'cult' in the modern sense is simply too loaded and can lead to religious intolerance from any direction.

Bill Halchin, USA

“
One person's cult is
another person's religion
”

Bill Halchin, USA

Cults usually represent an idea whose time has come plus charismatic leadership. The more universal the teaching, the more likely the 'cult' will grow from the fringe of a society to the centre of its culture.

Jerome Whitney, UK

No beliefs ought to be banned. You should be ashamed of yourselves for even asking that question. However, I don't see a problem with a government keeping an eye on groups that may seem dangerous.

William Cooke, US

My husband has been attracted to an extreme religious group, which has the origins of a cult in Walterboro, South Carolina, USA. It calls itself the Overcomerministry, the founder calls himself the 'Last Day Prophet'. This man encourages break-up of families and has been quite successful in doing so. My comment is that cults are formed by persons who are bitter about their own personal lives and are aiming to make themselves rich through the wealth of others by psychologically bullying vulnerable persons who lack inner strength at some point of their lives. Belief in God has nothing to do with most of these incidents, it is purely evil and encourages wicked people to do more wicked things all in the name of God.

Mrs Goberdhan, UK

There is a huge difference between freedom of speech and freedom to kill: cults which lead their followers to their deaths ought to have their activities curtailed, for the protection of the cults' members.

Simon, Jersey

Dangerous cults should not be banned - doing so only drives them into hiding where they cannot be observed. There is also the issue of an individual's right to worship as one pleases. Even though many cults, such as Scientology, are threats to national security and dangerous to critics, most liberal societies feel, rightly in my opinion, that curbing religious violence and abuse will adversely effect religious freedom for those who cause no harm. This is why dangerous cults such as Scientology are free to wreak havoc in USA society - the cost of prevention is too high.

David Rice, USA

How can we ban organisations that offer something for people to believe? The mainstream Christian churches in the UK signally fail to do this for anyone except white middle-class, middle-aged people. I suggest to the Church of England - get off the fence, stop trying to avoid offending anyone and say what you believe, if you really believe in anything!

David Hammond, UK

“
How can we ban organisations that offer something for people to believe in?
”
David Hammond, UK

The real problem with cults like this is their isolation from the rest of society. This allows the leaders to form some sort of mini-government where the followers are no longer allowed to express dissent or divergent views but are kept in tow by threats and fear of even death. This phenomenon has underlined most such tragedies, from the Guyana tragedy to this one. Available law enforcement and a functioning judicial system is really all that is required.

Beatus, Nigeria/ USA

Social psychology states scientific research in to the causes of human behaviour, in particular, group dynamics, is important before we pass judgement on the values of a particular group.

Tony D'Angiolillo., Australia

I was amazed by the propensity of our government to deny responsibility for the tragedy in Kanungu. The Justice and Constitutional Affairs Minister, Mayanja-Nkanji was quoted by the New Vision that government could not be held liable for the death of so many innocent Ugandans including children. But I think someone owes Ugandans an explanation. Our taxes pay a whole network of security operatives, ISO, ESO,

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I was amazed by the propensity of our government to deny responsibility for the tragedy in Kanungu
”
Godber W. Tumushabe, Uganda

DMI, Police Special Branch, Cadres, etc. What do these fellows do if a tragedy like the Kanungu one can happen before our own eyes for this long. Do the gentlemen working for these organisations deserve to be paid by the Ugandan tax payer? In functioning democracies, the Minister of Internal Affairs would resign at such a tragedy and of course, Mayanja-Nkangi would be asked to resign for those irresponsible utterances.

Godber W. Tumushabe, Uganda

The problem is not one of belief or religion but rather one of education and information. The unfortunate people who died in this horrible manner were not weak or feeble-minded, they were simply used and misled by a mass murderer and sociopath. All religions have a myth of 'the last days'. For the unfortunate souls in Uganda, the prophecy of doom proved true.

Conall Bullock, United Kingdom

To believe that it is possible to make a moral judgement upon the legitimacy of an organisation is ridiculous. Taken to its logical extreme Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism and any other religion would be outlawed. There is already provision for dangerous individuals or groups, these are the routes to be followed, not knee-jerk reactions to what the followers believed to be genuine (and for all we know maybe they are) religious communities.

Mark Whitehouse, Birmingham, Britain

COMMENTS: The crimes of murder and aiding and abetting suicide are already illegal. Other than that, no, religious and political thought should never be banned. It runs the risk of the Government of the day banning anything that appears to threaten its perceived control over the people. Also, these reports of the misdemeanours of various cults are coming from all over the World. If we banned them here, it still wouldn't help Uganda.

Fiona, UK

What happened in my mother country is horrible, totally inhuman especially as it was carried out by the so-called "GOD" fearing people. The world should take it as a lesson so that it's not repeated again anywhere. Also the government is to be blamed for its' poor administration and planning. These cults are many in Uganda and are untouchable because politicians fear to lose votes. Lastly Ugandans (Africans) should stop worshipping foreign gods, it is high time we renewed our heritage. May our ancestors comfort the victims.

Evelyn Lutalo, Uganda

“
What happened in my mother country is horrible, totally inhuman especially as it was carried out by the so-called "GOD" fearing people
”
Evelyn Lutalo, Uganda

How about banning all religious groups, cults and the

mainstream? At least the cultists tend to keep to themselves. Mainstream churches, on the other hand, have throughout history been responsible for the persecution and murder of millions of persons deemed to be non-believers.

Ben, Canada

Any sort of group can be described as a cult, depending on who is labelling it. The idea that someone should want to do this reflects the mentality of the person and the naivety of the followers. Does any group become a cult when a life has been taken, and if so then religion, sport, and work are all types of cults. The idea that a government can ban a cult depending on their definition of the group is a form of communism, but the need to incarcerate the leaders of extreme groups such as this is apparent.

Danial Beers, NZ

“ Any sort of group can be described as a cult, depending on who is labelling it ”

Danial Beers, NZ

I believe that people have the right to believe what they like. If this leads some of them to be deluded into believing nonsense put about by cults and/or religions, then so be it. If they're stupid enough to believe that some sort of suicide or mass-death will grant them admission to the next life, let them do it - people have a right to make a fool of themselves. The problem comes when they decide to start taking non-"believers" with them in the belief that they are on some kind of mission from 'God'.

Pete Morgan-Lucas, UK

I do not believe Governments should have the right to ban anything - even for the perceived good of the people. Human beings are theoretically blessed with choice and do not need to be 'nannied' by the state. If some people are silly enough to be led into a destructive cult which claims their life - tough, it is their own fault. If governments want to help they should aid the unbiased transmittal of information about various subjects so that the tax paying populace is better informed with regards to making a decision.

Derrek, UK

As usual those people who firmly believe in there particular religion/cult think their way is the only way. So people like Trevor Dodds think early indoctrination is the answer, as long as all children are indoctrinated with his beliefs. Cults should not be banned but any organisation that is not a registered company should be available for investigation, and that includes established religions, charities and recreational groups.

Graeme, England

I was taught a long time ago:- "Anything good is hard to join and easy to leave" whereas "Anything bad is easy to join and hard to leave"

Peter Dennis, UK

Attempting to ban cults can too easily turn into repression by the state of basic human rights. However I think that a profile of potentially dangerous groups should be drawn up, and such groups should be monitored by the secret services so that any crime can be prevented in advance.

Miland Joshi, UK

It would be very difficult to ban cults until there's an official definition of a cult. However any form of guru worship can be incredibly destructive. Many cult members throughout the world are wealthy intelligent professional people who often succeed in destroying the lives of their families and loved ones, simply because their guru is the only one that matters in their lives. It's self-brainwashing, and it's very dangerous.

Ray Marsh, Australia

“ Many cult members throughout the world are wealthy intelligent professional people who often succeed in destroying the lives of their families and loved ones ”

Ray Marsh, Australia

I seem to remember an historical precedent from about 2000 years ago which has relevance to this debate. As I remember, it had something to do with a carpenter's son with some radical points of view who the authorities of the day decried as a subversive. His followers were persecuted and executed as members of a dangerous sect. I think that we should be careful about rushing to implement irresponsible laws in the name of protecting people from themselves.

Anton Zimmermann, UK

Surely we cannot even come close of suggesting that cult groups have fully fledged rights. These individuals are irrational they don't have the right to die this way. Issues about religious beliefs are intangible, powerful and at times very misleading.

Mandlenkosi, South Africa

“ Surely we cannot even come close of suggesting that cult groups have fully fledged rights ”

Mandlenkosi, South Africa

Cults should not be banned but regulated by requiring them to post their complete financial statements for the government and the public to scrutinise. All religions were cults at one time but many religions are becoming like cults again in their desire for money. All cults seem to be driven by greed. The more paranoid and apocalyptic they are the more they extort money from their faithful causing a vicious circle of dependence and fear. Freedom to all religions should not free them from a responsibility to society, therefore they should pay taxes as do individuals and corporations

Don Landry, USA

Ban cults? Then what...the Girl Scouts? People have a choice to join these and any other religious organisations/cults.

Wilson, North America

I dare say that Christianity, Islam, Judaism etc. all started off as small religious cults; they didn't become vast worldwide faiths overnight! On this basis, any talk of banning cults must surely include these great religions! I rest my case...

Ed Bayley, USA (English)

If one observes the trend established by previous news coverage of cult-related massacres, it would be rather objective to point out that they occurred in trouble-torn countries. Religion (and cults for that matter, since we could all agree that at one point in history all religions were considered by those in power to be cults) is society's way of coming to terms with life. One creates ideals and lives by them, calling them

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The members of these cults must, at a certain point in their lives, have failed to find solace in whatever ideals they lived by
”
Laetitia, Kenya

religion. The members of these cults must, at a certain point in their lives, have failed to find solace in whatever ideals they lived by; failed to find an explanation for the problems or challenges that they encountered. And so they turned to someone who led them to invest so much trust in his promises that they must have been convinced. Finding no meaning in their previous lifestyles, they chose to follow him. This is how cults are formed. This is how religions are formed. This is a process that is almost impossible to ban.

Laetitia, Kenya

The problem is not "to ban or not to ban" cults. The problem is the underdeveloped countries being crucified by the IMF and The World Bank with brutal interest rates and concomitant debt payments and creating squalor and hopelessness in their wake. Obscurantist, religious cults breed in such circumstances and are products of profoundly sick societies. The solution is to radically change the world politically, socially and economically to the advantage of all the people. Only when that is accomplished will Domsday cults lose their appeal to suffering humanity.

Jay Maerker, USA

I think what happened in Uganda is a dreadful thing. Jesus' Ten Commandments are rules of love, peace and justice. If you say that you adhere to these rules, how can you be able to kill so many people? And besides: if you believe in God, how can you be so scared of future to want your life to come to an end?

Marco Sartori, Italy

Firstly, in my opinion all religious organisation is a cult of a

nature. In an ideal, scientific, fact-based world all religion should be banned. However, we do not live in an ideal world, and if we start banning "religions" are we not just telling people how to think, and run their lives? Then what separates us from the cults? Don't get me wrong, I'm not supporting them, just their right to exist. Cults are 100% malicious, evil, self-serving centres for hate, oppression, and prejudice. But so is the Catholic Church, Islam, and all the rest.

Rachelle Garcia, USA (formerly UK)

The Cult is a very horrible belief. The Lord Jesus Christ never asks for anyone to kill themselves or others. He is a God of love. Yes the Cult should be banned.

Yvette Velez, USA

The tragedy that took place in Uganda, and is still unfolding, is a very good reason for banning these so-called cults. These doomsday prophets are not only a danger to themselves but to other innocent beings.

Pamodou Gassama, The Gambia

Where does religion cross the line and become a 'cult'? I would be as bold as to say that a cult is any organisation that creates such dependency upon its own people and structure, and therefore takes away from that most fundamental of elements - faith. They restrict freedom of thought and movement, but most

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Where does religion cross the line and become a 'cult'?
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Peter Nicholls, UK

disturbing of all they don't have love. I don't know if you can ban cults (some pop groups and even political parties in a very real way do become 'cults'), but we can show love and compassion to those caught up in such deception. Pray unceasingly for these people.

Peter Nicholls, UK

Be it a cult or religion, every faith based organisation is supposed to advance humanity to a new level of progress, spiritually as well as materially. If it fails in this responsibility, it has no reason for existing. In the case of cults that fool people to commit mass suicide, it is absolutely necessary for human decency to ban them.

Nvasekie N. Konneh, USA

It is a disgrace to humanity if people can hide behind religion and lead others to die in such a manner as is evidenced in the recent case in Uganda. Whether it is banned or not, there will exist, in one way or the other, some form of cults. Therefore, people must be careful in accepting everything they are told as the gospel truth. With a little bit of carefulness, such death traps could be avoided.

Augustine Kwakye-Agyekum, South Africa

Firstly, exactly who is it that we would be trusting to ban these 'cults' - the UK state, for example, is officially tied to a 'religion' as full of irrational and archaic beliefs as any 'cult'. Should we trust one 'cult' to regulate another? The best remedy against any form of superstition is surely to attempt to foster a climate of open questioning and scepticism. No religion should be banned, but all forms of questioning those religions (including what the Christians call blasphemy) should not only be allowed, but also noisily practised by anyone who wants to further the interests of truth and humanity.

Richard Pull, UK

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It is a disgrace to humanity if people can hide behind religion and lead others to die in such a manner.
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Augustine
Kwakye-Agyekum,
South Africa

Cults should be completely banned. These sorts of beliefs, which go in the shade of freedom of worship, should certainly be looked into for the sake of preserving human life. It is the prerogative of GOD to let you live or take you away and any other human being with such devilish minds like the one which happened in Uganda. I wish all the leaders of Religious groups to disclaim such things.

Jummane Mwinshe, Tanzania

Absolutely yes, they should be banned, especially those that think along the lines of The Restoration of the Ten Commandment. In the first place they are not restoring the Ten commandments because they have already violated one of them, "Thou Shall not Kill". These people are now bloodthirsty and when they are done with their members they will turn to the general public. Those children never understood anything about their religion.

Mabvuto Nkangala, Malawi

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Those children never understood anything about their religion.
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Mabvuto Nkangala,
Malawi

In South Africa there are many fringe religions which come and go and merge into each other and break away again. Logistically they could not be monitored, let alone controlled. They do encourage their adherents to switch off their brains,

Deborah Hubbard, South Africa

A human being is the highest form of God's creation. God gives life and only God has the right to take it away. Exaggerated concepts of freedom and rights mainly from the West, including the right to live or die as one chooses, pose the greatest danger to God's kingdom on this planet. African countries should steer clear of extremist views of freedom and rights as often

propagated by the West.

Frank Kintu, Uganda

Cults are a form of belief just like religions. Christianity has swept the world by storm, no-one ever said its evil, millions and millions of people joined it, no-one ever said it was brainwashing people. Before the missionaries came into my country (Botswana) to introduce Christianity, Our Great-great great parents believed in ancestry. It was their belief, then they were told Ancestral beliefs were wrong and started preaching to them about Jesus Christ. Christianity was introduced to them. If you think of it, if at all missionaries did not brainwash our Great parents, there wouldn't have been a thing about Christianity in Africa.

Malebogo, Australia

“ Christianity has swept the world by storm, no-one ever said it's evil.

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Malebogo, Australia

If a cult offers human sacrifices, it is from the devil and certainly should be banned. "Freedom of Religion" is a RIGHT so long as they are not devil worshipers and offer human sacrifices. There is a difference in salvation and a cult or a religion. Christ came to save those who are lost and HE lives in our hearts. We need to spread the word more about Christ and the plan of salvation.

Doris Shields, USA

It would be truly wise if people before writing about cults etc., would look up the correct meaning of the word. A "cult" is a religion or faith that is led by a human leader. Often, Jehovah's Witnesses are branded as such whereas they have no human leader. Their leader is Jehovah's anointed King, Christ Jesus and no other. It is always wise to be sure of all the facts before considering any religion a sect or a cult.

Anthony Shelton, United Kingdom

I agree with one of your previous writers that what we see with the mass suicide is just part of the theory of evolution. The stronger of the species will always survive with the weaker members becoming victims of cults, etc. While I feel some sympathy for these people especially the children who were innocent unknowing victims.

Rubin Naidu, Canada

“ The stronger of the species will always survive with the weaker members becoming victims of cults.

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Rubin Naidu, Canada

Cults should not be banned under any circumstances. Instead they should be studied very carefully since they offer a window into our primitive nature which is much clearer and broader than any other effort to understand the pure forces and yearnings of

the human psyche.

The cults offer an unconstrained experiment which cannot be devised any other way. We should not allow the impurities of culture interfere with fundamental interactions among human beings in their basic pursuit of kinship and existence.

Loukas Loukopoulos, USA

And who has the right to decide what is and what is not a cult? It would be ridiculous to even attempt to define the criteria.

This suggestion is akin to the Chinese methods of subjugating any organisation that is not approved by the government.

As far as being a potential menace to society, then it is not simply religion that should be targeted. What about the Labour,

Conservative and LibDem parties? Should we ban those? Wake up people!

Try to ban cannabis or prostitution and what happens? You still have the problem but it is driven underground. What an inane idea.

Paul Boswell, UK

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Try to ban cannabis or prostitution and what happens? You still have the problem but it is driven underground.

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Paul Boswell, UK

As a Ugandan I was pushed off balance on hearing the news from home. I couldn't believe that such a thing would happen to my country men. I guess the main remedy is to educate people and try to uproot any related signs associated with this tragic incident.

People should be vigilant in pointing out any suspicious activities going on in their neighbourhood to the nearest authorities. This should not apply to Ugandans only but also other countries of the world. While we enjoy freedom of worship, the freedom MUST not be abused by individuals to satisfy their selfish motives.

Amos kezironi, Ugandan in USA

Yes yes yes. Cults by definition are a deviation from regular social behaviour and has caused more grievance than good.

Pradeep, USA

Could it be possible that the Ugandan authority had a hand in this horrendous "murder?" Given past and present problems the government have/is encountering with these so called religious fanatics, could it be possible that they wanted to stem this "cults" from growing into another thorn on the side of the government? We have seen how the NRM government deals with this kind of threats in the past. Why did the government get rid of valuable forensic evidence before any proper investigation conducted?

Aliker, UK

In our society today, we must practice human rights. Cults should not be banned nor should they be fully blamed for

misleading the people. It is up to the people to decide for themselves whether a particular cult is practising the correct form of worship or belief. As such, it is the responsibility of the various religions in the world to enforce and stress on their teachings, so that the people would not be likely to be misled by corrupted teachings.

Chee Kin, Singapore

“ It is up to the people to decide for themselves whether a particular cult is practising the correct form of worship or belief. ”

Chee Kin, Singapore

Cults should be banned. In Uganda we didn't have such problems during Idi Amin Dada's regime because he had regulated the practise of various religions allowing only three - Islam, Protestants and Catholics. I think this should be the way forward. Look at the Tabliq sect for instance which is always prone to violence on other people. We never used to have such, during the "good old days" of Idi Amin ***Kasadhakawo, Belgium but of Ugandan origin***

Cults: should they be banned? Well, as I am informed; believing in Christ once was considered a menacing cult and the believer was treated accordingly. So beware...

Ron Brandenburg, The Netherlands

It would be a serious breach of civil rights to ban these cults (although when has that really stopped the government from doing anything in the past?) Apart from that, what was Christianity at it's conception but a cult? Cults are only described as such because they are small. In actual fact nearly all organised religions employ some form of brain washing, whether it be infant baptism or merely the parents enforcing their beliefs on their children.

Trevor Blayney, N. Ireland

“ Nearly all organised religions employ some form of brain washing. ”

Trevor Blayney, N. Ireland

All religions are cults, except some have been widely accepted in the course of time. If possible, all religions should be discarded. We don't have to search far and wide what all religions do, amputating arms, an eye for an eye, keeping people ignorant and unthinking for themselves.

G. Weldenegodwad, Ethiopia

Cults recruit from the most vulnerable members of society and cannot be ignored. Many cults do not preach peace and have the potential to harm themselves and others. Remember Waco? The Branch Davidians had enough weapons to arm a small army!

Greg Evans, Wales, UK

Members of the cult groups are insecure people. They can be led

by half-truths because their own knowledge-base is limited. There are lots of such groups existing in today's society. It is obviously a difficult matter to establish criteria for banning such groups. However, many of these groups are violating existing laws.

A very good example are the groups who claim to be able to heal all sorts of disorders (especially psychological ones) with highly suspicious means without slightest qualifications. Why don't the governments take actions against them?

Tridiv, Germany/India

Cults should be banned, because they're a danger to society and the public.

Godfreyson, Uganda

Cults can only exist with the co-operation of its members/devotees, whatever you choose to call them. If an individual takes the decision to participate in these types of mass suicides, then the cult no longer exists.

This is of course at the cost of the cult members lives, but we have to take responsibility for our actions. It's not as if they don't know what the result will be.

Rod Mansell, England, UK

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Cults can only exist with the co-operation of its members/devotees.
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Rod Mansell, England

The difference between a cult and a main stream religion is just a matter of perspective. Cults tend to have many more activists in its rank than mainstream religions. But many mainstream believers are fundamentalist enough to maim and kill those who disagree with them just as in Rwanda and Burundi both predominantly catholic countries or Northern Ireland where the issue of sect is a strong one.

Many identify cults as being secretive organisations which form closed communes. But Catholicism forms closed communes of Nuns and monks and priests.

Mark, Germany

Cults can be a danger, this is irrefutable. Jesus said "in the last days false prophets would be prevalent, misleading many.

Whether these prophets preach commerce, racism, exploitation of humans or the planet they are all degrading this society.

Education; focus on the essentials is fundamental in avoiding manipulation by cults. Fortunately we have choice. Governments can't ban our freedoms.

E.C., Canada

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