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Advocates for Awareness of Watchtower Abuses

Press Release - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Watchtower Victim's Memorial Day July 26 – A day to remember and to end shunning

June 24, 2014

As Jehovah's Witnesses continue their convention series in various cities, members of Advocates for Awareness of Watchtower Abuses (AAWA), and their supporters will be commemorating "Watchtower Victims Memorial Day." This international day of recognition will take place on July 26, 2014.

"Watchtower Victims Memorial Day" is being organized to draw attention to the continued interference in family relationships by Watchtower Society teachings and to mark and celebrate survival and freedom for the victims, most who are or were Jehovah's Witnesses.

Many people who have had their families taken from them will take this opportunity to remember and to call for a change to Jehovah's Witnesses' shunning policies that undermine private family relationships – a human right given to all.

One of the organizers of this event, Bo Juel Jensen, was molested by a Jehovah's Witness elder for over four years beginning when he was just 5 years old. He was later shunned by his own Jehovah's Witness family for speaking out and identifying his abuser.

This is how Bo describes his personal experience as a Watchtower victim:

"It is inhumane to be shut off from having contact with my family. I have not hugged my daughter since she was nine years old. She is now 23. She now has her own child, my grandson, who I have never seen or held. The abuse and interference with families by Jehovah's Witnesses policies has to stop.

"I have made a short video as a message both as hope for others, but also so that my

family has a chance to know that I care. I hope people will watch my video and think about the undue influence religious groups have over normal family contact, especially Jehovah's Witnesses who continue to protect abusers and block families from having loving relationships."

Bo's video makes a powerful statement that reflects not only his own pain, but also the impact on other families who get entangled with high control groups. See it for yourself on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pO4M8mUSgDc>

A Message from AAWA

"We hope people will take the opportunity on this day to reflect on the families they have lost. We also hope that the families who are choosing to shun a member of their family because of what Jehovah's Witnesses leadership dictates will recognize the damage this does to themselves and the person being rejected.

"In June, the UK Charity Commission announced that it has opened a statutory inquiry into the policies and procedures of the UK arm of Jehovah's Witnesses. This is just the start of what many people hope will be an uncovering of what really happens inside this high control group known as Jehovah's Witnesses." - Lee Marsh, President of AAWA

Bo Juel is just one of dozens of former Jehovah's Witnesses promoting "Watchtower Victims Memorial Day." A memorial web page with thoughtful, heartfelt comments has been created and is now live and accessible by the public on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/WatchtowerVictimsMemorialDay?fref=ts>

Several peaceful events are planned to take place globally on July 26, 2014, as a remembrance for those individuals and families who have suffered due to their association with Jehovah's Witnesses.

It will be a day when personal and individual **freedoms** will be celebrated – *freedom of thought, freedom to love, and freedom to speak out*. The Watchtower organization denies Jehovah's Witnesses all of those basic rights.

NOTES FOR EDITORS:

Bo Juel's "Watchtower Victim's Memorial Day" video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pO4M8mUSgDc>

The UK Charity Commission's Statement on the opening of statutory inquiries:

<http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/news/charity-commission-investigates-jehovahs-witnesses-charities/>

Background: Why 2014?

Jehovah's Witnesses are a religious group that formed in the late 19th Century. Their initial beliefs were invented by founder Charles Taze Russell and later changed and added to by his successor, Joseph Franklin Rutherford. The group has always been focused on their millenarian teachings. Since 1874, the Watchtower's leaders have announced and predicted various dates that would herald the "end of the world," including 1914.

One recent Watchtower prediction was that the year 1975 would be the beginning of "the end of this system of things." Shortly after the failure of their "1975" expectations, thousands of Jehovah's Witnesses abandoned the group, disappointed that the Watchtower had misled them. Instead of miraculously entering into a promised "paradise on earth" where they would celebrate the death of most of the world's population, 1975 turned out to be a fairly normal year.

Because 2014 marks the centennial of their most famous failed prediction about what would happen in 1914, this year has become a significant anniversary for Jehovah's Witnesses who continue to hope "the end" will finally come during their lifetimes.

More about child molestation

Jehovah's Witnesses have a policy about child abuse that is out of line with child protection policies in most countries and USA states. There are numerous documented cases of Jehovah's Witnesses being convicted of child molestation and several recent cases are still going through the court process. Survivors are not being protected by the Watchtower Society's "two witness policy. While local congregations neither offer or provide any significant assistance to victims or their families, child molesters and spousal abusers are protected by Jehovah's Witness elders if they imagine that the "accused" have exhibited some level of "repentance" and promise to cease their sinful acts. Actual reporting by elders of these kinds of crimes is very rare and only after getting permission to do so from Watchtower headquarters.

Details about the still pending Candace Conti child abuse lawsuit:

<http://jwsurvey.org/cedars-blog/candace-conti-speaks-out-at-rna-2013-conference>

SNAP – Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests: A statement about JW policies on child abuse

"I can't recall ever seeing a policy anywhere that is more predator-friendly and self-serving than the Watchtower's 'two witnesses' rule. On its face, it is dangerous and callous. If any crime is likely to have no witnesses, it is child sexual abuse. If the law enforcement community adopted this rule only a handful of child predators would be charged, convicted and imprisoned every year." – David Clohessy [[more...](#)]

Recent Press Comments

The following article provides quotes from independent humanitarian organizations:

UK Independent Newspaper – <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/jehovahs-witness-abuse-victims-quizzed-by-their-attacker-at-church-9421040.html>

"This shows a complete lack of understanding of the impact of sexual abuse on a victim and of how a perpetrator might behave. It shows a complete disregard for any kind of child

protection or safeguarding policies.” - Fay Maxted, chief executive of the Survivors’ Trust

“This process is akin to what the witness goes through in court but it is worse because it has a spiritual dimension to it. Victims need trained people to support them in these situations.” - Peter Saunders, National Association for People Abused in Childhood

More Information Links:

- [Shunning Policy Explained](#)
- [Child Molestation Information](#)
- [Domestic Abuse](#)
- [Anti-education](#)
- [Refusal of Blood Transfusions](#)

Advocates for Awareness of Watchtower Abuses (AAWA)

Background: AAWA is a religiously neutral organization, a not-for-profit corporation with 260 volunteers from over twenty countries committed to objectively and respectfully raise awareness and to help victims of abusive Watchtower (Jehovah’s Witnesses) policies.

[AAWA.co](#) is the official website of **Advocates for Awareness of Watchtower Abuses**, a legally incorporated educational organization. While its members and volunteers have their own opinions, they do not proselytize their personal religious or secular beliefs while representing AAWA.

AAWA’s founders include men and women living in five countries on three continents. All AAWA officers and board members have declared their commitment to presenting responsible and well-informed reporting focused on five of the Watchtower Society’s harmful policies. [[AAWA Mission Statement](#)]

AAWA also freely offers support for those who are struggling mentally and emotionally as a result of their leaving the Watchtower – an organization that many experts consider an “unethical mind-controlling religion” that has established and maintained undue influence over its members. URL: <http://aawa.co>

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