

To the attention of ZDF editorial team

Concerning the video documentary called "**In den Fängen des Gurus: Kulte, Sekten, gefährliche Gemeinschaften**", made by Marcus Thoess and published on 24 January, available on YouTube [here](#) and on ZDF site [here](#), we would like to point out that this material includes **false information and ungrounded allegations about MISA**, and that it does not comply with **the deontological requirements of professional journalism**. And most importantly **MISA Yoga School does not even exist in Germany!** As we have already explained, the yoga schools belonging to Atman International Federation teach yoga following the same curriculum, which was initially developed many years ago by yoga teacher Gregorian Bivolaru, the co-founder of MISA; however, this does not mean that all the schools of Atman Federation are "branches" of MISA. They are independent schools, established according to each country's legal requirements, with independent organization and administration.

Already in the past we had a similar bad experience with an extended interview given by Gregorian Bivolaru to Markus Thoess, interview which was heavily truncated and distorted in a material broadcasted on N-TV in July 2017. Apparently, misinterpretation and distortion of facts is not an isolated incident, but a habit of Mr. Thoess.

We have received from him several questions to which we provided detailed answers, and also additional information to support our position, expecting that this time Mr. Thoess would not blindly maintain his preconceived ideas, but he would be interested in finding out the truth. However, he failed to mention any of the valid arguments included in our reply, he only mentioned that we denied some allegations. And this probably only to prevent a legal action, since now he can prove he "quoted" us.

With respect to the obsessive use of derogatory label "*sect*" or "*cult*" in connection with MISA, we inform you that a well-known Swedish expert in sects, Karl-Erik Nylund, made in 2005 a [report](#) at the request of the Supreme Court of Sweden and concluded that MISA is not a sect, but "*a movement supporting a different way of life, alternative therapies, displaying strong Gnostic syncretism features*". This report was one of the key pieces of evidence in the trial in which the Supreme Court denied the extradition of Gregorian Bivolaru to Romania and granted him political asylum, considering that he cannot have a fair trial in his country, due to his spiritual beliefs.

The allegations made against MISA and Gregorian Bivolaru in this video are based solely on the story of an ex-student of the German yoga school, who made some vague complaints, without explaining why she had a "*difficult time*" when she was a yoga student and what exactly prevents her from living a normal life after she left the school. Please note that she mentioned no obstacle to leave the school when she wanted (!). Note also that **there are thousands of students** who attended yoga classes (at MISA or other Atman schools) and at one point decided to quit, but they do not complain about "*difficult times*". Which should lead to the logical conclusion that the problem is not the school.

How come that the unsupported allegations of one person (who by the way admits she is "*feelling lost*" and "*not really functional*") are credible and reliable, while the testimonies of tens of thousands of past or present yoga students are not? Why should someone wrongly accused have to prove they are innocent, while the person making false allegations does not have to prove anything? Who made Mr. Thoess the "judge" of who is right and who is wrong? With how many current or former yoga students did he talk before making allegations that people joining so-called "*sects*" suffer from "*mental illnesses*", "*psychosocial stress*" etc? What gives him the right to insult, denigrate and even demonize our yoga school and yoga students? What is the difference between a journalistic investigation and sharing gossips and calumnies?

We would be interested in getting answers to the questions above. Meanwhile, we ask you to either remove the respective video material, or make public as well our position on the matter. We remain at your disposal for further information.

MISA Press Office

26 January 2024