



Atheist Freethinkers
PRESS RELEASE
For immediate release

Atheist Freethinkers will plead its case for Bill 21

Montreal, 8th December 2020 – *Atheist Freethinkers* (LPA-AFT), an association which promotes secularism and supports the rights of atheists, will plead its case before Quebec Superior Court, presided by Justice Marc-André Blanchard, during the week of December 14th. The organization is intervening in the case Hak versus Attorney-General of Quebec as friend of the court and in support of *An Act respecting the laicity of the State* (Bill 21). LPA-AFT will be represented by Maîtres Samuel Bachand and Marc-André Nadon of the firm PFD Avocats.

Atheist Freethinkers' arguments will be centred on the primacy of freedom of conscience which precedes freedom of religion (the freedom to believe in the existence of supernatural phenomena) and which encompasses both freedom of religion and freedom from religion. LPA-AFT will also argue the important distinction between freedom of belief and the right to express that belief in civic space, that is to say, in State institutions.

As atheists, we welcome the objective, expressed through Bill 21, to end certain religious privileges. Indeed, to allow civil servants and schoolteachers to indulge in ideological displays while on the job, simply because their ideology is religious, constitutes an unjustifiable privilege for religions. The consequences of this privilege are (1) an infringement on the freedom of conscience of users of social services and students in public schools, by exposing them to passive proselytism and indoctrination which these partisan religious manifestations exemplify; and (2) discrimination against atheists and other non-believers in their relations with the State. It is therefore imperative that State representatives refrain from wearing religious symbols, thus putting an end to this discriminatory privilege.

Although atheism is completely different from religions – which are founded on baseless beliefs, while atheism is simply the refusal to accept such gratuitous hypotheses – we, *Atheist Freethinkers*, willingly accept that the duty of restraint, codified in Bill 21 for religious symbols, be extended to symbols of atheism. Civil servants and teachers must not flaunt their personal convictions on the job, whether those convictions be religious or political. It is a matter of professional ethics. All that we ask of religious believers is that they behave with the same *savoir-vivre* as we do.

– 30 –

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