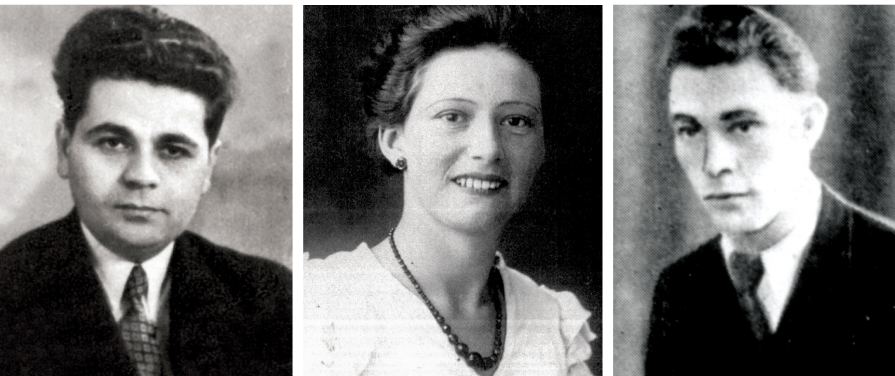


# Jehovah's Witnesses and Political Neutrality



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# Jehovah's Witnesses and Political Neutrality

**“Be obedient to governments  
and authorities.”**

*—Titus 3:1*

## RESPECT FOR THE AUTHORITIES

Jehovah's Witnesses believe that it is their responsibility before God to respect and cooperate with the authorities. They follow the Scriptural direction to “be obedient to governments and authorities.” (Titus 3:1) Officials worldwide recognize the Witnesses as peaceful, honest, and law-abiding citizens who conscientiously pay their taxes and fulfill their civil obligations.

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**Jehovah's Witnesses are  
politically neutral and thus  
remain united all over the world**

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## POLITICAL NEUTRALITY

Jehovah's Witnesses recognize the challenges government officials face in trying to ensure the well-being of their citizens. The Witnesses do not take part in separatist movements, violent protests, civil unrest, political campaigns, or lobbying. They maintain strict neutrality in political affairs. They pose no threat to the authority of any government or to public security. This is in harmony with the example and teachings of Jesus Christ, who did not get involved in political disputes.



The Witnesses apply the Bible command to “beat their swords into plowshares” and not to “learn war anymore.” (Isaiah 2:4) They are grateful that the vast majority of governments have implemented international standards in providing alternative civilian service (ACS) programs in lieu of military service. Officials responsible for ACS programs in many countries agree that Jehovah's Witnesses have exceeded their expectations in performing civilian service and making a meaningful contribution to society.

Jehovah's Witnesses respect national emblems and the governments they represent. Because they believe that sacred devotion belongs to God alone, they respectfully abstain from participation in patriotic ceremonies. However, they do not discourage others from sharing in such observances. The Witnesses appreciate having the freedom to live according to their Bible-trained conscience, just as they respect the rights of others to have their own beliefs.



## EFFECTS OF POLITICAL NEUTRALITY

Jehovah's Witnesses are politically neutral and thus remain united around the world. They follow the Bible's command to "love your neighbor as yourself." (Matthew 22:39) This principle has helped people to overcome ethnic hatred and political animosity and to live peacefully.

- During the 1994 genocide of the Tutsi in Rwanda, Jehovah's Witnesses did not take part in the violence and killing. At great risk to their own lives, Witnesses sheltered fellow believers and others, regardless of their ethnic origin. Recognizing them as a group that refused to harm others, Professor J. J. Carney called Jehovah's Witnesses "a Christian community that truly lived up to its name during the horror of 1994."
- A 2001 report produced by the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine discussed the Witnesses' political position, stating that Jehovah's Witnesses are "law-abiding citizens." The report concluded that the beliefs and practices of Jehovah's Witnesses do not "undermine the security and integrity of any state."

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- "The conduct of Jehovah's Witnesses in the [concentration] camps and prisons embodies virtues that are as essential today as they were in the past . . . Given the increasing brutality against foreigners and against political or ideological dissenters, these virtues are a must for every citizen of our country."—German parliament member Steffen Reiche, 1999
- On May 10, 2019, at a ceremony in honor of those who were persecuted by Nazis and Fascists, Maria Fausta Maternini, full professor of Comparative Law of Religions, University of Trieste, stated: "Today, as in years past, the ongoing mission of Jehovah's Witnesses contributes actively to the dissemination of values that are a prerequisite for peaceful and harmonious coexistence."

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**Jehovah's Witnesses "are the most honest and the most punctual taxpayers in the Federal Republic [of Germany]"**

—*Münchener Merkur*

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May 1945: Gusen Concentration Camp. Witness survivors shortly after their release. Jehovah's Witnesses were imprisoned for their refusal to enlist in military service. Designated by a purple triangle, any Witness could have been released with a signature denouncing his or her faith





Aaron Mankhamba and Hastings Mtambalika, the children of Jehovah's Witnesses in Malawi. Khombe Primary School respected students' freedom of religion and recognized the rights of Jehovah's Witnesses to be exempt from singing the national anthem

## LEGAL PROVISIONS

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR):

- Article 18.1 “Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.”

The following international and regional human rights instruments outline similar provisions:

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 18
- The American Convention on Human Rights, Article 12
- The European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), Article 9
- The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, Article 8
- The ASEAN Human Rights Declaration, Article 22

## BIBLE PRINCIPLES

“You must love your neighbor as yourself.”

—**Matthew 22:39**

Make “supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving . . . concerning all sorts of men, concerning kings and all those who are in high positions, so that we may go on leading a calm and quiet life with complete godly devotion and seriousness.”

—**1 Timothy 2:1, 2**