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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

UPDATED RELEASE

Angry demonstrators picketed the Church of Scientology's headquarters in Los Angeles today charging the church with fraud, misrepresentation, failure to pay refunds as promised and harassment.

Spokesperson for the group, Davina Rubin, said, "We thought it was time that the public know how Scientology operates. They promote that your fees will be promptly refunded if you are dissatisfied, and that is a lie. It can take four months or more to get your money. Some people were forced to wait over a year."

The Church of Scientology, which charges fees ranging from a few hundred dollars to \$12,000.00 for a single course and from \$500 per hour to over \$1100.00 per hour for their counselling (called "auditing"), encourages people to contribute in advance for services by increasing the price of services 5% each month. The money remains on account for the person, but earns no interest, Ms. Rubin said.

"The majority of our marchers are just seeking repayments of money they have on account and do not intend to use," said Rubin. "This is not a small matter. We represent over 150 people waiting for their refunds totalling over \$1-1/2 MILLION." Each marcher carried a list of names for whom they marched in proxy.

There was a similar protest last Sunday at the Church's European headquarters in East Grinstead, Sussex, England. Approximately 60 protestors marched through the city and to the church quarters known as Saint Hill Manor. They were decrying church forced disconnections that cause families to break up, church harassment tactics, and failure to make repayments.

The english marchers claimed that bailiffs (court appointed collection agents) have been sent to Saint Hill to collect delinquent repayment orders.

Ms. Rubin passed out copies of the procedure one must follow to get a refund. "Here is what you must do," she said. "You must appear in person, and follow a complicated checklist. You must prepare at least six separate documents, get appointments with, and be interviewed by, seven different officials of the church, have certain documents notarized, make a complete duplicate set of all documents, put them in two separate packages, agree that the Church retain 12% of your money as an 'administrative fee', and then mail one of the packages to a review board in Clearwater, Florida. Just doing the checklist takes days. Once the packages are mailed, the waiting begins. And, if a portion is incorrectly filled out, is illegible or is missing, the whole package is returned for the error to be corrected. Then you are put at the end of the line again."

"I certainly wasn't told about that when I was signed up," she said. "I wasn't told I'd have to sign statements waiving all my rights, and that I would be publicly expelled and humiliated, that I would be declared an enemy of the Church. I wasn't told that if I have family and friends still in the Church, that they will be forced to disconnect from me.

If you are employed by a church member, she said, chances are you will lose your job.

"The Church will stop at nothing to pressure you to drop your claim. Claimants have been visited late at night by teams of 'handlers' who attempt to talk them into dropping their claims. If you have hired an attorney, they will tell you that your attorney is no good and blame the church's failure to repay on the lawyer. Of course, nothing could be more ridiculous. We know dozens of people with unpaid claims months and months old who are not using an attorney at all."

"They will even persuade your family and friends to call and pressure you. Recently the Church has resorted to using private investigators to harass individuals. They visit your neighbors, follow you about and otherwise annoy you. I wasn't told about all that!"

Ms. Rubin referred to a Church policy called "FAIR GAME" wherein Scientologists are permitted, and even encouraged, to commit "acts" against Church "enemies" (called Suppressive Persons or SP's) without fear of discipline from the Church. "The Church says that 'FAIR GAME' is no longer in effect, but here is a recent issue where they reinstate it." Indeed, among all the Scientology slang was the statement that no Scientologist could be disciplined by for any acts against so-called "Suppressive Persons" unless the offender breaks the law. (Requesting a refund, according to Church policy, makes one a Suppressive Person.) "You would be surprised by the things they can dream up to do." said Ms Rubin. "Perhaps, on the other hand, you wouldn't be surprised."

One marcher, wearing a cloth hood to conceal her identity declined to answer questions posed to her by reporters. She did hand out a statement which in part read, "if the Church were to learn my name, they would force members of my family who are still in the Church to disconnect from me. They would force my friends who are still in the Church to disconnect. I believe I have the right to demand a return of fees for services I did not receive without fearing condemnation in the community and public denunciation by the Church. And it would be this way if I needed the money for an operation or whatever. The names I carry are for John Does and Jane Does who share my fears. A church that engenders this kind of fear in the community is no church by any definition I know."

Some of the marchers are represented by Glendale attorneys Eberle & Jordan. Both Mr. Jordan and Mr. Eberle were present today "Just as legal advisors to those of our clients who have decided to participate in the march," Jordan said. He says their firm represents 140 clients with claims against the Church in excess of one million dollars, world-wide.

"We certainly are not happy with the Church's performance in settling these claims, and with the harassment of our clients. In fact, today we filed suits on behalf of 9 plaintiffs in Los Angeles Superior Court against the Church of Scientology and its affiliated organizations for failure to make repayments of unused funds on account, fraud, misrepresentation and punitive damages. We will be filing additional suits based on Church attempts to interfere with our contractual relationships with our clients, and harassment.

"We had nothing to do with organizing the demonstration, although the Church is accusing us of it. In fact, they have launched a particularly vicious attack, blaming us for their failure to make proper repayments. In fact, they just want us out of the way because we keep statistics on the refunds. They certainly don't want the public or press to know about the hundreds of refund requests. And they don't want their failures to make payments known."

"We are here because our clients are outraged and they asked us to attend. We have also advised them in the proper procedures for conducting such a protest," Jordan said.

"I've never been a Scientologist," said Eberle. "and frankly, I am shocked at what I've seen. I find it unconscionable for a church to portray itself as benign and well-intentioned on the one hand, and advocate policies such as 'disconnection' and 'fair-game' on the other. Something here just doesn't add up. I am not opposed to Scientology as a religion. I'm opposed to anyone doing this kind of thing." he said.

"Moreover," he continued, "it is not as if the Church does not have the money. According to their recent publications and statements to the press, the Church cash reserves are at an all-time high. They have just completed a \$400,000 remodeling of the ball room of the Church headquarters in Clearwater and recently spent \$3.3 million in oil investments. If that is true, why do they torture these claimants this way?"

Asked about the future litigation, neither Jordan nor Eberle were willing to comment, except to say that current suits are, "Just the tip of the iceberg."