12. March 13, 1710. Letter from Johannes Witsen, a mayor of the city of Amsterdam, to Nicolas de Vicq as representative of the States General in recommendation of the request of the Mennonite Committee for intercession for their fellow believers in Bern, concerning which the writer has referred the petitioners to the States General.

[recto]

To Mr. Nicolas de Vicq,[[1]](#footnote-1) a magistrate of Amsterdam and a representative of the Province of Holland and West Friesland in the Assembly of the High and Mighty Lords of the States General of the United Netherlands in The Hague.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Copy March 13, 1710.

Worthy, right honorable Sir,

Some delegates of the Mennonite congregations in this country have advised us, how they were informed, through many letters and certain reports, that their fellow believers in Switzerland, especially those in the Canton of Bern, are currently being oppressed by very severe persecution relating to the practice of their religion; so much so that a great number of persons, men as well as women, are locked up in various prisons, who are being threatened with (besides lesser punishments) banishment to the galleys and even with death itself. This persecution and these harsh procedures are derived from the assumptions reported by the Lords of Bern in their edict dated February 20, 22, 25 and 27, 1695, and reduced by them to three main points, namely, that they supposedly do not recognize the office of government to be of and with God, and in addition that they refuse to attest to the usual allegiance with an oath and to defend the country with weapons in time of distress.

Whereupon we humbly request, considering our favorable opinion, that the state would allow us to ask for its support of the efforts which the aforesaid congregations, from brotherly duty and compassion for their fellow believers, try to achieve by their favorable intercession with those in Bern. [There should be] not only a reprieve from the threatened execution of the aforesaid edict, but they also might hope for further merciful treatment.

In response to this address and request, worthy, right honorable Sir, we are not at all disinclined to help promote the aforesaid intercession of the state, inasmuch as lies in us, and, having judged that the shortest and most prompt way to this purpose would be for the Committee members from the aforesaid congregations to address themselves directly to the High and Mighty Lords [of the States General]. To this purpose we therefore are providing them with our recommendation to you noble and right honorable Sirs as well.

They will then attempt to have the honor to hand this over to you, noble, right honorable Sir, and also to present a copy of the edict mentioned above in the Dutch language, together with a short analysis made up by them for the purpose of respectful defense.

[verso]

Hoping that you, right honorable sir, willing to check out some of the matters, may be extensively informed concerning that of which their oppressed fellow believers are being accused in that edict.

It would please us greatly if you, noble Sir, should be so kind as to employ your good services, by promoting the requested interest of the aforesaid delegates, as soon as this case will be dealt with in [the assembly of] the States General by using most favorable and convincing terms. Waiting for a favorable outcome in due time, and in the hope of a good result, we remain,

Worthy, right honorable Sir,

your worthy, right honorable Sir’s

good friends,

Mayors and Governors

of the city of Amsterdam,

signed in their name:

Johannes Witsen.

Letter of the Mayors of Amsterdam

to Mr. de Vicq in The Hague,

dated March 13, 1710.

1. 12 See Document 24 note. For a fascinating narrative of what was going on behind the scenes of the Mennonite intervention with government officials see Gulik DB (1909), pp.129-132, 137-145, 149. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. This address was moved here in the translation from the lower left corner of the recto. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)