



GA1

Issue 1

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Forum: GA1
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Introduction

Throughout history and currently, religious minorities have continuously experienced mistreatment and threats in conflict zones including targeted violence, ethnic cleansing, forced displacement and aggressions. The personal beliefs of an individual have frequently been used as justification towards these actions further perpetuating inequality and discrimination. Furthermore a large fraction of past and current conflicts being caused or further heated by religious differences and conflicting perspectives of personal beliefs. This can make those who express themselves with the religion of the opposition a scapegoat or a target to threats mentioned above. Furthermore it can lead to irrational or unethical actions taken from the offense during a war on innocent uninvolved individuals and to mistreat the opposition or even commit war crimes. It is extremely important to protect religious minorities during outbreak of war or any conflict in order to maintain peace, equality and to prevent xenophobia. This research report will further explain the key information, terms and events surrounding this issue.

Key Terms

Ethnic cleansing

the widespread murder or deportation of local members of one ethnic or religious group by local members of another.

Persecution

animosity and mistreatment, particularly based on political views, sexual orientation, religion, or ethnicity

Genocide

the intentional murder of many members of a specific nation or ethnic group in order to eliminate that country or group.

Refugee

An individual who has been compelled to leave their nation due to natural disasters, war, or persecution

Apostasy

The rejection or surrender of a political or religious concept or principle

Blasphemy Laws

Blasphemy, which is the act of insulting or displaying disdain or lack of respect for a deity, sacred objects, or something deemed sacred or inviolable, is prohibited by blasphemy laws.

Extremism

the possession of intense religious or political beliefs; fanaticism

Sectarian Violence

Violent conflicts between various religious or sectarian groups are referred to as sectarian violence, and they are frequently sparked by enduring political, social, and historical tensions. Usually, this kind of violence takes the shape of riots, assaults, or armed conflicts.

Christian/Islam/Judeo-phobia

The fear or hatred of religions mentioned above. A phobia of religion can apply to any religion

General Overview

Whilst the religious minority discriminated against depends on the conflict in question, some religious minorities have been more persecuted than others. For example since 1991 Jews have been the religious groups most victim of hatecrimes shown by FBI data. There are several current religious conflicts today which this report will focus on. It is important to note this is only a very small sample of all the current and past conflicts occurring. Furthermore it is important to note that when attempting to bring solutions to the issue in question to focus on religious persecution as a whole and not specifically a solution to one conflict.

Persecution of Uyghur Muslims in China –

The Uyghur Muslims are a group of muslims living in china particularly in the Xinjiang region. The government has enforced mass surveillance consisting of the “Strike Hard Campaign against Violent Terrorism” a “country protecting campaign” resulting in mass arresting and discrimination. Additionally the government has imposed internment camps where one million uyghur muslims have been imprisoned. Whilst Xinjiang is not a war zone or a conflict area between two opposing sides it represents conflict between a minority and their environment. The chinese government has repressed the religious expression of the Uyghur labelling it as extremism and have destroyed and disrespected mosques as well as oppressed and arrested religious leaders. The Chinese government has taken action to “reeducate” The Uyghur muslims through oppressive and forced action such as re education camps that consists of political indoctrination, forced labour and torturous methods. These actions have been justified by the Chinese government by labelling the associating the minority’s groups with terrorism. This case shows religious identity being used as a pretext to take control against a minority.

Persecution of Muslims in Myanmar-

The Rohingya people primarily occupy the Rakhine state in Myanmar and the majority follows islam. Whilst Myanmar does not follow an official religion the government recognizes buddhism as the most common faith expressed. Myanmar is officially a conflict zone with a war occurring since 2021 and a long history of hostility and issues. The rohingya genocide happened initially in October 2016 up to January 2017 before Myanmar was officially a conflict zone. However the persecution dates back to 1970 and is directly linked to buddhist nationalists making this situation a religious clash. The actions that the Burmese military took during the genocide have been advocated against by the UN who recognized the burning down of villages, rapes and violence against women and children and extrajudicial killings as human rights violations. Furthermore even after the mass killings a January 2018 report showed that , 18,000 Rohingya women and girls were victims of gang rapes and other forms of sexual assault, while at least 25,000 Rohingya were slaughtered by the military and the local Rakhine community. They calculated that 36,000 Rohingya were thrown into fires and 116,000 were assaulted or victims of violence. The Rohingya to this day experience religious oppression and violence and threats. The situation in Myanmar is a very complex one with a long history and many factors as well as consequences.

Persecution of Varied religions in Syria-

A very large of different religious groups are persecuted in Syria. During the Syrian Civil war in 2011 many religious minorities were affected up until down and faced persecution. This includes a variety of

christian minorities which experienced violence from jihadist groups such as kidnappings, forcing to convert and destruction of places of worship. Additionally many communities were displaced by force. Furthermore many muslim groups such as the Shia Muslims have experienced violence from extremists groups such as the Sunni. This also includes destruction of shrines and mosques and living areas.

Major Parties Involved

Open doors

An NGO working to protect christian minorities. Started by a Dutchman in 1955. Open doors has provided medical aid and food to Syria and Iraq during the ISIS crisis. They have also housed christians and worked towards repairing and building churches. They are currently working towards protecting christianity by releasing a World Watch list with a rank of the top most dangerous 50 countries for christians. They have advocated for christianity through smuggling bibles into North Korea and China. They work towards providing Christian religious documents where Christianity is repressed.

The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF)

USCIRF studies and tracks topics related to religious freedom around the world. The Commission has the authority to hold public hearings and go on fact-finding expeditions abroad.

Every year, the Commission on International Religious Freedom evaluates the facts and circumstances of religious freedom abuses around the world and makes policy recommendations to the U.S. government. Each year the government publishes a report focusing on areas of particular concern and monitors events happening. Sanctions on Chinese authorities involved in the Xinjiang Uyghur Muslim genocide were recommended in part by USCIRF. Officials connected to forced labor camps were subject to asset freezes and travel restrictions by the United States. USCIRF also helped to push sanctions against Myanmar leaders following the Rohingya genocide

Timeline of Key Events

1933- 1945 Holocaust. The genocide of six million Jews during WWII by Nazi Germany and its collaborators. This has greatly impacted the treatment of Jews in future years.

1981 - UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief- A declaration adopted by the UN to work against intolerance and discrimination

1992 - UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities- This declaration enforces that the states must protect minorities from discrimination and violence

1998 - U.S. International Religious Freedom Act- act in the United States passed to encourage more religious freedom

1994 - Rwandan Genocide- mass murder, violence and sexual violence occurring during the Rwandan Civil war by ethnic Hutu extremists

2001 - War in Afghanistan- mass murder of Hazaras and Christians by the Taliban as well as killings of Sikhs and Hindus by ISIS who were forced to wear yellow badges to identify themselves perpetuating their oppression

2008 - Genocide of Christians in Orissa, India- Christians were blamed for the assassination of a prominent Hindu leader leading to the largest Christian killings recorded in India and burning of churches as well as torture, forced conversions and sexual violence.

2011 - Syrian Civil War Begins- Different extremist groups targeting religious minorities within Syria such as Christians, Shia Muslims, Yazidis and Druze.

2014 - ISIS Genocide of Yazidis & Christians in Iraq- Happened mainly in Sinjar. Violence and abuse against Yazidis and forced conversions as well as killings of Christians. This led to the UN recognizing the violence and persecutions as genocide

2017 - Genocide Against Rohingya Declared by UN Investigators- When the UN investigators had officially declared that the persecution of the Rohingya by Myanmar was genocide. Significant as it challenged the concept of achieving justice for religious minorities but was done after the killings took place

2018 - International Religious Freedom Fund Launched- Established by the US and its allies, the freedom fund provides humanitarian aid for victims of religious oppression and shows the growing need for protecting religious minorities

2020 - U.S. Establishes the International Religious Freedom Alliance- Over 20 countries present in an alliance made to protect religious safety and freedom worldwide and to ensure collaboration in aiding the issue.

2022 - Ukraine War & Religious Freedom Violations- Russian invasion brought several factors of religious persecution with the Russian military persecuting the Protestant and Catholic minorities not aligning with the common Russian Orthodox beliefs. Reports show violence against citizens, burning down of places of worship and persecution of priests and religious figures.

UN Involvement and Other Treaties

- Resolution name, Date (Reso. number)
 - Official conference name, Date, City, Country
 - Treaty Title, Date (Treaty Number)
 - Secretary-General on environment and human settlements, 10 Aug. 1999, (A/RES/53/242)
 - United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Jun. 1992, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
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- Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide
 - Adopted by the general assembly resolution A/res/260(III) Approved and proposed for signature 9 December 1948 and entered into force 12 January 1951
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- The African Charter on Humans and people's ,rights
 - AHG/Res. 115 (XVI)
 - A treaty of the organization of African unity June 27 1981 in the 18th Assembly of Heads of State and Government in Nairobi, Kenya
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- Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities
 - Adopted by General Assembly resolution 47/135 of 18 December 1992
 - Un headquarters New York USA
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- Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence and violence againsts, persons based on religion or belief
 - Adopted By the Human rights council A/HRC/REC/16/18 12th April 2011
 - Un headquarters New York USA

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

From the UN

The 1992 resolution is the only official UN resolution focusing on minorities hence why it is so important. Furthermore many other UN resolutions impact the issue without directly addressing the protection of minorities in conflict areas such as the convention of the prevention of genocide. Furthermore the UN has made attempts at solving the issue through a variety of peacekeeping actions and missions. In 1944 the UN established a peacekeeping mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR), whilst this helped to implement the Arusha Accords (the peacekeeping agreement) the UN failed to prevent the genocide in 1994. Additionally the UN helped to protect christianity in areas such as Kosovo in 1999 up to now. This helped protect the Orthodox Christians following a war there. Further such missions included the protection of christians as well as other minorities in Sudan from 2005 up to 2011. This was done through implementing a peace agreement (comprehensive peace agreement). Furthermore the UN also aided christianity in Iraq between 2003 up to now by providing humanitarian support such as legal protection and assisting in safe displacement. This was also implemented for Shia Muslims in Iraq who were a small minority targeted by the ISIS. Additionally the UN provided aid to muslim groups in Mali in their stabilization mission between 2013 up to now and in their Interim force in Lebanon in 1978 up to now. There have been many many more missions to provide aid to many minorities but it is clear that this provides relief to the groups already impacted by the conflict and harm and does not

prevent the harm being taken. Furthermore in some cases like in Rwanda the UN had been unable to prevent harm or genocide at all.

The US government

The US government has taken a plethora of action to ease the issue. They have imposed sanctions on regimes for discriminating against religious minorities such as focusing on the collaborators of ISIS. It is important to note that the US government and political system is complex and has its own religious matters. The government does not always impose these sanctions and it is not clear that this is an action taken solely for protecting religious freedom. Furthermore they have established an office of international religious freedom and the US commission on international religious freedom which focuses on surveillance of religious discrimination and preparation of reports to remain updated on the situation.

The Global Coalition Against ISIS

This is an international alliance starting September 2014. The alliance includes NATO, The EU, the Arab League as well as over 75 countries. It has taken military actions against ISIS such as airstrikes in Syria as well as Iraq. Other such action includes training and providing weapons to Iraqi forces and Kurdish forces. They have also led the liberation of Iraq and Syria in 2017, more than 98% of the area once taken by ISIS had been returned. Furthermore they have worked on strengthening the safety of borders in conflict zones to prevent ISIS recruits from traveling in as well as monitored terrorism recruitment networks across many areas in Europe and Asia as well as the middle east. This collaboration has worked to provide humanitarian aid to minorities and aid in safe displacement as well as the rebuilding of cities destroyed by ISIS. It is important to acknowledge that ISIS has still caused threats and hostility in Iraq as well as Syria. Furthermore the alliance has not taken action against radicalization. Many ISIS soldiers are imprisoned in Syria and Iraq which many worry about bringing radicalization and extremism in the future.

Organization of Islamic Cooperation

The OIC is an organization of 60 Muslim countries and focuses on the Muslim religion and its freedom as well as solidarity and human rights. It was founded in 1969. They have worked to provide humanitarian aid and relief to various Muslim minorities taking focus in Palestine, Myanmar, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Sudan.

Community-led rebuilding projects:

Many of such projects took place such as the Yazidi rebuilding project in Iraq, The Christian peacebuilding in Nigeria with the Christian Association of Nigeria, The Rohingya rebuilding mission in Myanmar as well as Bangladesh and many others. These projects focusing on the rebuilding of houses and shelter as well as places of worship. They also focus on creating safety groups such as the Yazidi Survivors Network where victims can receive psychological support and assistance. This is a strategy for after such conflicts and tragedy's took place in order to provide relief but it fails to prevent religious persecution.

International Criminal Court (ICC) & National Prosecutions

Have provided accountability and justice in cases of persecution. Examples include their investigations into ISIS and the crimes against the Rohingya in order to hold the attackers accountable. This also includes national prosecutions such as after the Genocide in Rwanda.

However the ICC's jurisdiction is only limited to countries that have ratified the Rome Statute (the court's founding treaty) meaning many nations are outside its reach.

Possible Solutions

Peacekeeping treaties

There is currently only one UN resolution that targets religious minorities specifically. Therefore it is extremely important when attempting to tackle this issue to focus on bringing new approaches and agreements to create new laws against this problem. A possible solution would involve implementing peacekeeping treaties in existing conflict areas and enforcing them as well as providing surveillance or monitoring of the situations. This includes supporting the genocide convention and enforcing the laws of human rights.

Establishing regular humanitarian aid

Establishing humanitarian aid such as food and water, shelter and safe zones during war can help to provide relief to victims of persecution when the conflict is already present. It does not help to prevent religious persecution as a whole but it helps victims on a smaller scale. Possible options include systems for safe displacement of victims, initiating community building and rebuilding projects as well as missions to provide relief in areas that peacekeepers or other individuals may not reach due to complexities of the conflicts. Additionally providing cash assistance or assistance in economic programmes such as small loans or charity funds to ensure that communities are able to rebuild in a stable manner post conflict can be beneficial.

Educating against religious discrimination

It is very important that to prevent future persecution of minorities extremism and prejudice is reduced. Proper education about different religions and their equality as well as their rights can help to prevent extremism, prejudice and radicalization in the future and can help address this issue over generations. Options to do so include providing diversity in education around the world. This may be connected to charity work and humanitarian projects as not all nations have the manpower, resources or knowledge to teach and work on such concepts. Additionally it is important to note that such solutions have to be connected to laws advocating freedom of speech as not in all nations such educative programmes would even be legal. We must focus on bridging the divides between different religions to prevent persecution and scapegoating during outbreaks of war when human emotion is unstable and many rash actions are taken.

Providing religious freedom and options to prevent prejudice

Creating inclusive work places and advocating for a variety of religions within one community is important in preventing prejudice and establishing peace within what may be opposing religions or minorities. Additionally establishing and strengthening legal frameworks to protect religion, freedom of speech and other religious rights is beneficial in areas with frequent conflict occurring such as Iraq or Syria. Furthermore creating religious accommodations in such areas protected by the law and safe places of worship would create a possibility of shelter for minorities and prevent the brutal destructions of shrines, churches and mosques during outbreaks of war like history has seen.

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Appendix

- **About minorities and human rights OHCHR-** <https://www.ohchr.org/en/minorities/about-minorities-and-human-rights>
- Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities
https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocity-crimes/Doc.17_Declaration%20on%20the%20Rights%20of%20Persons%20Belonging%20to%20National%20or%20Ethnic.pdf
- Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide
https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocity-crimes/Doc.1_Convention%20on%20the%20Prevention%20and%20Punishment%20of%20the%20Crime%20of%20Genocide.pdf
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