

Forum: Social, Cultural and Humanitarian Committee (SOCHUM)

Issue # 1: Measures to ensure religious tolerance to be widespread

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Guiding Questions as you Read

- How does racial intolerance affect minorities?
- Among what groups can we see religious intolerance?
- Where is religious intolerance seen?
- How does religious intolerance lead to conflict?

Introduction



Conflict over religion has been around for millennia, and it shows no sign of it stopping. A two-year study of diversity by the Woolf Institute discovered that most people are tolerant to those of different ethnic or national backgrounds, but the “red line” for many people is religion. What does this mean in a broader sense? An approximate 22% of bias committed crimes are religious hate crimes according to the FBI, the highest proportion ever in their tracking history. Society has been experiencing religious discrimination for so long that it is now engraved subconsciously into our very system. This mainly stems from the fact that, unlike race or nationality, people can choose their religion, which may affect the way people react to religious prejudice.

Nearly 70 percent of the world's 6.8 billion people live in countries with high restrictions on **religion**, the brunt of which often falls on religious **minorities**, and the repercussions of this issue are seen in multiple ways. **Religious intolerance** is unfortunately considered such a major issue due to the large amount of **hate crimes** and threat to human life that stems from it. **Concentration camps**, similar to those that killed millions of Jews in World War 2, have started to re-emerge, only this time, Muslims are being targeted. The Xinjiang internment camps, located in China, have over 1.5 million Uyghur Muslims detained in “reeducation camps.” These groups of Muslims have reported being “detained, interrogated, and beaten” because of their religion.

Muslims are considered the most oppressed religious minority in our current day and age, not only on a global scale but also due to the prejudice of the average everyday person. The study by Woolf Institute mentioned previously found out that Muslims are the group that feels most at threat due to their background, and that 45% percent of Asians and Africa-Americans surveyed stated that they wouldn't want a close relative to marry a Muslim. This racial discrimination towards Muslims is extremely severe, but even Christians and protestants who aren't considered minorities were discovered to suffer similar oppression if they had a very strong faith.

Comprehension Question(s): What is religious intolerance?
How and why has this topic affected so many people
worldwide in the past?

Definition of Key Terms

Religion: the system in which one believes in and worships that of a superhuman controlling power

Minorities: an amount that is less than that of the whole number or picture

Religious intolerance: when a group or an individual refuses to tolerate the practice, of another person on that of the religious grounds

Hate Crimes: a crime, normally involving violence, that is motivated on the foundation of religion, race, or other ideals

Concentration camps: a place that deliberately imprisons large numbers of people, especially members of persecuted minorities, in a small area with terrible facilities. This is sometimes used to await mass executions or provide forced labor.

Discrimination: the action of unfair treatment to different categories of people or things (race, age, sex, religion)

Prosecution: the process of legal actions against someone because of a criminal charge

Stereotypes: a widely held, oversimplified, and blown out of proportion image/idea of a particular type of person or thing

Harassment: the action of aggressive pressure or intimidation on a person

Social Groups: the collection of people who share a sense of connection and interact with each other

Social hostilities: wars or conflicts that started because of intolerance and discrimination against the beliefs of others

Protesting: the action of expressing disapproval or an objection to something.

Current Situation



Around the world, there is **discrimination**, intolerance, and even crimes of hate against others because of their beliefs or religion. Religious intolerance happens because a religious or non-religious group does not want to tolerate the beliefs of the other, on religious grounds, and can even lead to **prosecution** for those beliefs. Society impacts this topic a lot because there are many **stereotypes** about religion in today's world. For example, masks can be seen as something used for robbers and or bad people in general, therefore every time a person sees a religion that covers their face, some will automatically assume that they are bad people because of that common stereotype.

Christians

Many religions experience religious intolerance, for example, Christian. According to a study done by Pew Research Center, recently this belief experienced more **harassment** than any other religion. It was reported that Christians were harassed in over 140 countries and that some are being beaten and killed for refusing to do something because of their beliefs.

Furthermore, Africa in the Middle East-North region received the highest number of countries where Christians were being mistreated (Harassment of religious groups continues to be reported in more than 90% of countries). In the research, they found that out of 20 countries, 19 had some report of harassment by governments or **social groups** targeting Christians. For example, the study showed that there was a case where a court denied the marriage application to an interfaith couple because one of them was Christian.

Other Religions

As with anything, it is not just one religion that suffers from religious intolerance. Other religious groups include but are not limited to Baha'is, Jews, Muslims, Scientologists, Sikhs, Rastafarians, and Zoroastrians who also suffer from intolerance to their religion (Harassment of religious groups). Practically every religion has in one way or another experienced religious intolerance in two times as many countries as they received **social hostilities**. However, there is some improvement over the years for some religions. Hindus were harassed in 19 countries, however, in the past, the number was 23 (Harassment of religious groups). Although the number is still high, it means that there is some improvement and people are responding to try and make it better.

Consequences and the Impact

Religious intolerance affects everyone and even the economy of a country. In one of the world's most growing economies, India still has a deep concern for religious intolerance considering Hindu nationalism (Kékesi and Kovács). Here the intolerance had a domino effect on the economy and eventually created an environment that is unappealing to foreign ideals and people. Overall, it was found that countries that had a good religious tolerance had a positive impact on their economic growth and the discrimination on religion in a business environment decreased the economic output of a country (Kékesi and Kovács). Therefore religious intolerance doesn't just affect that one group or religion, in reality, it affects the entire country.

Current Events

Even though most of the world is occupied with the current pandemic, religious intolerance didn't stop. Many groups were **protesting** because they felt that their religion had been unfairly restricted. In Brazil, hundreds of Christians protested so that the Supreme Court and other authorities would allow in-person services under Covid-19 restrictions (Presse).



Many governments have not allowed citizens to practice their religions in person, even if they take the necessary COVID precautions and so this resulted in the groups having to demand their religious freedom back.

Even taking COVID out of the equation, there is still a continuous heightened tension amongst religions. In Pakistan for instance, police fired tear gas at over one thousand people who were marching towards the French embassy (Anti-France protests). Another event that happened was on March 18 where it was reported that in the northeastern Sylhet division of Bangladesh, hundreds of extremist Islamic group supporters attacked and ruined about 80 houses of Hindus (12 tragic tales of the Hindus facing systematic persecution at the hands of the radical Islamists in Bangladesh). This brutal attack was started and planned because a young Hindu man criticized Mawlana Mufti Mamunul Haque on Social Media.

Comprehension Question(s): Why is religious tolerance such an important issue that needs to be addressed? How is religious tolerance affecting people today?

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

China

As mentioned previously, China has over 1.5 million Uyghur Muslims and other minorities trapped inside “education camps.” The Chinese say this educational and vocational training has helped in increasing job opportunities and combating poverty. They state that these camps have helped people coming from rural areas to start their own businesses through state support. Despite reports from people trapped inside, who have said they were cuffed, beaten, and interrogated, they state that accusations of forced labor are “fabricated by Western countries.” It’s reported that the Uyghur Muslims are used as unpaid workers in these education camps, which is a pleasant way to call a concentration camp. The concentration camps are a clear example of racial intolerance and showcase a lack of regard for human rights.

The United States

The United States is a country that is well known for portraying to its citizens an image of freedom, justice, and equality. After all, it’s the home of the “American Dream”. Throughout their history, from George Washington to Obama, the government has stated “that America historically has been a place of religious tolerance.” This works well on paper, but with the United States being such a diverse country, with 40% of its citizens being something other than caucasian, there is huge potential for clash of cultures, which is why despite the good intentions of the country as a whole, there is still a huge amount of hate crimes and religious intolerance in the country. This represents how the issue represents a more global stage: it is not the governments that need to change views, but the people. More than six-in-ten U.S. adults say that being Muslim hurts someone’s chances for advancement in American society. Apart from this, personal security is also compromised due to religion, since religious hate crimes take up the biggest percent of bias related crimes in the country. Apart from this, 82% of

Americans say they have witnessed discrimination towards muslims, which proves that it is the people who need to change.

Russia

Today, many people debate whether Russia can be considered a religiously free country, according to Krasikov, because the current religious situation is ambiguous and "abounds with paradoxes" according to the Kennan Institute. According to this institute, the Orthodox church has become the second most trusted organization in the country after the president, however, the church is losing its historical position of importance due to the decreasing percent of Russian population that associate with the church. This has also caused intolerance since many of the leaders of this church are trying to restrict the freedom of non-orthodox religious groups, and that the government is collaborating with them. In 1997, the Russian government, supported by this church, approved a law that significantly increased restrictions for non-native groups.



Myanmar

Like China, this is one of the few countries which actively persecute religious minorities. Hundreds of thousands of Rohingya, a Muslim ethnic minority group, have fled persecution in Myanmar's Rakhine State, fueling a historic migration crisis. For decades this group has suffered institutional racism in a Buddhist-majority country. In a 2017 census they weren't even considered, meaning they don't even consider them humans. The Myanmar government launched a military campaign in 2017 that forced seven hundred thousand Rohingya to flee. This campaign included incentivising racial discrimination by using mass paid advertisements in social media in order to make the general population hate the group. Certain human right groups also claim that the government organized a mass genocide, but officers deny these accusations. Myanmar states that all of this is done in order to reinstate "stability" in the region. Myanmar mounted brutal campaigns against Rohingya villages, killing at least 6700, and reports state that armed forces planted mines and shot fleeing civilians.

Israel

The Israel-Palestine conflict is a clear representation of how not only minorities can be the victims of religious intolerance, but also two groups with similar influence. This conflict started in the 1940's when there was unceasing violence between Jews and Muslims where Palestine and Israel are now. The United Nations proposed to split the land into what is now these two countries, but muslims weren't satisfied with this deal, considering it "colonial theft," since Israel kept what is considered for both to be holy land. This moved Palestine to invade Israel in 1947. Conflict has not stopped since, with military and non military force being used by both parties in order to keep hold of the Holy Land, and by doing so, further creating gaps between them and incentivising religious intolerance.

Yemen

Yemen is one of the many countries that is home to the conflict occurring between the Shia and the Sunni. These two groups are different branches of Islam, each one believing that someone else should've been the successor of Mohammed. Shias are the minority among these two groups, with them consisting of only 6.5 percent of all muslims

worldwide. These two groups have started something which is called "Sectarian Violence," which is a clash between two muslim groups. This conflict has been on the rise the past few years, being marked by violence and intolerance. This conflict between the two groups has caused Shia majority groups to have what is called a "middle eastern cold war" due to religious differences amongst other factors.

Ecosoc

In 1946 The Economic and Social Council from the UN (ECOSOC) helped plow the dirt for what is now the Commission on Human Rights. They helped identify discrimination against race, and ever since the first session they have been suggesting measures to be taken for the advocacy fighting "religious hostility as an incitement to violence." The UN stated that this matter was not one for them to try to pursue since it was made for theologians and philosophers. To solve this they merely appointed one of its members to submit proposals on the issue of discrimination stemming from religious rights and practices.

UN Involvement

The United Nations has created a document titled "Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief". This formal and explicit statement was proclaimed by the General Assembly on 25 November 1981. This document states and outlines that everyone should have the right to freedom of religion, conscience, and thought. These rights would also include the freedom of beliefs and choice whether that be individual or collective.

A resolution that the UN created the "Elimination of all forms of religious intolerance". This resolution is signed by many countries including but not limited to Brazil, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Spain, Thailand, and the United Kingdom. This resolution calls for all forms of religious intolerance to be eliminated and for the promotion of universal respect of human rights and freedoms of religion.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event	Effects:
-∞-∞	. It is important to note that conflicts arising from religion have been an ongoing problem since these originated.	This means that this issue is not once with a black and white solution or past.
600	Muslim Conquest of Egypt	One of early examples of religious conflict, where it was left under muslim rule
632-present	Shia-Suni Muslim Split	Muslims split into two groups, Suni and Chia after not agreeing on a successor of Muhammed. Conflict ongoing to this day
1096-1271	Crusades 1-7	Complex issue which basically revolved around christians wanting to retrieve holy land from muslims, as well as conflict with jews and pagans.
1540	Spanish Conquest of Inca empire	Incas stripped off religion and forced into Christianity
1478-1874	Spanish Inquisition	Movement by Catholic church and spain that tortured and killed jews and
1939		

		muslims
	World War 2	
1940		Terrible war in which had Nazy Germany created concentration camps for jews and other groups of people. Saw a big portion of jews killed.
	Israel-Palestine Conflict	The United Nations established Israel, a nation under control of Jews in Palestine in the late 1940s, conflict still today
1997		This is supported by the Church
	Russia Increase restrictions on Non-orthodox religions	
2017		Mllions of this muslim group have been forced to leave the country
	Myanmar Rohingya persecution	

Past International Action

Online Movements for Myanmar

Every since the Rohingya muslim persecution started in 2014, online movements and activists have become enraged with the situation due to the fact that it's a severe breach of the 1981 human right declaration of the UN that calls for religious freedom for all. Since individually we are not able to combat the government, activists have used

social media to gather groups of people to fund donations as well as bring awareness to the issue as a whole in the hopes of having the UN or other major parties get involved.

Possible Solutions

Religious Intolerance is of great importance, especially because so many people suffer from it daily. Since it's such a broad topic and can be disguised in so many ways, there are several possible solutions. For instance, schools invest in a mandatory class where children learn about the different beliefs and practices of other religions. Whether it is a common religion such as Christianity and Muslims or a not as known religion such as Yezidi. This way children are brought up in a world where they learn to accept that there are different religions and not everyone must believe in the same thing.

Many people aren't learning to accept others even if they have different beliefs to them. Children are growing up in a world where if someone doesn't think the same way as them then that person or group must be the one in the wrong. Therefore, this issue needs to be solved, by breaking down that ideology.

Another possible solution would be for multi-religious events to be promoted and created. Before the events, it would be important for the reason of holding the event to be clearly stated (Multi-Faith Events). The guidelines of the event would also be stated however, they would exclude any activities that interfere with a distinctive belief of a person and their religion.

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)

This issue can be connected to the SDG of reduced inequalities. This SDG ensures that no one is left behind in order to achieve goals as a united society. This issue acts as a barrier between religious and social groups, disintivating cooperation and fueling concern. Inequalities deepen the vulnerability of certain minority groups within countries with weaker health systems, and in this case, those facing humanitarian crises. A fair and equitable system should be widespread in order to make sure that inequalities amongst social, racial or cultural groups and therefore everyone can have fair

opportunities to thrive.

Another SDG that the issue can be connected to would be Partnership for the Goals. This SDG has the purpose of increasing international cooperation and governmental partnerships on a global scale in order to achieve a common goal. This also includes the involvement of the general public and private-public sector partnerships. Since this issue of religious intolerance is one that affects not one country, but most, if not all around the world, it is essential that governments collide and form treaties and regulations that allow for the issue to be minimized. They can also attempt to involve the masses in order to create stronger sentiments of cooperation on a global scale.

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Useful Links for Research

I. Country profile:

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

- Here you can research and find facts specific to your country. This will help you understand your countries views, population, and how their economy is

II. Religious Tolerance Description:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious_tolerance

- Do not use this as a source, but this can help you understand the topic better and begin your research into what your country thinks about it

III. Harassment of Religious Groups

<https://www.pewforum.org/2020/11/10/harassment-of-religious-groups-continues-to-be-reported-in-more-than-90-of-countries/>

- This website can show you how religious tolerance affects not just one religion, but many. See if one of the religions mentioned here is practiced in your country. Then you can research further into that religion and your country

Tips:

- When starting off your research, first find any UN sources. This way you know that the information you are getting is a good source. The quickest way to know if it is a UN website is that the URL should say "un.org" or the header of the website should have the UN logo and say United Nations.
- When researching for your country, make sure that the source you are using is credible. To do this you should ask these questions:
 - Who is the author of the source? Research a little more to see if the author is credible.
 - When was the source published? If the source is too old, then the information might be outdated.
 - Is there a work Cited page? If the source includes statistics and or concrete facts that the author doesn't already have, then check to see if the article or website has a work cited page.

- Remember that Plagiarism is taken very seriously in PANAMUN, so make sure and record down everything you use in your research. This will also help in the debate if another delegate questions where you got your information, you can easily send them the link or tell them where.