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Global Violations of Freedom of Religion or Belief



Cumberland Lodge Briefing

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Author: Kat Eghdhamian



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Founded in 1947, Cumberland Lodge in Windsor Great Park is home to an educational charity with the vision of more peaceful, tolerant and inclusive societies.

We offer a 'safe' space for unsafe conversations, tackling the causes and effects of social divisions by challenging silo thinking and equipping and inspiring people to engage in constructive dialogue.

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- Inter-disciplinary conferences, lectures and seminars, with leading figures from public life
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Cumberland Lodge is celebrating its 70th anniversary as an educational foundation in 2017. Find out more about its history and heritage at: cumberlandlodge.ac.uk/timeline.

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introduction

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. This right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship, and observance.

Article 18, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

No country in the world has a perfect record on freedom of religion or belief, because it is a complex and, often, ambiguous and contested human right. Violations of freedom of religion or belief can take a variety of forms – at one end of the spectrum there is persecution, intimidation, and violence, but there are also violations relating to access to public services and civic life. Thus, what constitutes a violation of the right, and what is understood to be a legitimate limit to freedom of religion or belief, is an increasingly contested area of debate.

This briefing offers a cursory overview of global violations of freedom of religion or belief, including whether there are legitimate limitations to the right in practice. As violations and violators of freedom of religion or belief are diverse, responses to them must also take into account the particularities of each context.



What constitutes a violation of the right, and what is understood to be a legitimate limit to freedom of religion or belief, is an increasingly contested area of debate.

violations and violators

Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

Article 18.3, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

The right to freedom of religion or belief is a fundamental and wide-ranging belief. It has both internal and external dimensions. The terms “belief” and “religion” include the right to hold any religious or nonreligious (including atheistic and agnostic) belief. The freedom to have a belief includes the right to change one’s religion or belief, as well as to practice and manifest it. Protecting this right extends to communities as well as individuals and, in principle, covers a range of activities related to worship, assembly, expression, and other customs, rites, rituals and practices - individually or collectively, in public and private.

In addition to the actions of governments (through restrictive legislations, regulations and control), violations of freedom of religion or belief can also be committed by non-state actors, including religious organisations and terrorist groups. Given the breadth of violators, responses to violations must also be varied and cognisant of context. The international legal regime has been built to some extent to clarify and document when violations take place but the way in which violators are held accountable often takes place at the local, national, and regional level. Scholars, public policy makers, advocates, and other stakeholders, can work in synergy to ensure that the case for freedom of religion or belief around the world and in varying contexts is upheld (Hertzke 2012).

There are a number of global challenges to safeguarding the right to freedom of religion or belief, and often there is conflict with/around other rights. It is necessary to know how and when to balance different human rights. Understanding the intricacies of specific human rights is also important. For instance, the right to manifest one’s religion or belief is narrower than the right to hold a religion or belief. According to the United Nations Human Rights Committee (see General Comment no.22), the right to have or to adopt a religion or belief is absolute and unconditional. It is the *manifesting* of one’s religion or belief that can be limited. This is particularly the case when expressing a religion or belief threatens public safety or impacts the fundamental rights and freedoms of others. That is, when it comes into relation with other human rights. This raises an important point: that there can be instances where freedom of religion or belief can be legitimately limited.

limits to freedom of religion or belief

Understandings of, and approaches to, legitimate limitations to freedom of religion or belief are varied and contested. Although lengthy, the following interpretation of limitations permitted by Article 18 offered by the UN Human Rights Committee (UNHRC, General Comment no. 22) is worthy of regular review and reflection:

Article 18.3 permits restrictions on the freedom to manifest religion or belief only if limitations are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health or morals, or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others. The freedom from coercion to have or to adopt a religion or belief and the liberty of parents and guardians to ensure religious and moral education cannot be restricted. In interpreting the scope of permissible limitation clauses, States parties should proceed from the need to protect the rights guaranteed under the Covenant, including the right to equality and non-discrimination on all grounds specified in articles 2, 3 and 26. Limitations imposed must be established by law and must not be applied in a manner that would vitiate the rights guaranteed in article 18. The Committee observes that paragraph 3 of article 18 is to be strictly interpreted: restrictions are not allowed on grounds not specified there, even if they would be allowed as restrictions to other rights protected in the Covenant, such as national security. Limitations may be applied only for those purposes for which they were prescribed and must be directly related and proportionate to the specific need on which they are predicated. Restrictions may not be imposed for discriminatory purposes or applied in a discriminatory manner. The Committee observes that the concept of morals derives from many social, philosophical and religious traditions; consequently, limitations on the freedom to manifest a religion or belief for the purpose of protecting morals must be based on principles not deriving exclusively from a single tradition. Persons already subject to certain legitimate constraints, such as prisoners, continue to enjoy their rights to manifest their religion or belief to the fullest extent compatible with the specific nature of the constraint. States parties' reports should provide information on the full scope and effects of limitations under article 18.3, both as a matter of law and of their application in specific circumstances.

It is clear that in order for limitations to freedom of religion or belief to be legitimate, they must meet certain legal standards and cannot be applied without qualification. In addition to these delineated standards in international law, Ahdar and Leigh (2005) have identified a number of common limiting strategies to religious liberty. Most of these specifically focus on the type of belief and the impact of manifesting that belief. For instance, whether the action is other-regarding or self-regarding; whether it is religiously compelled or religiously motivated; and the extent to which the belief is core or peripheral to an individual.

Finally, it is important to note that when a violation takes place, there is a need to substantiate claims of violations in order to move them beyond mere allegations. In addition to challenges with evidence gathering, the ability to distinguish religious issues from ethnic or national ones can further complicate understandings of violations of freedom of religion or belief in different contexts.

Consider a profound paradox of our age: at the very time that the value of religious freedom is becoming manifest, the international consensus behind it is weakening, assaulted by authoritarian regimes, attacked by theocratic movements, violated by aggressive secular policies, and undermined by growing elite hostility or ignorance.

Allen H. Hertzke (2012)

Countries all around the world — from differing social, political, cultural and religious systems — face or perpetrate violations to freedom of religion or belief. Violations may include, but are not limited to: threats of imprisonment, fines, or death on the basis of religion; armed conflict based on religious objectives; damage to religious property or obstacles to the acquisition of property for certain religious groups; the use of incentives or force to make someone abandon their belief or to convert; giving special privileges to certain religious people over others; restrictions to education (including the employment of educators, and the curriculum) based on religion.

To further illustrate the range of violations of freedom of religion or belief, it may be useful to understand them in the context of the broad spectrum of restrictions. For instance, high degrees of religious restrictions may include the banning of all independent religious practice in North Korea; the repression of minority faiths through inflexible applications of Sharia law in Iran; and the repression of Tibetan Buddhists and the killing of Falun Gong practitioners in China. Less overt and violent violations may include, for example, restricting the legal status of religious groups or refusing to grant any status to particular religious groups; outlawing the publication of certain religious materials; discriminating against employees on the basis of religious affiliation (such as restrictions on certain forms of headdress in the workplace); anti-conversion and apostasy laws in some countries; or other forms of state-sanctioned repression.

It is impossible to provide an exhaustive and conclusive account of violations of freedom of religion or belief around the world, as they have been and remain diverse and far-reaching. However, the following case studies offer a glimpse into the range and diversity of violations of freedom of religion or belief as they pertain to the individual and the collective, in both the private and public dimensions of the freedom, and as perpetrated by both state and non-state actors.

conversion and apostasy laws

The right to change one's religion or belief — whether by renouncing or converting to another religion or belief — is a core aspect of freedom of religion or belief and is enshrined in the UDHR, the International Covenant on Civil or Political Rights (ICCPR) and the 1981 UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief. Yet, many countries continue to limit conversion, for example by passing and implementing conversion laws that disadvantage certain groups over others. Some countries fail to take measures to investigate and, where necessary, to prosecute violators or to compensate victims when forced conversions or punishment of converters takes place.

According to the Pew Research Center (2015), 20% of countries impose limits on conversion and 26% of countries have recorded incidents of hostility over conversions from one religion to another. Of that 26%, 16% have witnessed incidents of hostility over conversions that included physical violence. Muslim-majority countries where Islamic law is applied often exhibit the highest degrees of limitations. In general, because converting from Islam to another religion is considered an act of apostasy. As a result, when the 1981 Declaration was being drafted, the right to convert was highly scrutinised and resisted by Islamic countries, particularly where it is deemed to be an unqualified right. This led to references to the right to change one's religion being removed from the text of the preamble and Article 1, consequently weakening the text of the 1981 Declaration. In order to safeguard the right to change one's religion or belief, Article 8 stipulates that '[n]othing in the present Declaration shall be construed as restricting or derogating from any right defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenants on Human Rights'.

In Malaysia, the case of Lina Joy (formerly, Azalina Jailani) gives insight into how arduous it can be to convert under Malaysian law.¹ In 1998, Joy applied to have her conversion from Islam to Christianity legally recognised by the Malaysian government in order to marry her Christian fiancé. In 2007, the Malaysian Federal Court rejected her appeal. According to Article 160 of the Malaysian constitution, the definition of a Malay (the majority ethnic group in Malaysia) is 'a person who professes the religion of Islam, habitually speaks the Malay language, conforms to Malay custom'.² Although freedom of religion or belief is enshrined in Article 11 of the Federal Constitution of Malaysia, certain key clauses restrict and limit this freedom. For example, state and federal governments have the power according to the constitution to 'control or restrict the propagation of any religious doctrine or belief among persons professing the religion of Islam' (US State Department 2013). Furthermore, conversion is a crime in several states of Malaysia, punishable by a fine or even imprisonment. In some states, a rehabilitation procedure is also enforced.³

This case, which is one of many, illustrates how contentious the right to change one's religion or belief can be in practice. Indeed, when the UDHR, the ICCPR and the 1981 Declaration were being drafted, it was this right that raised the most objections.

¹ For more on Lina Joy's case, see Perlez, 'Once Muslim, Now Christian and Caught in the Courts', *New York Times* (2006). Available at <<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/24/world/asia/24malaysia.html>> [Accessed May 2017].

² See Federal Constitution of Malaysia (2010). Available at <[http://www.agc.gov.my/agcportal/uploads/files/Publications/FC/Federal%20Consti%20\(BI%20text\).pdf](http://www.agc.gov.my/agcportal/uploads/files/Publications/FC/Federal%20Consti%20(BI%20text).pdf)> [Accessed May 2017].

³ For more on conversion and apostasy laws in Malaysia, see Woo, J. (2011) 'Apostasy in Malaysia: A Hidden View'. Available at <<http://www.newmandala.org/apostasy-in-malaysia-the-hidden-view/>> [Accessed May 2017].

disclosure of religion

Requiring people to disclose religious affiliations or beliefs can be a subtle and complex violation of freedom of religion or belief. In some cases, requiring individuals or groups to reveal their religion or belief in a state document has been used to further destructive agendas. In Nazi Germany, the national identity card (*Kennkarte*) was instrumental in mobilising mass identifications of Jews. Before Jews were required to wear a yellow ‘Star of David’ badge, their identity cards and passports were marked with a ‘J-stamp’. In Rwanda, the Belgian colonial government helped to define what it meant to be ‘Rwandan’ by using the designations ‘Tutsi’ or ‘Hutu’ on identity cards. It can be argued that, had these identity cards not included ethnic and religious identities, neither of these genocides would have been facilitated with the degree of ease, speed, or magnitude with which they were perpetrated. Including individual and group classifications based on religion on national identity cards does not, of course, always lead to genocide, but it can be a means of applying discriminatory restrictions in other ways. For instance, Iran currently issues special stamps for Christians, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan classify non-Muslims as foreigners, and Syria issues stamps for Jews (IDLO 2016: 29).⁴

The question of whether or not it is a violation of one’s freedom of religion or belief to be required to disclose a belief or affiliation can be further explored in the context of Turkey. In the case of *Sinan Işık v. Turkey*, the European Court of Human Rights clarified and reasserted that freedom of religion (as per Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights) has a negative aspect. That is, everyone has the right *not* to manifest one’s religion or belief. In 2004, Mr. Işık (a Turkish national) applied to have his entry under the category ‘religion’ on his national identity card changed from ‘Islam’ to ‘Alevi’. Two separate courts dismissed his complaints, with the reasoning that the Alevi are a sub-group of Islam and that the entry on his card was therefore correct. By 2006, the Turkish Government was allowing individuals to leave the ‘religion’ category on their identity card blank. However, in 2005, the European Court of Human Rights had ruled that the violation of freedom of religion or belief in such a context was not merely due to the lack of flexibility over what could be entered on the card, but the very existence of the category for religion requiring individuals to declare their religion or belief. Finally, in January 2016, the classification ‘religion’ was removed from Turkish national identity cards.

This case is interesting for a number of reasons. First, it reiterated that freedom of religion or belief has both positive and negative dimensions. Second, the Court found that there was no need for religion to be included on an identity document by drawing on the concept of *laïcité* (*laiklik* in Turkish). It ruled that, as a secular state, Turkey was in breach of its neutrality and impartiality on matters of religion by requiring individuals to disclose their religion or belief and by making assessments of the religion or belief of applicants (in this case, by deciding that the Alevi are a sub-group of Islam).

While it can be argued that being asked to disclose one’s religion or belief on an identity card is one of the less egregious violations of freedom of religion or belief, its potential impact must not be understated or underestimated. As mentioned above, the requirement can lead to more severe consequences as a form of religious profiling. In one report, the United Nations has highlighted how religious profiling can be used as a means to conduct ‘questioning, searches and other law enforcement investigative procedures’ that will, in essence, be used to track religious or ethnic minorities (IDLO 2016: 29).

⁴ As of 2013, nine countries included a religious classification on national identity cards (IDLO 2016: 29).

destruction of religious property

Vandalism, destruction, and removal of religious property are increasingly common forms of violation to freedom of religion or belief globally. To date, many discussions and reports on violations of freedom of religion or belief and matters of property rights have focused largely on the right to purchase or dispose of property. This has been of particular concern for women in relation to marriage and inheritance laws that are informed by religious doctrines. However, it should be remembered that the right to manifest one's religion or belief has both an individual and a collective dimension. It is a wide-ranging right, including the right to have and maintain places for religious worship and the right to openly display religious symbols (see General Comment no. 22).

In 2013, a campaign to demolish crosses and churches began in the Chinese province of Zhejiang and spread to nearby areas. More than 2000 crosses and churches had been destroyed by 2016. In 2015, new government directives stipulated a number of restrictions on religious properties, including the banning of crosses on steeples, and limits to the height and colour of buildings (ACN International 2017). In a 2016 report, Human Rights Watch found that at least 100 Christians were briefly detained for resisting the demolition of churches and at least one church leader, Huang Yizi, was convicted of 'gathering crowds to disturb social order' and given a year-long jail sentence for speaking out against the new directives. In many cases, Christians flocked to churches in order to protect the buildings, which often led to confrontations with the police, including incidents where some were beaten by police officers (Chan 2016). According to Kolodner (1994: 465), there had been a lot of antipathy towards religion in China even before the rise of Communism, and religious freedom had tended to be viewed as an individual right, subordinate to the rights of the collective.

This case, like many others, highlights how sensitive and malleable the relationship between religion and state powers can be in practice. Even where religion is explicitly separated from the state, legislation and state practices can still result in violations of freedom of religion or belief. As a further illustration, in the United States of America, some Muslim communities have faced legal obstacles and social hostility when trying to lease or purchase property for the purpose of constructing a mosque or a religious school. While some restrictions have been justified by reference to matters such as traffic or property values, there is increasing evidence that fears about Islam, Sharia law, and the perceived link to terrorism often lie behind attitudes and responses to the proposed construction of mosques (IDLO 2016: 23). In 2011, 30 US states reported anti-mosque incidents (Ibid.).

denial of education

Violations of freedom of religion or belief also come in the form of state regulations aimed at the curtailment or control of cultural, economic, and social developments of a religious group. Although some forms of state regulation appear to be non-discriminatory, others seek to regulate religion in clearly discriminatory ways. For instance, in 18% of countries, religious doctrine must be submitted for approval before it can be registered (see US Department of State 2015). Another way in which the development of religious communities can be regulated or restricted is by denying access to education solely on the basis of religious identity and affiliation.

In Iran, the government not only prohibits members of the Baha'i Faith from officially assembling or maintaining administrative institutions, it also specifically restricts their access to education. Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, Baha'is have been systematically persecuted as a matter of government policy. Article 13 of the Iranian Constitution states there are only three recognised religious minorities (Zoroastrian, Jewish and Christian Iranians). In a 1991 secret memorandum prepared by the Supreme Revolutionary Cultural Council, the Iranian government outlined its official position on Baha'is, stating that '...dealings with them must be in such a way that their progress and development are blocked'.⁵ Indeed, while Baha'i children have been allowed to enter school, they have been required to first identify themselves as Baha'is, which has resulted in a number of restrictions and, in many cases, expulsion. One official government statement on Baha'is in Iran directed that Baha'is should be enrolled in schools with a strong and imposing religious ideology. They must be expelled, either in the admission process or during the course of their studies, once it becomes known that they are Baha'is (Pohl cited in Kazemzadeh 2000).

As is the case with many violations of freedom of religion or belief, other human rights must be protected in order to uphold freedom of religion or belief. In the Iranian example above, the right to education without discrimination or exclusion is clearly stated in international law.⁶ However, where suppressing or marginalising the economic, social, and cultural growth of a religious community it is part of the agenda of a group or institution (state or non-state), to deprive them of education is a primary means of repression. Without access to education, individuals cannot fully develop their potential, or participate and contribute to the life of society.



⁵ *Namiyyih Seyyed Mohammad Reza Hashemi Golpaygani, Dabir-i Shurayih A'liyyih Inqilab-i Farhangi* [Memorandum by Dr. Seyyed Mohammad Reza Hashemi Golpaygani, Secretary of the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution, dated 6/12/1369 (February 25, 1991)]. This document was brought to the attention of UN Special Representative Reynaldo Galindo Pohl in 1993. Available at <<http://info.bahai.org/article-1-8-3-14.html>> [Accessed May 2017].

⁶ See Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; Article 18.4 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; and UNHRC General Comment no. 13: The Right to Education (Article 13) (1999) (Adopted by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights at the Twenty-first Session, E/C.12/1999/10, 8 December 1999).

religiously motivated conflict and violence

Overt and explicit violations of freedom of religion or belief often receive the most attention in media and other reports, particularly in cases where religious extremism and intolerance leads to conflict or violence. These acts of violence or conflict can be committed against religious communities but also between different religious groups. Unfortunately, examples of such violations are numerous and ongoing. As of 2013, over a quarter of countries had high levels of religious hostilities (Pew Research Center 2015).

In an IDLO report (2016: 15), the following examples were offered as a snapshot of the range of religiously motivated conflicts and acts of violence around the world:

- Since 2012, in the northern state of Rakhine, Myanmar, violence between the majority Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims had resulted in mass death and displacement, as well as the destruction of thousands of homes and businesses.
- In April 2012, in Khartoum, Sudan, several hundred Muslims set alight a Catholic church and school for harbouring South Sudanese and Ethiopian refugees.
- In August 2012, in the state of Wisconsin, United States of America, a white supremacist killed six people and wounded four at a Sikh gurdwara (temple).
- In August 2013, in Tripoli, Lebanon, car bombs exploded outside two Sunni mosques in response to the neighbouring war in the Syrian Arab Republic.
- In September 2013, in Muzaffarnagar, India, riots between Hindus and Muslims left dozens dead and many others hospitalised.
- Throughout 2014, in the Central African Republic, sectarian attacks against Christians and Muslims escalated, resulting in widespread displacement and thousands of deaths.
- In January 2015, in Paris, France, the offices of Charlie Hebdo, a satirical weekly magazine, were attacked by gunmen who killed 12 people whilst reportedly shouting ‘we have avenged the Prophet Muhammad’.

It is important to note that, although all of these (and other) examples have clear religious characteristics, it is not always the case that the motivations or causes of these violations are entirely based on religion. Rather, in some instances — particularly those involving acts of terrorism — it is more accurate to refer to political interests and ideologies (or the politicisation of religion).

conclusion

In an increasingly diverse world, ensuring and protecting freedom of religion or belief in a range of contexts remains a challenging and urgent task: violations are all too common. Overcoming and rectifying these problems requires greater volition but also clarity about the principles and laws that relate to this freedom. Clarity is particularly needed in debates about legitimate limits to freedom of religion or belief. Misguided assumptions often polarise and politicise what should otherwise be a universal agreement to ensure the protection of a basic and fundamental human right in practice.

Exploring the reasons behind violations of freedom of religion or belief falls outside the scope of this briefing. However, it suffices to mention briefly that, just as violations and violators are diverse, so are the reasons and motivations behind violations. Aside from religious totalitarian governments and religious fanaticism, violations may also include cases where secular politics are used to actively resist freedom of religion or to induce indifference to it, as well as an attachment to, and popularisation of, an excessive relativism whereby no one can make an 'exclusive' truth statement of any kind. Intolerance stemming from prejudice, hatred, dogma, and hostility towards all religions can also manifest itself at various levels, from majority and minority politics, to conflating religion with racial or ethnic differences. When the fear of loss of power or the rise and proliferation of competing rights and equality norms are factored in, we can see that violations of freedom of religion or belief are complex and multi-faceted.

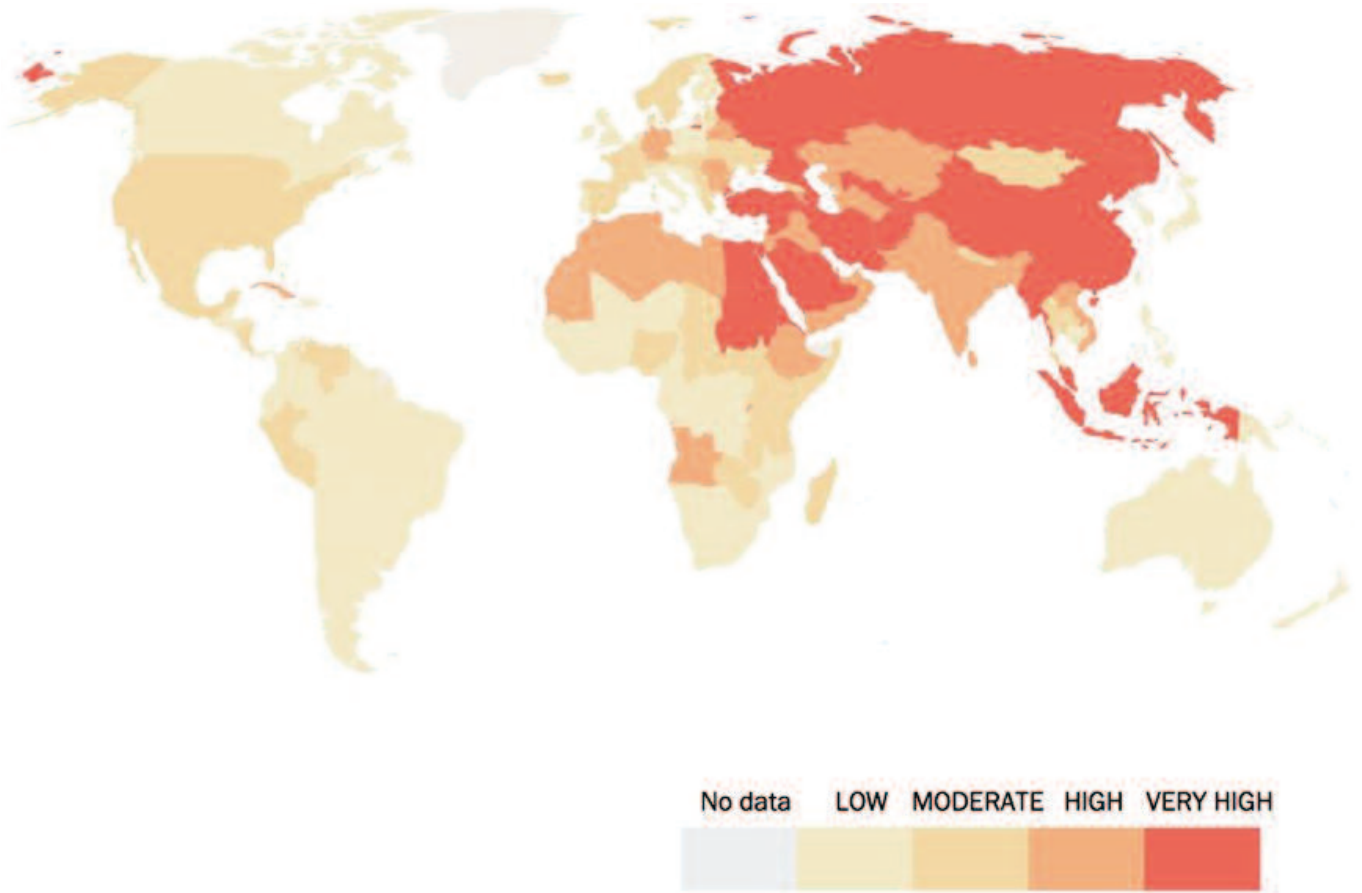
In the final analysis, advancing towards deeper understandings of what violations of freedom of religion or belief look like is essential if we are to build stronger communities in spaces of increasing plurality. Although this is undoubtedly a complex task, the need is a vital and urgent one. Ensuring that independent truth-seeking, believing and living are protected and assured so that appropriate (legal, social, economic, political and spiritual) conditions are created to allow human potential to flourish, is a pressing need of our time.

key statistics

- As of 2010, 84% of the world's population identified with a religious group (Pew Research Center 2012).
- Over 74% of the world's population lives in areas with severe religious restrictions (Pew Research Center 2016).
- 38 countries (of the 196 reviewed) have significant religious freedom violations (ACN International 2017).
- Of the 50 countries that faced incidents of hostility over religious conversions, 30 experienced incidents that fell short of violence and the remaining 20 experienced incidents that included physical violence (Pew Research Center 2016).
- Non-state actors are responsible for religious persecution in 12 of the 23 countries identified as the worst-offenders in terms of religious persecution (ACN International 2017).

appendix a: government restrictions index⁷

Government Restrictions Index Score in 2013



Source: Global Religious Futures, <http://www.globalreligiousfutures.org/>

⁷The Government Restrictions Index (GRI) measures — on a 10-point scale — government laws, policies and actions that restrict religious beliefs or practices. The GRI is comprised of 20 measures of restrictions, including efforts by governments to ban particular faiths, prohibit conversions, limit preaching or give preferential treatment to one or more religious groups. For more on the methodology, see the Global Restrictions on Religion studies at <http://www.globalreligiousfutures.org/> [Accessed May 2017].

appendix b: harassment of different religious groups

Number of countries where religious groups were harassed, by type of harassment

Government harassment in the year ...

Social harassment in the year ...

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014		2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Muslims	77	74	58	74	78	83	73	80		64	53	58	64	82	88	84	81
Christians	79	80	71	95	78	81	85	79		74	72	70	77	81	83	71	85
Jews	11	16	14	21	28	28	39	31		46	48	60	64	63	66	72	80
Others*	25	28	29	40	39	34	33	39		15	13	19	28	18	20	17	17
Folk religions**	13	10	9	10	5	11	12	13		16	13	19	20	21	18	26	12
Hindus	12	11	9	13	9	13	8	9		12	9	8	10	6	9	4	7
Buddhists	7	7	6	11	5	9	7	8		4	4	4	7	5	7	7	3
Any of above	118	112	103	124	129	131	133	128		127	110	124	135	150	147	145	139

* Includes Sikhs, members of ancient faiths such as Zoroastrianism, members of newer faiths such as Baha'i, other religious groups and atheists.

** Includes followers of African traditional religions, Chinese folk religions, Native American religions and Australian aboriginal religions.

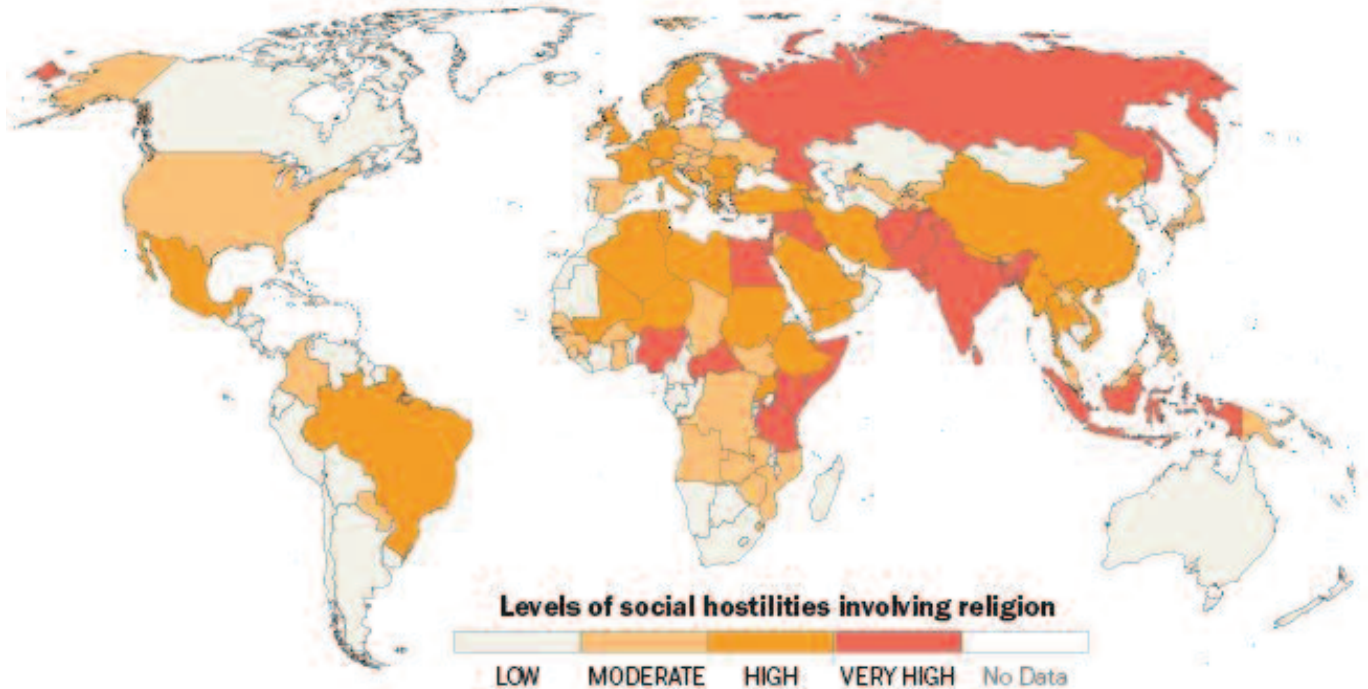
Note: This measure does not assess the severity of the harassment. Numbers do not add to totals because multiple religious groups can be harassed in a country.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of external data, 'Trends in Global Restrictions on Religion'.

From these statistics, it can be seen that, in 2013, some religious groups were more likely to be harassed by governments, while others were more likely to be harassed by individuals or groups in society. For instance, Christians experienced harassment by some level of government in more countries than they experienced social harassment. By contrast, Jews were subject to social harassment in many more countries than they were by governments.

Social Hostilities Around the World

Level of social hostilities in each country as of December 2013



"Latest Trends in Religious Restrictions and Hostilities," February 2015

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

⁸The Social Hostilities Index (SHI) measures — on a 10-point scale — acts of religious hostility by private individuals, organisations and social groups. This includes mob or sectarian violence, harassment over attire for religious reasons, and other religion-related intimidation or abuse. The SHI includes 13 measures of social hostilities. For more on the methodology, see the Global Restrictions on Religion studies at <<http://www.globalreligiousfutures.org>> [Accessed May 2017].

Countries With Very High Social Hostilities Involving Religion

Scores of 7.2 or higher on the 10-point Social Hostilities Index

2012	2013
Pakistan	Israel
Afghanistan	India
India	Pakistan
Somalia	Palestinian territories
Israel	Nigeria
Iraq	Bangladesh
Palestinian territories	Sri Lanka
Syria	Russia
Russia	Afghanistan
Indonesia	Somalia
Nigeria	Syria
Yemen	Tanzania
Kenya	Indonesia
Egypt	Egypt
Sudan	Central African Republic
Lebanon	Iraq
Sri Lanka	Kenya
Bangladesh	
Thailand	
Burma (Myanmar)	

Gray indicates a country that had very high government restrictions in 2012 but not in 2013. Bold indicates a country that had very high government restrictions in 2013 but not in 2012.

"Latest Trends in Religious Restrictions and Hostilities,"
February 2015

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of external data, 'Trends in Global Restrictions on Religion'.

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Cumberland Lodge
The Great Park, Windsor, SL4 2HP
01784 432316
cumberlandlodge.ac.uk

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