

Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Freedoms of Persons belonging to Religious Minorities.

Guidelines for the Norwegian Foreign Service



NORWEGIAN MINISTRY
OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS



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.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 18

Foreword	4
1. Introduction and goals	6
2. Who are religious minorities?	8
3. Discrimination and harassment of minorities on the grounds of religion or belief	10
4. The work of the Foreign Service for the rights of religious minorities	13
 Appendix:	
(I) International framework	16
(II) Monitoring mechanism	18
(III) The most important international human rights conventions	20
(IV) Other important UN documents	21
(V) Regional documents and systems	22
(VI) Useful points when gathering information	24
(VII) Sources	26

In many countries religious and belief minorities are subject to harassment and discrimination on the grounds of their convictions. This is not acceptable. We are therefore working in cooperation with other countries and organisations to move the situation of these minorities higher up on the international agenda. These efforts are an integrated part of our human rights policy and are followed up through our cooperation with various international organisations and through direct contact with specific countries.

The rights of religious minorities follow from key human rights treaties and are a vital factor for democracy. The right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion is closely related to other human rights, such as freedom of expression, association and assembly. Thus respect for human rights implies that all persons belonging to religious minorities are able to practice their religion freely and are protected against hate crimes, abuse and persecution. This also includes the right to not have a religion.

These rights should be enshrined in national constitutions and legislation, and respected in practice by states. While the human rights obligations are clear, insufficient implementation by governments is the greatest obstacle to religious freedom for people around the world today.

We know that persons who belong to a minority within a minority, are particularly vulnerable to discrimination and violence. Therefore our policies should always underline the principle that human rights are for all, regardless of national or ethnic origin, sex, gender identity, colour, religion or belief, language or any other status.

In order to safeguard these rights, it is important that government officials in all relevant sectors of society, and in particular the police, prison staff and other personnel in the security sector, have sufficient

knowledge of and training in basic human rights. Norway is ready to contribute to awareness-raising and training programmes in this field.

Norway considers it particularly important that the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief is granted access to all countries, in particular to countries where religious minorities are subject to discrimination and persecution.

Religion is a controversial subject in many countries, and addressing religious issues can entail risks for those involved. Human rights defenders who work to uphold freedom of religion and belief should enjoy the protection and support that follows from relevant UN resolutions, such as the landmark Resolution on Protecting Human Rights Defenders adopted by the UN Human Rights Council on 26 March 2013.

Improving the situation of religious minorities is a long-term priority for Norwegian foreign policy. The purpose of these guidelines is to provide an informative and operative tool for the Norwegian Foreign Service.

Norway's diplomatic and consular missions can play an important role by supporting human rights defenders in this field, asking the right questions, and providing information, for example in the Universal Periodic Review process under the Human Rights Council.

We hope you will make active use of the guidelines in the country where you are serving.



Espen Barth-Eide
Minister of Foreign Affairs



Heikki Eidsvoll Holmås
Minister of International Development

1. Introduction and goals

The right to choose and practise a religion or a belief is an important part of an individual's life and a fundamental human right. Freedom of religion or belief means that the state has an obligation to safeguard this right. Protection and promotion of human rights are a central element of Norway's foreign policy. Many minorities of religion or belief (referred to in this document as religious minorities) are harassed, discriminated against and subjected to violence and abuse from both state and non-state actors, and in recent years a stronger international focus has been placed on the situation of religious minorities.

Norway will:

- engage to ensure that religious minorities are not discriminated against on the grounds of their beliefs,
- engage to ensure that religious minorities' rights are safeguarded in legislation and practice,
- promote freedom of religion or belief as an important human right and work for peaceful coexistence founded on tolerance, respect and equality,
- work to move religious minorities' rights higher up the international agenda.

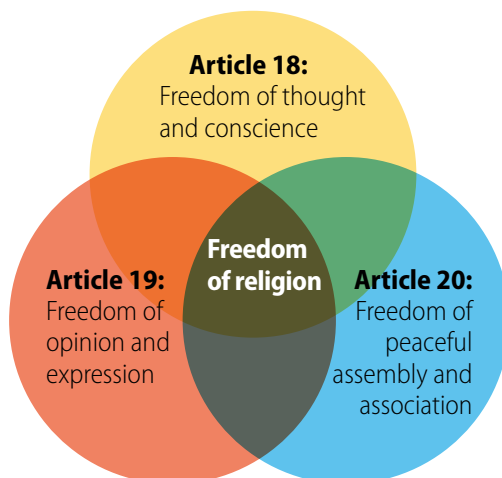




FOTO: NTB SCANPIX / FABRICE COFFRINI

UN's Palace of Nations in Geneva, room XX. The ceiling is decorated by the Spanish artist Miquel Barceló.

'Minority' is a broad term. It is often thought of as a minority of a population. However, a majority may also be considered a minority, since a minority is characterised as a subordinate or marginalised group defined by certain factors such as ethnicity or religious affiliation, and that has less power and political influence than the rest of the population.



Minority is not a static term, and there is no international definition of which groups should be considered minorities.

The UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities of 1992 is intended to strengthen the rights of these minorities. However, not all religious communities wish to be described or treated as a minority, for example because they do not wish to be stigmatised.

These guidelines are intended to help the Foreign Service in its work for the rights of religious minorities. They should be viewed in relation to the Ministry's guidelines on human rights defenders, death penalty, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons (LGBT). Measures described in these other guidelines may also apply to individuals who are being persecuted for their religion or belief.

The work of the Foreign Service to safeguard minorities' religious freedom should not be confined to whether or not the group in question defines itself as a minority, but include any population group that is in practice prevented from freely practising its religion or belief in the same way as other population groups.

The information presented here is also intended to benefit civil society organisations and other groups working with religious minorities.

2. Who are religious minorities?

Every country has religious minorities. They may be members of a religion that is widely practised in another country, such as the Christians in the Middle East, the Jews in the USA, or the Hindus in Europe. Atheists and agnostics may be minorities in countries where religion has a strong position. Baha'i's and Ahmadiyya are vulnerable groups in many countries.

Minorities that belong to a religion that is a majority religion in another country may be allied with, or accused of being allied with, sister communities in neighbouring countries or another country believed to have a political agenda. This can make such groups vulnerable. Some minority groups in for example the Balkan countries also form religious minorities in neighbouring countries, across national borders.

The five world religions – Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Christianity – take many different forms. Thus an individual may belong to the same religion as the majority of the population and yet be part of a minority that professes a different form of the religion, such as the Sunni Muslims in Iran or the Roman Catholics in Norway. Thus the rough divisions shown on the religious world map do not give a sufficiently detailed picture of the conditions for the different religious minorities.

In addition to the religious groups with international distribution, there are many local religious groups. These may have links with more traditional religions, local cultural traditions or holy places or events, or have formed around a local charismatic leader.

Ethnicity and religion do not always overlap, and many ethnic groups have members with several different beliefs or religious affiliations.

3. Discrimination and harassment of minorities on the grounds of religion or belief

In many countries, religious minorities are subject to discrimination and abuse and are deprived of their right to practise their religion or belief. Many of these minorities experience systematic discrimination by the public authorities. Discrimination may be direct or indirect, and is being used here to mean differential treatment that is not based on objective grounds and that cannot be justified as positive discrimination.

Open discrimination often contains an element of exclusion, for example from public or political positions, educational institutions, or health or other public services. Some countries require their citizens to belong to particular religions, and those who do not do so are for example not granted identity documents, making it impossible for them to attend school, marry, or obtain a passport.

Indirect discrimination may take the form of community rules, such as rules for burials that prevent some believers from complying with their religious obligations. Import regulations and rules for employment or property ownership may also have a discriminatory effect. Other rules may result in a ban on importing religious literature or make it impossible to employ a religious leader or own a place of worship. However, it is important to be aware that the rules of a society that make it difficult in practice for religious individuals to follow their religious convictions may serve a legitimate purpose and do not necessarily violate human rights.

In addition to discrimination by the authorities, religious groups may be subject to harassment and abuse from non-state actors, in other words from groups or individuals. The authorities have a responsibility to prevent such actions, to provide protection, and if appropriate

to investigate and prosecute the perpetrators. However, in states with weak governments, or where the authorities are unwilling to provide protection, religious groups will in practice often receive less protection than the state is obliged to give them under its international commitments. Such impunity makes minorities even more vulnerable, and is a serious problem in many countries.

Impunity: «Exemption from punishment or loss or escape from fines».

In the international law of human rights, it refers to the failure to bring perpetrators of human rights violations to justice and, as such, itself constitutes a denial of the victims' right to justice and redress. Impunity is especially common in countries that lack a tradition of the rule of law, suffer from corruption or that have entrenched systems of patronage, or where the judiciary is weak or members of the security forces are protected by special jurisdictions or immunities.

Wikipedia

Many religious groups bear a double burden; they suffer from discrimination by the authorities and harassment in their social environment.

It is a common misunderstanding that the right to freedom of religion or belief has unlimited application. However, states can and should waive this right if there are other weighty and legitimate considerations that should be given preference. Religious communities may not perform acts that are in conflict with other human rights, or encourage acts that may injure others. The right to religious freedom must be weighed against other rights. Thus freedom of religion can obviously not be used to legitimise violence, other criminal activity or hate speech. Both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 18 (3)) and the European Convention on Human Rights (Article 9 (2)) give governments the right to limit the exercise of religion or belief when such limitations are prescribed by law, aim to achieve certain purposes and are necessary in a democratic society. If these three conditions are not fulfilled, such limitations are a breach of the right to freedom of religion.



The Pakistani mother of five Asia Bibi, who is a Christian, was in 2009 sentenced to death for alleged blasphemy. International efforts have been taken for the pardoning of Asia and she has become a symbol of the struggle for the rights of religious minorities.

It is necessary to understand the cultural, political and economic context in which minorities live before engaging in specific work to support them. There are many examples of religious rhetoric being used to convey a political message, but religion and belief are also influenced by political and other developments in a society. It is important to be aware of the political power of religion and the status and authority of religious leaders.

4. The work of the Foreign Service for the rights of religious minorities

Religious minorities often have a complex history that needs to be understood before action is taken. They may have been part of an elite or a powerful political constellation, or have represented the country's poorest and most marginalised groups. Religious groups may have a short or long history, be political, play an active role in the public debate, or live a relatively enclosed life outside politics. A minority in one part of the country may be a majority in another part.

Not all countries consider religious belief to be a private matter. In many countries religion is closely interwoven with the political system, and may also be subject to strong social control.

A global perspective is also needed in order to understand how religions may be interrelated politically and even across continents. Postings on social media may for example lead to demonstrations in other countries and thus contribute to conflict and violence against religious groups. Media also have an important role to play in uncovering discrimination and violence against religious minorities.

Section VI of the Appendix contains questions that may help the missions obtain an overview of the situation of religious minorities in the host country.

The following are specific examples of how missions can engage in practical work to improve the situation of minorities:

- establish contact with civil society and alternative groups, and raise issues with the authorities related to the human rights situation of religious minorities,
- call attention to areas where legal protection is lacking, and cases of practical discrimination,

- consider in cooperation with the Ministry and other embassies in the host country whether it would be expedient to attend particular court cases as observers,
- in critical situations that threaten life and health, consider how to express concern to the country's authorities. Possible measures, if informal dialogue is not appropriate or has not been successful:
 - formal inquiries,
 - official meetings,
 - an official protest (démarche), alone or together with other embassies. Approval from the Ministry is required.
 - official statements, such as a press release. Again, approval from the Ministry is required,
- establish contact with religious and human rights groups in order to identify signs of discrimination and cases that can be pursued through UN mechanisms such as the Human Rights Council and the Council's Universal Periodic Reviews and followed up in bilateral discussions at political level or in international forums,
- consider supporting measures that will create arenas for discussion on freedom of religion or belief, and seek opportunities to have human rights and religious freedom included in dialogues between religious groups,
- consider supporting training and knowledge-sharing projects for the police, prison service and other parts of the justice sector,
- consider facilitating contact between parliament members in the host country and Norway on the topic of freedom of religion or belief,
- consider supporting participation by religious minorities in international networks,



- invite knowledge institutions in Norway to meetings with institutions in the host country or region for discussions on religious minorities and related topics. Create meeting places for experts and researchers. Use this as a basis for joint projects that would promote contact and result in new knowledge across national borders,
- establish contact with the media. Consider inviting media representatives to seminars or meetings on specific topics,
- establish contact with international organisations and other embassies to discuss the situation of religious minorities,
- cooperate with national human rights commissions/national institutions that could be important sources of information, especially if they are independent.

Proceed with caution. Religious faith touches on the most fundamental elements of human and cultural identity. Treat your dialogue partner with respect, maintain an open and interested attitude and be willing to listen and learn.

Appendix I: International framework

In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language.

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 27

Freedom of religion or belief is a fundamental human right. It follows from global and regional human rights conventions and is laid down in most countries' constitutions and other legislation. The first international document to establish this right was the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, on which the later legally binding conventions are based. The principle of non-discrimination has a central place in human rights. No unreasonable or disproportionate differential treatment should be implemented on the grounds of religion or belief.

The right to freedom of religion or belief applies to both individuals and groups. For example, exclusion from the labour market because a uniform has to satisfy certain requirements may affect individuals or groups, as does the denial of holding a religious service. It is important to

underline that the right to religious freedom applies to the believers, and not to the religion itself.

The individual's right to freedom of religion or belief includes the freedom to choose, change, renounce or practise their religion or belief. No one may be subject to coercion, be it to practise religious rituals, to belong to a religious community or under any other circumstances.

Everyone has the right to manifest their religion or belief in private or in public. Freedom of expression and the right to education are therefore fundamental to the fulfilment of religious freedom. Individuals must have the opportunity to learn about religions and beliefs, but no one must be forced to convert to a religion in order to obtain a place in a state school. Parents have the right to



ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions. Religious freedom is thus closely interwoven with other fundamental human rights.

Freedom to manifest a religion or belief includes the right to assemble and practise the religion and celebrate religious holidays together with other believers. Community is an important feature of all religions. Freedom of religion or belief thus includes the right to freedom of association and assembly, and protects against attacks on or unjustified interference with its religious activities.

International conventions are legally binding on the states parties, but only on these states. Some states also make reservations when they become party to conventions. The conventions to which the host country is a party and any reservations it has made should thus be checked. However, many of the obligations under human rights conventions constitute customary international law, and thus are also binding on non-member states. The most relevant conventions are described under section III below.

Appendix II: Monitoring mechanisms

The international community has established a number of mechanisms for monitoring the various states' implementation of the human rights to which they have committed themselves. The mechanisms work in parallel, and the same issue is often addressed under more than one. The following is a brief description of the most important mechanisms.

The main human rights conventions have their own monitoring mechanism, typically consisting of a committee of independent experts who are appointed in their personal capacity. The committee issues statements ("views") on complaints filed by individuals or groups and/or reviews and submits recommendations on periodic reports from states parties.

The UN General Assembly and the Human Rights Council play a central role in the work for human rights. States can make use of these bodies to exert political pressure on other states to comply with their human rights obligations. The resolutions of both bodies may consist of specific criticism of a human rights violation in a particular country. However, such resolutions are often considered by the state in question to constitute interference in its internal affairs, and are therefore controversial. Resolutions may also have a broader thematic focus, such as

combating torture or promoting religious freedom.

Norway's goal for its UN work is to defend the universal human rights and to take specific initiatives to promote the development of norms and standards and strengthen the position of human rights on the ground. We will only achieve results if the human rights issues that we promote internationally are in line with our bilateral cooperation at country level. The latter includes not only human rights consultations, but also the day-to-day work at foreign service missions and our support to civil society.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) supports the UN monitoring mechanisms. It has a secretariat in Geneva and regional and country offices.

The independent national human rights institutions also play a central role in the international monitoring system. They have a formal role in relation to the UN system and are independent of both the national authorities and civil society. National institutions, ombudsmen, NGOs and academia are often useful partners at country level.

The Human Rights Council and its Universal Periodic Review mechanism.

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR), which was established in 2006, is a state-driven process under the auspices of the Human Rights Council in which all UN member states declare what actions they have taken to improve the human rights situation in their countries and to fulfil their human rights obligations. The High Commissioner for Human Rights then draws up a report based on the information from the member state, which is presented together with reports from NGOs and National Human Rights Institutions. The review itself takes the form of a dialogue between states on the human rights situation in the state concerned. The missions play a key role in the preparation of UPRs by providing information to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Civil society organisations provide important input in the preparation and follow-up.

Special rapporteurs and independent experts. One of the monitoring mechanisms under the Human Rights Council consists of the special rapporteurs and independent experts whose task is to monitor and report on specific human rights issues. These include a Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief and an Independent Expert on minority issues. In addition the special rapporteurs on freedom of opinion and expression, racism, and the right to education may also

uncover cases of discrimination related to religion or belief. The Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief transmits urgent appeals and letters of allegation to states on cases that represent infringements of or impediments to the exercise of the right to religious freedom. Special rapporteurs and independent experts also conduct fact-finding country visits to countries where they are granted access, and submit annual reports to the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly on developments in the human rights situation and their activities and working methods. They are appointed in their personal capacity by the Human Rights Council. These positions carry no salary and receive support from the OHCHR Secretariat in Geneva.

The Human Rights Council's confidential Complaint Procedure was established in 2007. Two working groups, the Working Group on Communications and the Working Group on Situations, examine complaints and investigate human rights violations. Complaints may be submitted by individuals, groups or organisations, and must satisfy certain criteria in order to be accepted for examination. The working groups' mandate is to examine, document and describe consistent patterns of gross and reliably attested violations of human rights and report them to the Council. They give advisory opinions, which are not binding, either on the Council or on the state concerned.

Appendix III: The most important international human rights conventions

Four UN conventions are particularly important for the protection of religious minorities:

- ***The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*** of 1966 states that the rights set out in the convention apply regardless of a person's religion or other status (Article 2). Article 18 states that freedom of thought, conscience and religion includes freedom to have or adopt a religion or belief of one's choice and freedom to manifest one's religion or belief, either individually or in community with others and in public or in private; and freedom to ensure the religious and moral education of one's children in conformity with one's own convictions. The convention also states that all persons are equal before the law and may not be discriminated against on the grounds of religion or other status (Article 26). Article 27 specifically deals with the protection of religious, ethnic and linguistic minorities.

- ***The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*** of 1966 states that the rights recognised in the convention (to work, an adequate standard of living, food, clothing, housing and the highest attainable standard of health apply regardless of a person's religion (Article 2). Article 13 recognises the right to education, which should promote

understanding, tolerance and friendship between all racial, ethnic or religious groups.

- ***The Convention on the Rights of the Child*** of 1989 enjoys more support than any other human rights convention, but its provisions are typically more vague and its application is limited by reservations made by a large number of states when ratifying the convention. Article 14 states that the child has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, but that the freedom to manifest their religion or beliefs may be subject to limitations prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health or morals, or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

- ***The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*** of 1979 condemns all forms of discrimination against women (Article 2). Women's rights have to be protected by law, and national penal provisions that constitute discrimination against women must be repealed. Most countries have ratified the convention, including all those in the Middle East apart from Iran. However, many countries have also entered reservations, for example that the state concerned will comply with the provisions of a particular article as long as they are not in conflict with sharia law.

Appendix IV: Other important UN documents

- ***The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*** of 1948 states that the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion is a human right (Article 18). The declaration has universal application but is not legally binding.
- ***The General Assembly Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief*** (resolution 36/55 of 25 November 1981) states i.a. that everyone has the right to choose their religion or belief and manifest it together with others, and that no one may be subject to coercion that would impair this freedom (Article 1).
- ***The UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities*** of 1992 declares that states shall take measures to create favourable conditions to enable persons belonging to minorities to express their characteristics and to develop their culture, language, religion, traditions and customs.
- ***The resolution Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against, persons based on religion or belief*** (resolution 16/18 of 2011 adopted by the Human Rights Council) emphasises the relationship between discrimination and freedom of expression and religion. The resolution calls on states to promote religious freedom and take effective measures against violations of religious freedom. The consensus text was the result of a compromise. However, some of the issues addressed by the resolution are highly controversial.

Appendix V: Regional documents and systems

The Council of Europe conventions are particularly important for Europe. The main convention is the European Convention on Human Rights of 1950, which includes the right to freedom of religion, private life, freedom of expression, education, and freedom of association and assembly, and a prohibition against discrimination. Breaches of the provisions of the convention may be appealed to the European Court of Human Rights, whose judgments are legally binding. The Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of 1995 also contains important provisions on protecting minority cultures, including their religion. The Council of Europe mechanisms in this field are widely used. The Council of Europe also has a number of non-legal documents relating to protection of religious minorities. The Venice Commission has published a number of reports on religious minorities and protection in Europe of minorities in general.

The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has a comprehensive system for monitoring the way in which the 57 participating states comply with their obligations, not least in the field of human rights. The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the High

Commissioner for National Minorities (HCNM) and the Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFOM) play particularly important roles. In addition to observing elections, the ODIHR addresses issues of tolerance and discrimination, freedom of religion or belief, and minority rights, and publishes country reports, handbooks and conference reports. Every year the OSCE chairmanship appoints three tolerance representatives who work with discrimination of Muslims, Jews and other religious minorities. Their activities include visits to member states.

The American Convention on Human Rights is a regional instrument under the Organization of American States (OAS). Article 12 of the convention deals with freedom of conscience and religion, which includes freedom to maintain or to change one's religion or belief, freedom to profess or disseminate one's religion or beliefs, either individually or together with others, in public or in private, and the right of parents to provide for the religious and moral education of their children in accordance with their own convictions. Articles 1 and 24 prohibit discrimination, as does Article 3 of the Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights in the Area of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

The OAS has established the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights together with a number of special rapporteurs in areas that include women, children and freedom of expression. These mechanisms are also widely used.

The African Union (AU) has several human rights conventions with relevant provisions. The main convention is the *African (Banjul) Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights*. Article 8 guarantees freedom of religion and Article 2 prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion. However, the system is weakened by provisions that give the individual duties (especially Article 29) and give the states wide powers to intervene (especially Article 27). There are also a number of other AU conventions, such as the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. The AU also has monitoring mechanisms, but these are not as effective as those of the OAS and the Council of Europe.

ASEAN adopted its own human rights declaration, *the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration (AHRD)*, in 2012. The AHRD guarantees freedom from discrimination on religious grounds in section 2 and freedom of thought, conscience and religion in section 22. The AHRD does not use the term "freedom of belief", however, since atheism is prohibited in several of the member states. ASEAN established its own human rights commission, the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR), in 2008 in connection with the adoption of the ASEAN Charter. The AICHR is an advisory body established to promote and protect human rights in the member states. It has no mandate to monitor or prosecute human rights violations.

The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) adopted the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam, which was a response to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights of 1948. *The Arab League's Arab Charter for Human Rights* is largely a reflection of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, both these instruments provide poor legal protection of the right to freedom of religion and belief and against discrimination.

Appendix VI: Useful points when gathering information

We have in order to help the missions obtain information about the situation of religious minorities, put together the following checklist.

1. *Is the right to freedom of religion or belief ensured in national legislation, and if so, how? Can incidents of discrimination be appealed?*

- Is the right to religious freedom safeguarded in national legislation?
- Are there legal provisions discriminating against individuals on the grounds of their religion or belief? Are there provisions on blasphemy, and are they used against religious minorities?
- Is there any legislation protecting minorities against discrimination? If so, is it nationally and regionally implemented or is impunity widespread?
- Which conventions and additional protocols has the country ratified?
- Are decisions on family law issues turned over to religious institutions, and to what extent?

2. *What is the position of religious minorities in society?*

- Which religious minorities exist in the country? Are any of them part of a national or ethnic minority, and if so, what is their position in the country?
- Are religious minorities subject to any strong social exclusion mechanisms or harassment/ hate criminality from the majority population and/or other religious minorities?
- To what extent do religious minorities participate in political life? Are they represented in high social or political positions?
- Are there any human rights actors in the country that are concerned with religious freedom?
- Do the media report cases of discrimination or abuse of religious minorities, or do they keep silent?
- How are vulnerable persons such as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) treated within religious minorities?

3. *Is there any discrimination of religious minorities?*

- Does the individual have the freedom to manifest his religion or convert to another religion, or to be an atheist?
- Does an individual have to provide information on his religion to receive an identity card? Are individuals forced to say they belong to a different religion from the one they belong to in order to obtain an identity card?
- Do the authorities impose restrictions on religious activities or obligations?
- Do all groups have equal access to education, health services, social benefits and employment? Does discrimination increase in times of crisis?
- Are there requirements for religious affiliation in connection with particular positions/professions (for example teachers, police officers, judges, senior civil servants, political or military positions)?

4. *Do religious minorities have freedom of association and assembly?*

- Do religious minorities have freedom of association and assembly, and the right to employ a religious leader?
- Can they receive money/donations from within the country and/or from another country and import or distribute religious literature?
- Are religious minorities able to obtain juridical personality (able to open a bank account, own property/a place of worship, build a new/renovate a place of worship)?
- Do the authorities allow missionary activity, and do they protect missionaries from persecution by private persons due to their missionary activity?

5. *Are women in particular subject to discrimination on religious grounds?*

- Are women from religious minorities more subject to discrimination than women in general?
- Are women subject to discrimination within religious minorities?

Appendix VII: Sources

International organisations can often provide much useful information. The following is a list of good sources:

- **Country reports by the special rapporteurs under OHCHR:**
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomReligion/Pages/Visits.aspx>
- **Universal Periodic Review reports:**
<http://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/upr/pages/uprmain.aspx>
- **UPR recommendations and inputs from civil society, by country:**
<http://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/upr/pages/documentation.aspx>
- **UPR Info (an NGO based in Geneva):** upr-info.org
- **Tolerance and non-discrimination information system TANDIS, a data base under the OSCE:** <http://tandis.odihr.pl/>
- **The EU Agency for Fundamental Rights:**
http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/home/home_en.htm
- **The European Court of Human Rights:**
<http://www.echr.coe.int/echr/g>
- **The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities:**
http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/minorities/default_en.asp
- **Reports from the US Commission on International Religious Freedom:**
<http://www.uscirf.gov/countries/watch-list-countries.html>
- **Country reports from the International Crisis Group:**
<http://www.crisisgroup.org/>
- **Human Rights Watch:** <http://www.hrw.org>
- **Amnesty International:** <http://www.amnesty.org>
- **Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life:** <http://www.pewforum.org>

Further information about Norwegian human rights policy and other thematic guidelines can be found on the Ministry's webpages:
<http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/ud/selected-topics/human-rights.html?id=1160>



FOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO

Published by:
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Public institutions may order additional copies from:
Norwegian Government Administration Services
Distribution Services
Internet: www.publikasjoner.dep.no
E-mail: publikasjonsbestilling@dss.dep.no
Telephone: + 47 22 24 20 00

ISBN-number: 978-82-7177-830-9

Publication number: E-913 E
Design: 07 Media AS
Photos on cover, from left to right:
NTB Scanpix / Pascal Deloche / Godong,
NTB Scanpix / Fred de Noyelle / Godong,
NTB Scanpix / Doug Strickland, NTB Scanpix / Samrang Pring,
NTB Scanpix / Pascal Deloche
Print: Norwegian Government Administration Service
05/2013 - Impression 700