

**Weekly Report of
Studies in Inter-Religious Relations in Plural Societies (SRP) Programme**

Religious Conflict

1. Several die in a suicide attack in Nigeria

In the past few months, Nigeria has witnessed a new wave of bombings by Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN), a local Shia Muslim group, and the radical Sunni group - Boko Haram. The followers of IMN were bombed again by Boko Haram near Kano, during their march to mark the 40th day of Ashura, resulting in at least 21 being killed and many more wounded.

Keywords: Nigeria, Shia, Boko Haram, Ashura

Religious Controversies

1. Sikhism in India: Seeking justice

At the beginning of November, “Sarbat Khalsa”, a gathering of believers, was called by the Sikhs in the state of Punjab to protest against the desecration of their holy book. Torn pages from the Guru Granth Sahib, the sacred text, were found across the state.

Keywords: India, Punjab, Sikhism, Blasphemy

Secularism, Religious Freedom and New Religious Movements

1. Religious Freedom Roundtable considers initiatives to advance rights and freedoms

Australia's Human Rights Commissioner Tim Wilson announced new initiatives during the inauguration of the Religious Freedom Roundtable, held on 5 November. Representatives of religious and non-faith organisations have committed to an ongoing dialogue on rights and freedoms and actions to advance religious freedom.

Keywords: Australia, Religious Freedom Roundtable

2. Court upholds headscarf ban for French social worker

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) upheld France's headscarf ban in the case of a Muslim social worker who lost her hospital job because she would not remove her scarf. After a long journey of appeal since 2011, the ECHR ruled that the individual's right to freedom of religion was not breached and French authorities had rightfully given precedence to the state's religious impartiality.

Keywords: France, Headscarf Ban, Freedom of Religion

3. Religious education in England 'needs overhaul'

Several latest reports call for a total overhaul for England's religious education. A number of problems were unveiled, including the long-term ignorance of non-religious world-views, the stereotyping of major religions, and the nonchalance towards a changing religious landscape.

Keywords: England, Religious Education, Non-believers

Peace, Reconciliation and Interfaith Dialogue

1. Pope Francis promises to be 'apostle of hope' on Central African Republic visit

The pope took his message of peace to the Central African Republic, where thousands have died in clashes that have split the country along religious lines. The pope visited a mosque on Monday morning to meet community leaders, where hundreds of Muslims listened as Pope Francis made an impassioned appeal for an end to the violence.

Keywords: CAR, Africa, Pope, Interfaith Harmony

2. Coptic Pope Tawadros's Jerusalem visit 'will create huge firestorm in Egypt'

Egypt's Coptic Pope Tawadros II visited Israel on Thursday to attend the funeral of a senior church official. This is the first Coptic papal visit to Jerusalem since 1832. Even *civilian* Copts were barred from traveling to Israel's capital by the previous pope after the signing of the 1979 peace treaty between Egypt and Israel. An Egypt expert predicted a huge firestorm due to this in Egypt in the backdrop of the recent Coptic oppression.

Keywords: Coptic pope, Egypt, Jerusalem

3. Canadian synagogue invites Muslims to pray in building after local mosque is fire-bombed in suspected hate-crime

A Canadian synagogue has opened its doors to the local Muslim community after the nearby mosque was torched in a suspected hate crime following the Paris attacks. The board of directors voted to favour the suggestion of the president of the synagogue, which is to share the prayer space with the Muslim congregation. "It's not about religion, it's not about race," said the president.

Keywords: Canada, Synagogue, Muslim