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

### Religious Conflicts

#### 1. Secular activist who criticised Islamism killed in Dhaka

A secular activist who had posted messages criticising Islamism on facebook was hacked and shot to death by at list four assailants in Dhaka. This follows the trend of secular activists and bloggers being killed by radical Islamists in Bangladesh, resulting in protests calling for the prosecution and punishment of those responsible for the attack. The Bangladeshi government has also been criticised for failing to punish previous perpetrators and contributing to further attacks.

Keywords: Bangladesh, Dhaka, Islamism, radicalism, extremism, violence

#### 2. British Muslim group criticized for rejecting Ahmadi Muslim sect

The Muslim Council of Britain has been criticised for its refusal to recognise the minority Ahmadiyya Sect as Muslims. The MCB was forced to make the proclamation due to mounting pressure to acknowledge the minority sect after the former condemned the stabbing of a member of the sect in Glasgow. The MCB's justification was that there are fundamental theological differences between the sect and mainstream Islam such that it sees itself not to be in a position to represent or to be represented by the sect.

Keywords: United Kingdom, Glasgow, Islam, Ahmadiyya Sect

### Religious Controversies

#### 1. Arab-Jewish segregation comments spark furor in Israel

An Israeli Jewish Member of Parliament's proposal to separate Jewish and Arab women in maternity wards in apartheid-style segregation has been condemned for racism, even by the head of his own political party. The incident is a display of Israel's struggle to contain the potential division between ultraconservative and moderate Jews, in addition to the animosity between Jews and Arab Muslims.

Keywords: Israel, Islam, Judaism, religious discrimination, racism

Contributors: Akanksha Narain, Ha Yu Xin, Juhi Ahuja, Yang Ni

Editors: Akanksha Narain and Juhi Ahuja

## **2. India Shani temple to allow women worshippers**

Authorities of the Shani Shingnapur temple have lifted the ban prohibiting women from prayer and worship in the inner sanctum of the temple after weeks of protests from female activists. The protests followed the Bombay High Court's ruling last month that women have a fundamental right to enter the temples and those who attempt to prevent them from entering the temples would be handed a six-month jail term.

Keywords: India, Maharashtra, Hinduism, tradition, feminism, secularism

## **3. Virgin Mary statue stirs up debate in secular Uruguay**

The Catholic Church's proposal to erect a statue of the Virgin Mary in a popular promenade in Uruguay's capital, Montevideo, has sparked fierce debate over the potential violation of the country's stance on separating the church and the state. Uruguay is known for its strong anti-religious ethos, in which "Christmas Day" is officially designated as "Family Day".

Keywords: Uruguay, Montevideo, Catholicism, secularism

## **4. Triple talaq: India's Muslim women fight against instant divorce**

The Bharatiya Muslim Mahila Andolan (BMMA - Indian Muslim Women's Movement) has filed a petition to India's Supreme Court and Prime Minister Narendra Modi to reform Islamic laws and especially the banning of the "un-Koranic" practice of "Talaq" where a Muslim man can divorce his wife by uttering the word thrice. Several influential Muslim groups have opposed the taking up of the petition by the Supreme Court. They perceive this to be interference to their "religious practices".

Keywords: India, Islam, Sharia Law, Talaq

# **Peace, Reconciliation and Interfaith Dialogue**

## **1. The incredibly gracious way Muslims welcomed a man who had drunkenly shot their mosque**

A former Marine who had shot at the Baitul Aman "House of Peace" mosque in Connecticut was welcomed by the worshippers when he attended an event at the mosque to apologise for his deed and to learn more about the religion. Both the man, Ted Hakey, and the President of the mosque highlighted that hate crimes against Muslims are mostly due to a lack of understanding of the faith. Ted Hakey has thus promised to educate others to promote further understanding and prevent hate crimes against Muslims.

Keywords: United States, Connecticut, Islam, Ahmadiyya sect, Islamophobia, hate crimes