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

**Religion and Conflict**

**1. Iraqi Christians fear “extinction” given the threat from ISIS**

Marred by the threat from ISIS, Easter in Baghdad this year lacked the usual festivity. Many Iraqi Christians believe that the constant attacks from ISIS might result in the “extinction” of the community, despite attacks by the international coalition against the group. With the attacks on Mosul in 2014, the minority community was forced to leave Northern towns and settle in other towns and cities or else migrate to Europe. As a result, their population has dwindled from 1.5 million prior 2008 to just a few hundred thousand.

Keywords: ISIS, Iraq, Christians, Refugees, Migration

**2. U.N. tribunal finds former Bosnia Serb leader guilty of genocide**

Former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic is sentenced to 40 years in jail by U.N judges who found him guilty of genocide during the Bosnian War, including the 1995 Srebrenica massacre and other war crimes charges. While the UN has recognized the war as a “campaign of genocide” the Serbian government claims it was a “crime and not genocide”.

Keywords: UN, Radovan Karadzic, Bosnian War, Srebrenica

**3. Belgian Muslims fear growing anti-Islam backlash in wake of terror attacks**

With the ISIS-linked twin attacks in Brussels many Belgian Muslims fear an increased backlash against the religious community. Post the Paris attacks last year a number of anti-Muslim rallies have been organized in cities such as Antwerp and Ghent. One fears that in the light of the recent attacks the attendance of such rallies might also increase.

Keywords: Belgium, Brussels Attack, Muslims, Islamophobia

### **3. Suicide bomber targeting Christians kills 70 in Pakistan park**

On Easter Sunday, Lahore was rocked by a suicide bomb attack at the children's park where Christians were celebrating their holy day. It is reported that the attack claimed more than 70 lives and at least 300 people were injured. A faction of the Pakistani Taliban, Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, claimed responsibility for the deadly incident. Though the group wanted to target Pakistan's minority group yet majority of the victims were actually Muslims.

Keywords: Lahore, Pakistan, Christians, Easter, Attack

## **Religious Controversies**

### **1. Sierra Leone abortion bill blocked by President Bai Koroma again**

Sierra Leone's President refused to sign an abortion bill unanimously signed by Members of Parliament despite the fact that the country's law prohibits the President to veto any bill that has 2/3<sup>rd</sup> majority. The bill if passed would allow women to terminate a pregnancy in any circumstances up to 12 weeks and in cases of incest, rape and foetal impairment up to 24 weeks and pave way for safe abortion practices. However, the President Koroma has stated that a referendum must be held on the issue after meeting with religious leaders as they "a huge constituency across the country."

Keywords: Sierra Leone, Religion, Abortion, Women, President

## **Peace, Reconciliation and Interfaith Dialogue**

### **1. Pope on Good Friday decries terror profaning God's name**

Pope Francis at the traditional Good Friday cross procession denounced those committing "terrorist acts" while profaning God's name and lamented what he called "anesthetized" consciences over war refugees flooding Europe. Francis renewed his condemnation of what he has called indifference and inhospitality to those risking their lives in unseaworthy smugglers' boats in hopes of finding refuge on European shores from war and other violence.

Keywords: Pope Francis, Good Friday, Terrorism