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

Religious Conflict

1. Bangladesh police detain seven suspected militants in raid

Bangladeshi police detained seven suspected Islamic militants and seized explosives and grenades during a raid. Bangladesh is facing a problem of increasing violence conducted by the Islamic militants. Several liberal activists and Shi'ite Muslims have been killed by the violent acts of these militants and the raid suggests that violent acts will still likely continue.

Keywords: Bangladesh, Islam, Islamic militants, violent killings

2. As Islamic State threat mounts on its doorstep, Indonesia scours a jungle

Indonesian forces have begun operating in Sulawesi jungles in an attempt to capture Santoso, the first Indonesian militant leader who has pledged loyalty to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). He is known for his networks and contacts with ISIS fighters in Syria and the authorities are concerned about his influence. The authorities have also foiled attacks planned by ISIS supporters in Jakarta in raids. These show the increasing ISIS influence in various parts of Indonesia.

Keywords: Indonesia, Sulawesi, Jakarta, ISIS, Santoso

3. At least 48 killed in bombings in north Nigeria

Two bombings occurred in a Maiduguri and Madagali in Nigeria, killing at least 48 people. Although no group or individual has claimed responsibility for the attacks, the attacks were characteristic of the Boko Haram, whose militants fought government forces in Maiduguri the day before. The two bombings occurred at a mosque and a market, signaling a growing trend of Boko Haram's attacks on "soft targets", if they are confirmed to be responsible for the attacks.

Keywords: Nigeria, Boko Haram, Suicide Bombing, Islamic State

Religious Controversies

1. Calls for Cameron to step in after US bans British Muslim family from Disneyland trip

A British Muslim family planning to travel to the US to visit Disneyland was told their travel authorization was cancelled by US Homeland Security at the departure lounge without providing reasons. Noting that there was a rise in such incidents, Member of Parliament Stella Creasy requested for Prime Minister David Cameron to step in. A Downing Street spokeswoman said Cameron would consider the issues raised in Creasy's letter and respond in due course.

Keywords: The United States, British Muslims, Banned from the US

2. Stir over Langkawi housing project's cross-shaped air wells prompts developer to repaint them

The property developer of a terrace-house project had to repaint the air wells of the houses after the cross-shaped air wells sparked an outcry. The controversy led the Kedah state government to intervene as the controversy had gone viral in social media and had the potential to turn into a religious issue.

Keywords: Malaysia, Langkawi, Muslims, Christians, crucifixes

Secularism, Religious Freedom and New Religious Movements

1. A quiet Christmas in Brunei as ban on festivities sets in

Brunei's Christians have been preparing for Christmas celebrations at home and in churches privately, as the government has banned open displays of Christmas trees and Santa Claus figures since 2014, and disallows Muslims from joining in the celebrations. A representative from the Religious Affairs Ministry said the ban was to prevent deviation from the Islamic faith. He also said that the ban was not particular to Christianity and applies to other festive celebrations like Chinese New Year as well.

Keywords: Brunei, Christmas, Islam, Christians, Muslims

2. Ahmadiyya Muslim minority find religious freedom in Australia

Practitioners of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community celebrated their annual conference, Jalsa Salana, at a mosque dedicated to the faith in Sydney, Australia. The Ahmadiya community has faced religious persecution since its establishment as it is perceived by the broader Muslim community to defy the Prophet Mohammad. Hence, members of the community were elated that they can practice their faith openly in Australia. They also appealed to the Australian public not to perceive them as extremists as they are also victims of the Islamic State (ISIS).

Keywords: Sydney, Ahmadiyya Muslim, Religious minority group, ISIS

Peace, Reconciliation and Interfaith Dialogue

1. Respect other religions for others to respect ours: Zahid

Malaysia's Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid urged Malaysians to learn to respect the religion of others in order to earn respect for their own religion. Citing the religious and racial harmony in Malaysia as part of a unique Malaysian identity, he reiterated the importance of inter-religious harmony for the peace and prosperity of the country. This is a vision of the early Malaysian leaders which current Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak is also committed to.

Keywords: Malaysia, religious harmony, respect religious other