

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

Religious Conflict

1. Imam network launches site to counter Isis propaganda

British Muslim religious and community leaders have launched an online magazine, Haqiqah (Reality), to counter the extremist views of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). It portrays ISIS as having failed in establishing a caliphate and resulting in a migrant crisis instead. This effort also demonstrates the Muslim community's acknowledgment that online and social media have become more effective in resisting ISIS' reach to potential foreign believers and fighters.

#Britain #Muslims #Social Media #CounterExtremism

[Source: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/08/imam-network-website-counter-isis-propaganda-haqiqah>]

2. Hundreds face off in Australian town in anti-Islam protest

Hundreds of right-wing activists in Australia's Bendigo protested against a planned construction of a mosque in an attempt to prevent the spread of Islam. The dispute had went on for months but exacerbated by the recent attack on a police officer by a Muslim youth in Sydney. The protest was part of a coordinated series of worldwide anti-Islam protests organized by fringe extremists groups.

#Australia #Protest #Antislam #Mosque

[Source: <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2015/10/10/uk-australia-protest-idUKKCN0S40A220151010>]

Religious Controversies

1. Egypt to ban niqab-wearing women from voting

Following Cairo University's ban on lecturers wearing the niqab in class, the Supreme Electoral Commission of Egypt has banned women voters wearing the niqab (full face veil) from voting at the upcoming parliamentary elections if they do not remove the face veil for identity verification purposes. Meanwhile, a number of female candidates are running in the elections wearing the 'Niqab', notably members of the Salafist Al-Nour Party, amid wide media criticism.

#Egypt #NiqabBan

[Source: <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/news/africa/21532-egypt-to-ban-niqab-wearing-women-from-voting>, <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2015/10/08/electoral-commission-to-ban-niqab-wearing-women-from-voting/>]

2. Muslims Discriminated Against in Labour Market in France

A French researcher found that Muslim job applicants are twice as unlikely as Catholics to be invited to interviews in France. The research concluded that Muslims are likely to be discriminated against in France's labour market due to a perceived fear of demands of a religious nature and conflict between male and female employees. This conclusion was reached after fictitious job applicants were sent to respond to more than 6,200 job offers for accountants and assistant accountants.

#France #Discrimination #Muslims #Workforce

[Source: <http://allafrica.com/stories/201510091757.html>; <http://www.parisschoolofeconomics.eu/en/news/marie-anne-valfort-yes-muslims-are-discriminated-against-in-france-yes-solutions-exist-4275/>]

3. Despite lawsuit threat, mayor says Wilmore will not remove cross from water tower

The town of Wilmore in Kentucky, the United States had been requested by the Freedom from Religion, a liberal group, to remove the cross from its water tower, citing it as unconstitutional. However, the mayor of the town refused to remove the cross, stating that the water tower and the cross had been part of the town's identity for more than 40 years and there had not been opposition to the cross during this period of time. In addition, a private Christian college had constructed and been maintaining the water tower.

#Religion #Identity

[Source: http://www.kentucky.com/2015/10/11/4082831_despite-lawsuit-threat-mayor-says.html?rh=1]

Secularism, Religious Freedom and New Religious Movements

1. Vietnam always ensures religious freedom, official tells seminar with EU

Vietnam is committed to protect the religious freedom of its people as a basic human right by improving legislation and policies. A senior government official reiterated this view at a seminar with representatives from state agencies, religious leaders and representatives from the embassies of EU member states. The experience of EU member states in safeguarding religious freedom was also shared.

#Vietnam #ReligiousFreedom #HumanRights

[Source: <http://tuoitrenews.vn/politics/30901/vietnam-always-ensures-religious-freedom-official-tells-seminar-with-eu>]

2. KAZAKHSTAN: Secret police-inspired criminal prosecutions

Members of the National Security Committee Secret Police in Kazakhstan seemed to have been deeply involved in persecuting several individuals for sowing religious discord, keeping close surveillance on individuals who have been discussing their faiths with and offering religious literature to others.

#Kazakhstan #ReligiousIntolerance #SecretPolice

[Source: http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2110]

3. Israel May Be Taking First Steps Toward Becoming a Halakhic State

Israel's Ministerial Committee for Legislation is considering a new bill that requires the incorporating of Jewish religious law into Israeli Law. Critics are concerned about the relevance and sentiments of coercion of the ancient

religious law in the pluralistic society of Israel today. In addition, passing such a bill could undermine Israel's status as a democratic, secular state.

#Israel #Law #Secular #ReligiousLaw #Halakhic #JewishLaw

[Source: http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2110]

4. Oklahoma, Arkansas come out strongly in defence of students' right to pray in school

Officials from Oklahoma and Arkansas states have defended prayer sessions in schools from a complaint of the atheist group, Freedom from Religion Foundation, citing the ban as “too broad” and restricting the rights of students to pray. Students and Staff of an athletic event in Ashdown, Arkansas also responded by holding a prayer session comprising members of opposing teams, coaches, referees and spectators.

#Prayer #Schools #ReligiousFreedom #Oklahoma #Arkansas

[Source: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/oklahoma.arkansas.come.out.strongly.in.defence.of.students.right.to.pray.in.school/67180.htm>; <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/oklahoma.arkansas.come.out.strongly.in.defence.of.students.right.to.pray.in.school/67180.htm>]

5. Tajik public servants prohibited from attending regular Friday Prayers in mosques

While Tajikistan's constitution protects religious freedom, Tajik civil servants have seemingly been prohibited from attending Friday prayers at mosques although interviewed officials refuted this prohibition. In addition, children below the age of 18 are also prohibited from Friday prayers at mosques except those attending state-run religious schools and on religious festivals and funerals.

#Tajikistan #Prayers #Islam #ReligiousFreedom

[Source: <http://www.asiaplus.tj/en/news/tajik-public-servants-prohibited-attending-regular-friday-prayers-mosques>]

Peace, Reconciliation and Interfaith Dialogue

1. Interfaith Leaders Support Mosques Against Protest

Leaders of different faiths attended an Islamic service at the Islamic Society of North America Headquarters to support the Muslim community in response to anti-Islamic “Global Rally for Humanity” protests and rallies planned across several cities in the United States. These protests, planned to target mosques, Islamic community centres and government buildings, were eventually “smothered” by supporters of tolerance

#Interfaith #Tolerance #Islamophobia

[Source: <http://www.onislam.net/english/news/americas/494937-interfaith-leaders-support-mosques-against-protest.html>; <http://www.onislam.net/english/news/americas/494961-us-anti-muslim-rallies-turns-into-support.html>]

2. Sikhs Set Up Free Bakery Near War Zone to Feed Fleeing Syrians

Langar Aid, a UK-based organization, has set up a bakery in a refugee camp, five miles from the Syrian border. The Sikh volunteers have been running the bakery for nearly a year and feed 14,000 people a day.

#Sikhs #Syria #CivilWar #Volunteer #Langar #RefugeeCamp

[Source: <http://www.goodnewsnetwork.org/sikhs-set-up-free-bakery-near-syrian-border/>]

3. When a Muslim Woman Found a Temple Near Her Home, Here's What Happened

A Muslim woman, in the Indian state of Maharashtra, discovered an abandoned temple and helped rebuild it. Today the doors of the temple are open to both Hindus and Muslims to participate in and celebrate festivals of both the religions.

#India #Temple #HinduMuslims #Interfaith

[Source: <http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/when-a-muslim-woman-found-a-temple-near-her-home-heres-what-happened-1231374>]

4. Non-Muslims help repair Punjab mosque

In a small village in India, non-Muslims are bearing the majority of the cost for repairing a mosque. Despite the skewed religious make-up of the village, 500 Muslims in a population of 7000, it hasn't seen communal disharmony. During partition too the village was untouched by communal violence even though it sits close to the India-Pakistan border. The village's different religious take pride in this and consider all villagers as family, regardless of their faith.

#Punjab #India #Mosque #Interfaith

[Source: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Non-Muslims-help-repair-Punjab-mosque/articleshow/49266111.cms>]