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

Religion and Conflict

1. Tajikistan shaves 13,000 beards in 'radicalism' battle

Police in Tajikistan have shaved nearly 13,000 people's beards and closed more than 160 shops selling traditional Muslim clothing last year as part of the country's fight against what it calls "foreign" influences. Additionally, according to the law enforcement agencies in the Muslim-majority country they have convinced more than 1,700 women and girls to stop wearing headscarves. These moves are seen as part of efforts to battle what authorities deem "radicalism" as the country's secular leadership seeks to stop growing Afghan cultural influence in the country.

Keywords: Tajikistan, Radicalism, Afghanistan

2. Islamic State razing of Iraq monastery condemned

The Islamic State group has been condemned by the Vatican and the Obama administration for destroying Iraq's oldest Christian monastery, a 1400-year-old structure. St. Elijah's monastery in Mosul has joined a growing list of more than 100 demolished religious and historic sites, including mosques, tombs, shrines and churches in Syria and Iraq. The extremists have defaced or ruined ancient monuments in Nineveh, Palmyra and Hatra. Museums and libraries have been looted, books burned, artwork crushed — or trafficked.

Keywords: ISIS, Iraq, St. Elijah, Monastery, Mosul, Vatican

Secularism, Religious Freedom and New Religious Movements

1. Indonesia province bans small Islamic sect from 'spreading faith'

A province in Indonesia has banned Ahmadiyahs - a minority Islamic sect - from conducting religious activities, a move activists say raises concerns over intolerance in the Muslim-majority nation. Indonesia has the world's largest population of Muslims, the majority of whom adhere to moderate Sunni beliefs. But hardline Indonesian Muslims accuse Ahmadiyah and other Muslim minorities of apostasy.

Keywords: Indonesia, Ahmadiyah, Banned, Muslim, Minorities

Peace, Reconciliation and Interfaith Dialogue

1. Pope Francis meets Iran's president to boost nuke deal, Mideast peace

Pope Francis and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani met for talks on Tuesday — the first such encounter since 1999 — in a private meeting in which the pontiff pressed Rouhani on fostering Middle East peace and countering terrorism and arms trafficking.

Keywords: Pope Francis, Vatican, Iran, Iranian President, Peace

2. Muslim leaders to hold summit on protecting non-Muslims

Muslim scholars will meet in Morocco to discuss how to protect non-Muslims living in their communities. The summit is the first of its kind in almost 1,400 years and is expected to attract more than 300 Islamic leaders from Muslim majority nations, including Iraq, Turkey and Egypt. The key aim of the conference is to release a new declaration, rooted in Islamic Law, to reaffirm the rights of religious minorities, the Washington Post reported.

Keywords: Muslims, Non-Muslims, Harmony, Declaration, Morocco