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

Religious Conflict

1. Obama visits Rohingya Muslim Refugees in Malaysia

US President Barack Obama visited Rohingya refugee children from Myanmar living in Malaysia, on the sideline of the ASEAN summit. During the visit he said that the children were "the face of not only refugees from Myanmar - that's the face of Syrian children and Iraqi children". The comparison not only highlighted the plight of refugees but was also a response to America's internal debate over welcoming Syrian and Iraq migrants in the United States.

Keywords: Barack Obama, US, Rohingya, Refugees, ASEAN, Migrant crisis

2. Thai military court charges Bangkok blast suspects

A military court in Thailand charged two Uighur men, from China's Xinjiang province, with carrying out the deadly August bombing at a Bangkok shrine that left 20 people dead and more than 120 injured. The two, identified as Bilal Mohammad and Yusufu Mieraili, faced 10 charges in connection with the blast at Erawan Shrine.

Keywords: Bangkok, Thailand, Erawan Shrine, Bomb blast, Uighurs

3. West Bank: Israeli woman killed as West Bank deaths spiral

A 21 year-old woman in West Bank became the latest victim of attacks by Palestinians on Israelis. The latest spate of violence began in September amidst heightened tensions and rumours that Israel planned to relax long-standing rules to strengthen Jewish rights over a sensitive holy site in Jerusalem. The site is revered by both Jews and Muslims and is at the heart of the Israel-Palestine conflict.

In response to the attacks, Israel has [outlawed](#) Islamic Movement of Israel, an Islamist group, for allegedly inciting the country's Arab citizens and fuelling the two-month wave of deadly

violence. The group, which provides religious and educational services for Israeli Arabs, has routinely accused Israel of trying to take over the holy site, a charge Israel denies.

Keywords: West Bank, Israel, Palestine, Violence, Stabbing

4. Isis: UN in rare unanimous vote calls on world to unite against jihadist group

The United Nations unanimously adopted a resolution against the Islamic State (ISIS) in the aftermath of the Paris attacks, imploring the world to unite to defeat the terrorist organisation. It called on member states to “redouble and coordinate their efforts” to prevent further terrorist horrors by the group and “eradicate” its safe havens straddling parts of Iraq and Syria.

Keywords: United Nation, ISIS, Paris attacks

Religious Controversies

1. Mosques vandalised as US states reject Syria refugees

Several mosques have been vandalised and a number of suspected hate crimes targeting Muslims were carried out after 27 United States governors announced they would not accept Syrian refugees in their states, citing the recent Paris attacks.

Keywords: US, Syria, Iraq, ISIS, Refugee crisis

2. Jihadi Groups Dominate Global Terrorism

According to the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) 2015, published by the Institute for Economics & Peace, terrorist activity increased by 80 per cent in 2014, with Boko Haram and ISIS responsible for half the deaths from terrorism worldwide. Moreover, it also highlights that terrorist activity was highly concentrated in just five countries, where 78 per cent of all terrorist related deaths occurred – Iraq, Nigeria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Syria.

Keywords: Terrorism, Global Landscape, ISIS, Boko Haram

3. ISIS claims attack on Italian priest in Bangladesh

ISIS claimed it was behind the shooting and injuring of an Italian priest in Bangladesh. The 57-year-old priest and doctor Piero Parolari was shot at from close range while he was cycling down to a Catholic missionary hospital.

Keywords: ISIS, Bangladesh, Priest, Attack

Secularism, Religious Freedom and New Religious Movements

1. Saudi court sentences poet to death for renouncing Islam

A Saudi court sentenced Ashraf Fayadh, Palestinian poet and member of Saudi Arabia's contemporary art scene, to death for renouncing Islam. He was originally sentenced to four years in prison and 800 lashes by a city general court. However, after his appeal was dismissed he was retried last month and a new panel of judges ruled that his repentance did not prevent his execution.

Keywords: Ashraf Fayadh, Saudi Arabia, Death Penalty, Art

2. India among highest supporters for religious freedom: Pew Research

After having been at the center of a storm concerning growing religious intolerance, a new research carried out by Pew found that India is among the world's highest supporters for religious freedom. However, it also found the country to be lagging behind on several measures of free expression including government censorship, competitive elections and internet freedom.

Keywords: India, Religious Freedom, Pew, Freedom of Expression

Peace, Reconciliation and Interfaith Dialogue

1. 'Religion, Peace and Violence' is theme for Christian-Muslim meeting days after Paris, Beirut attacks

In the backdrop of the Paris attacks, Christian and Muslims came together and partook in interfaith dialogue, at the Ecumenical Center in Geneva, Switzerland. The participants discussed the misuse of religion to justify violence in order to "secure selfish interests" among other things. They also recognized that women are disproportionately victims of religiously motivated violence.

Keywords: Singapore, Paris attacks, religious harmony