

Weekly Report (25 -29 September 2015)

Religious Conflict

1. Christian-Muslim Brawl Leaves 24 Dead, 100 Injured

Major sectarian violence between Christians and Muslims in Bangui, the capital of the Central African Republic, has left at least 24 people dead and over 100 wounded over the weekend. The clash intensified recently due to the death of a Muslim taxi driver, who was believed to be murdered by Christian militiaman. Muslim protesters called for the step down of the interim President for her nonchalance. CAR has for years been embroiled in sectarian violence between Muslims and Christians.

<http://www.christianpost.com/news/christian-muslim-brawl-with-machetes-and-grenades-leaves-24-dead-100-injured-146354/>

2. Clashes resume near Jerusalem's Muslim, Jewish holy sites

Israeli police and Palestinians clashed on 27 September at Jerusalem's al-Aqsa mosque compound, where violence in recent weeks has raised international concern. A surge of Palestinian stone-throwing has been observed in recent violence in the occupied territory, with four Palestinian teenagers arrested for involvement in a stone-throwing attack.

<http://www.religionnews.com/2015/09/28/clashes-resume-near-jeruselems-muslim-jewish-holy-sites/>

Religious Controversies

1. TAJIKISTAN: Communities' foreign contacts blocked, websites banned, Central Asia's only legal religious-based political party banned

Several non-Muslim religious communities are facing tight restrictions over links with foreigners and foreign organisations, including fellow-believers and religious scholars. The state has also blocked access to some websites containing certain religious information, and fined two women for “teaching religion unlawfully”.

http://forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2105

2. Man Killed by Mob near India's capital Over Beef Rumours

A 50-year-old man was beaten to death by a mob near Delhi, allegedly over rumours that his family had eaten beef. In India, a Hindu majority country, there have been numerous debates and controversies regarding beef ban given that a number of Hindus consider cows to be a sacred animal. In 2015, the Maharashtra government imposed a beef ban and in September the Jammu state high court asked local authorities to enforce the ban on selling beef.

<http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/man-killed-by-mob-near-delhi-over-beef-rumours-1224514>

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/india/j-k-high-court-s-beef-ban-trouble-lands-in-sc-now/story-R23q08Vk5QCZNdOIOSBrTP.html>

Secularism, Religious Freedom and New Religious Movements

1. Pastor Saeed Abedini Tasered, Threatened With New Charges and More Time in Iran Prison as Wife Pleads for His Release

After 67 Parliamentarians signed a letter to the Speaker of the Iranian Parliament calling for the release of Pastor Saeed, who, according to his wife, was forced to deny his Christian faith and return to Islam. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom marked Abedini's anniversary in prison, arguing that the pastor is being punished unjustly.

<http://www.christianpost.com/news/pastor-saeed-abedini-tasered-threatened-with-new-charges-and-more-time-in-iran-prison-as-wife-pleads-for-his-release-146105/>

2. Secular thinkers under attack in India as religious fundamentalism grows

In the last three years, several prominent secular figures have been killed in India. In the world's largest democracy, liberal activists and writers have come under increasing pressure from fundamentalist groups and religious organizations.

<http://www.latimes.com/world/asia/la-fg-asia-writers-killings-20150927-story.html>

3. Argentinian pastor's fight for religious freedom goes on

Argentinian Pastor Marcelo Nieva has been embroiled in two court cases following the introduction of Argentina's Law 9891. The pastor, who was forced to close his Pueblo Grande church by local authorities and survived an assassination attempt, believes that the law is having a negative impact on religious freedom.

https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2015/09/4024157/?utm_source=Newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=Argentinian+pastor%27s+fight+for+religious+freedom+goes+on&utm_campaign=Argentinian+pastor%27s+fight+for+religious+freedom+goes+on

4. Jedi not religious enough for a tax break in New Zealand, says Department of Internal Affairs

New Zealand's Department of Internal Affairs has rejected a request by the Jedi Society Incorporated to be recognised as a legitimate charitable endeavour. A census conducted in 2011, shows that nearly 19,089 Kiwis have declared themselves to be Jedi adherents. However, the 19,000-odd force "protecting the galaxy" and "keeping an eye on agents of the dark side" isn't strong enough to be recognized as neither a charity nor a religion.

<http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/72469390/Jedi-not-religious-enough-for-a-tax-break-in-New-Zealand-says-Department-of-Internal-Affairs>

5. Indian state mulls separate law for Buddhist marriages

In the Indian state of Maharashtra the government is working towards introducing a separate legislation to govern Buddhist marriages and inheritance laws in the state. In India, Jains, Buddhists and Sikhs legally fall under the category of Hindus and are governed by the Hindu personal laws. However, a special committee created by state department of Social Justice and Empowerment is looking into this matter. The draft of the law is required to be finished and presented to the state government within one month. In the recent past, a separate act was drafted for Sikhs and they can now register their marriages under the Anand act.

<http://indianexpress.com/article/india/maharashtra/maharashtra-mulls-separate-law-for-buddhist-marriages/>

Peace, Reconciliation and Interfaith Dialogue

1. Malaysian parish brings together Christians and Muslims to march for peace and unity

The Church of Divine Mercy in Selangor organised a 'Walk of faiths in friendship', bringing together people of different religious background, including Christians, Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists, calling for respect among different faiths.

<http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Malaysian-parish-brings-together-Christians-and-Muslims-to-march-for-peace-and-unity-35402.html>

2. Pope Francis Assembles a Squad to Fight Religious Extremism

During Pope Francis's speech at a memorial gathering of 9/11 in New York, which attended by leaders of several main religions, he called for a protest against religious extremism.

<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/09/pope-francis-assembles-a-squad-to-fight-religious-extremism/407452/>

3. Biggest Sikh Gurdwara in Middle East opens its doors to Muslims on Eid, as it always has

The Guru Nanak Darbar in Dubai welcomed thousands of Muslims inside its doors on the occasion of Eid to come pray inside and enjoy the free *langar* meal. The Gurdwara, opened three years ago, has a tradition of holding special events for Muslims around Eid.

<http://bendit.tv/55>