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

Religious Conflict

1. France likely to close more than 100 mosques

A leading Imam in France believes that France is seeking to close more than 160 mosques under the current state of emergency after the November 13 attacks in Paris. Hassan El Alaoui said that the mosques that are likely to be closed are those that are unlicensed, preach hatred and use “Takfiri” (accusing others of the same religions of apostasy) speech.

Keywords: France, Paris Attacks, Islam, Mosques

2. After Paris and California attacks, U.S. Muslims feel intense backlash

There has been a rise of violent acts, such as gunshots and vandalism, against mosques and Muslims in the United States following the Paris attacks. Muslims are bracing themselves for a more hostile environment in which Americans are increasingly suspicious of Muslims. They also lamented that Americans do not seem to be able to differentiate the radical Islamist militants from the religion and its other non-extremist followers.

Keywords: United States, Paris attacks, San Bernardino attacks, Islam, Muslims, Extremism

Religious Controversies

1. Far-Right Israeli Jews Declare War on Christmas

A far-right Jewish group in Israel, Lehava, claimed that the YMCA in Jerusalem was attempting to convert Jewish children to Christians by organising an event encouraging children to decorate Christmas trees. They protested outside the YMCA even though the event was intended for Jerusalem’s Christians.

Keywords: Israel, Jerusalem, Jews, Christians, Lehava, YMCA

2. Donald Trump faces global firestorm over Muslim ban call

Mr. Donald Trump, the leading candidate for the Republican presidential nomination, sparked controversy and faced backlash after making a call for “total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country’s representatives can figure out what is going on”. His remarks came after the San Bernardino shootings by a radicalised Muslim couple that left 14 dead.

Keywords: United States, San Bernardino Shootings, Islam, Donald Trump, Muslims

Secularism, Religious Freedom and New Religious Movements

1. Iceland: New religion aims to cut church-state ties

A new religion, Zuism, is gaining popularity in Iceland for promising rebates on the religious taxes of their followers. The new religion currently has more than 1,000 followers, and is based on the ancient Sumerian beliefs. It seeks to abolish state funding for religious groups, apportioned from citizens' income taxes and known as parish fees. They have also stated that the organization will be disbanded once its objectives have been achieved.

Keywords: Iceland, Zuism, New Religion, State funding for religious groups

2. Sarawak continues to strive for religious freedom, says Adenan

Sarawak Chief Minister Chief Minister Tan Sri Adenan Satem stated at a Christmas parade that the state government would reject any forms of conversion in line with the state’s policy of religious freedom. He further assured that the state government recognizes the strong unity of multicultural society in the state and would support religious activities of the various religious groups.

Keywords: Malaysia, Sarawak, Religious freedom

Peace, Reconciliation and Interfaith Dialogue

1. Inter-religion event aims to foster mutual understanding

The management of Imambara Sibtainabad in Lucknow will be organising an inter-religious event on the eve of the “Chehellum”, the 40th day of the martyrdom of Imam Husain (Grandson of Prophet Mohammad), to promote cross-cultural, inter-faith dialogue. Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians will be sharing the stage, discussing humanity, touching upon various aspects of the message from the tragedy of Karbala in 680 AD.

Keywords: India, Lucknow, inter-faith dialogue

2. Richardson interfaith group aims to support beleaguered local mosque

The Richardson Interfaith Alliance seeks to promote mutual understanding between Muslims and Christians, including visits to Islamic Association of North Texas (IANT). The IANT has been targeted by protestors since last year and the recent Paris attacks have ignited more protests against them. The protests prompted a discussion within the Richardson Interfaith Alliance of how to support the IANT without being political or inflammatory toward the protesters.

Keywords: United States, Richardson, Interfaith Alliance, Islam