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

Religious Conflict

1. Egyptian Christians stage protest for rights in Cairo

Some three dozen Egyptian Christians staged a rare protest in downtown Cairo to demand the government uphold their rights as citizens of Egypt. Christian leaders have claimed a rise in the number of attacks against Christians. Further, interfaith disputes among Christians and the majority Muslim population were common in the countryside, with some of these conflicts escalating to violent confrontations perpetrated against the former group.

Keywords: Egypt, Christians, Muslims, Interfaith

2. Queens imam and assistant shot to death by gunman in attack

An imam in Queens, USA, Maulama Akonjee, and his assistant Thara Uddin were shot to death from point-blank range, as they were walking home from prayers. Some local residents denounced the incident as a hate crime but authorities investigating the case also pointed to the possibility of a botched robbery. Nonetheless, while the motives of the crime remained unclear, Mayor of New York City Bill de Blasio also acknowledged the escalation of anti-Islam hostilities – much of it connected to Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump’s aggressive campaigning.

Keywords: USA, Hate Crime, Islamophobia, Islam

Religious Controversies

1. Burkini swimsuits banned in French city

The mayor of Cannes, a prominent city in France, has banned the burkini or full-body swimsuits. Mayor David Lisner claimed that the burkini is “a symbol of Islamic extremism” and “not respectful of good morals and secularism”. Further, against the backdrop of terrorist attacks in France and other places of worship, Lisner argued that the burkini is an ostentatious display of religious affiliation and “might create risks of disrupting public order”. France’s Prime Minister has backed the banning of burkini swimsuits, saying that they were not compatible with French values and were based on the enslavement of women.

Keywords: France, Secularism, Islam, Burkini ban

2. Jordanian writer charged with offending Islam over cartoon on Facebook

Jordanian newspaper columnist Nahed Hattar was charged with offending Islam after he shared a cartoon depicting God and heaven on his Facebook. The cartoon was meant as a satire of how extremists viewed the afterlife, yet it sparked accusations of blasphemy and distorting the image of Islam. Analysts said the public backlash was excessive and might even sow discord between Christians and Muslims as Hattar was Christian.

Keywords: Jordan, Islam, Cartoons

3. Right-wing protestors staged a demonstration outside Anglican church in Australia

Right-wing protestors from the Party for Freedom organization dressed in mock Muslim outfits and stormed a church service at Gosford Anglican Church in Australia. They had entered the church and pretended to pray while playing Muslim prayers over a loudspeaker. The incident was a demonstration against the church's support for multiculturalism and immigration.

Keywords: Australia, Protest, Multiculturalism

Peace, Reconciliation and Interfaith Dialogue

1. Christians, Jews and Muslims to gather at Jerusalem festival

As part of the annual Mekudeshet Festival organised by the Jerusalem Season of Culture, a new interfaith and spiritual gathering of Christians, Jews and Muslims is slated to take place this September in Jerusalem. For a month, representatives from the three religions will offer a series of discussions as well as prayers in Arabic, Coptic and Hebrew.

Keywords: Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Interfaith, Festival

2. Survey finds that college students care about interfaith cooperation

The latest Interfaith Diversity Experiences and Attitudes Longitudinal Survey (IDEALS), which gauged United States' college students' affinity for interfaith cooperation, found that 71 per cent of incoming college freshmen in 2015 expected their educational institutions to provide opportunities for interreligious learning. However, the survey also found that many colleges fell short of students' expectations, with many students leaving campus with unclarified biases of certain faith groups. The survey can be found [here](#).

Keywords: Interfaith, Higher education, US