



Item 3: Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion

OHCHR report [A/HRC/43/48](#):

The report addresses gender-based violence and **discrimination in the name of religion**. It provides examples of the use of religion or belief to perpetrate gender-based violence and discrimination.

Main topics addressed: Religiously grounded gender-based discrimination by State laws; political and religious campaigns seeking to rollback human rights fundamental to gender equality; religion-based initiatives to promote respect and right to equality.

Mr. Ahmed Shaheed – Special Rapporteur (SR) on Freedom of Religion (Presenting the report):

In the framework of the 25th anniversary of Beijing declaration, the report focuses on the **overlap between freedom of religion or belief and gender discrimination**. It seeks to raise awareness to different contexts in which gender based discrimination emanates from religious authorities.

The report identified situations in which **states have restricted gender equality in the name of religious policies**. It is concerning that in many parts of the world, actors seeking justification of their discriminatory practices have been using **religions to deny women and other individuals their basic freedoms**. The report also mentions that gender based violence and discriminations are being perpetrated within **religious communities**.

SR country visit to Netherlands:

While freedom of religion is a practical reality in Netherlands, there are still challenges with growing intolerance towards Jewish and Muslim communities. Efforts to strengthen the capacities of frontline actors should continue.

SR country visit to Sri Lanka:

Mr. Shaheed was encouraged by the Government actions in strengthening institutions and local dialogue between religious actors, but concerned about lack of measures to prevent ethnic conflict. Legal framework in Sri Lanka guarantees freedom of religion. But in practice it is more concerning.

Country reply: Netherlands

Protection of freedom of religion is a priority. Netherlands support the mandate of SR and appreciate his recommendations. Netherlands echo the SR concerns about discriminations against Jewish and Muslim communities. The country is committed to continue investing in capacity building for police..

Country reply: Sri Lanka

The visit of Mr Shaheed occurred just after the terrorist attacks causing the deaths of more than 200 peoples. It was a time of trouble and social tensions. The SR report judged the scale of freedom of religion in Sri Lanka solely on the basis of the context after the terrorist attacks.

List of speakers – States: **African States:** Sierra Leone, Sudan, Senegal, Cameroon, Angola, Eritrea. **Asia-Pacific States:** Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, Myanmar, Indonesia, China, Nepal, Solomon Islands. **Middle East:** Qatar on behalf of the Arab Group, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, Syrian Arab Republic, Iran, Lebanon, Iraq. **Eastern European States:** Hungary, Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, Russian Federation, Bulgaria, Albania, Ukraine, Armenia. **Western Europe and Other States:** Canada, Holy See, Norway on behalf of a group of countries, France, European Union, Italy, Netherlands, Denmark, Ireland, Greece, Malta, Belgium, Poland, United Kingdom, Slovakia. **Latin American and Caribbean States:** Argentina on behalf of a group of countries, Brazil, Ecuador, Cuba, Venezuela, Guyana, Mexico, Barbados, Haiti,

List of Speakers – Other Stakeholders: UN Women, Sovereign Order of Malta, Organization of Islamic Cooperation, World Jewish Congress, Human Rights Law Centre; Christian Solidarity Worldwide; American Civil Liberties Union; World Evangelical Alliance; COC Nederland; Franciscans Int.; Center for Inquiry; International Humanist and Ethical Union; British Humanist Association

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