

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL - 49th SESSION

Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief

10 March 2022

In his opening remarks, **Mr. Ahmed Shaheed, Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief** highlighted that situations of conflict and insecurity frequently disproportionately affect the most marginalized members of society. He expressed his concern for the systematic violations perpetrated against members of religious or belief minorities during conflicts and insecurity. He also highlighted the situation of many religious or belief minority women, who often experience intersecting or compounding vulnerabilities because of their religion or belief identity, including shocking reports of sexual and gender-based violence. He recalled it is essential not to overstate or overestimate the role of religion in either furthering conflict or peace-making efforts to the exclusion of other factors and motivations involved. The Special Rapporteur suggested reforms to both policy and practice, ranging from that of States to humanitarian actors, civil society and social media companies. He will pursue the operationalization of **Interactive dialogue:** **Afghanistan** remarked that since the Taliban's control, religious freedom had dramatically worsened and called for accountability. **Armenia** denounced Azerbaijan's efforts of erasing the indigenous Armenian heritage in the territories of Nagorno Karabakh. **Brazil (on behalf of the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance)** showed their concern for attacks on places of worship in Myanmar, the impact of the crisis in Afghanistan on religious minorities, the fate of missing Yezidi women and children, persecution against Jehovah's Witnesses, and had released a statement in support of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community and on the situation in Ukraine. **China** condemned Muslims being often the target of hate crimes and discrimination attacks in the USA and called on the Special Rapporteur to report on the systematic violations of Muslim's human rights in Western countries, further opposing the report's attacks against China based on fabricated lies by Western media and anti-China forces. **India** also rejected the report as it presents unfounded allegations against the country based on unverified information. **Indonesia** denounced the Special Rapporteur's irresponsible framing of protests in the country in which religion and belief had nothing to do with it. **Venezuela** called attention to the rise of far-right ideologies that encourage religious hatred and intolerance, particularly against Muslim populations in the global North. The country said that anti-terrorism policies have fostered discrimination and violence and that the report uses unverified information on China which compromises the credibility of the Special Rapporteur's work. The **Russian Federation** stated that the report is biased and ignores the persecution of parishioners in Ukraine.

Denmark (on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries) recognized religious extremism as an important driver for conflict in parts of Western Africa, Africa's Horn, the Middle East and elsewhere. They and the **EU** stressed the need to prohibit and prevent violence based on religion or belief in the context of Russia's ongoing illegal aggression against Ukraine, and urged Russia to refrain from any such acts. Additionally, the EU voiced its concerns about the persecution of persons belonging to religious and ethnic minorities, in particular Crimean Tatars. **Iraq** expressed its commitment to strengthen accountability and collect evidence for the crimes of the terrorist organization ISIS. **Iran** expressed its concern for increased islamophobia. **Egypt** is working to intensify awareness campaigns among citizens to enhance the values of coexistence. **The Holy See** expressed its concern about the severity of human rights violations against Christians, Jews, Muslims and condemned the use of oppressive counterterrorism measures to infringe on the rights of religious or belief minorities in the name of combating "extremism" or threats to security. **Morocco (on behalf of the Arab Group)** called attention to the discrimination that migrants and asylum seekers are subjected to in some countries

**Point of Order: Israel (1), State of Palestine (1)*

NGOs regretted the elimination of emancipatory values and social plurality from public debate and public policies as well as the systematic increase in violence against the Kaiowá indigenous people in Brazil;

expressed concern over the situation in Nigeria where apostasy and blasphemy are outlawed by customary and sharia systems alike, and punishable by death; said that the COVID-19 pandemic has been used as a pretext for further repression of conflict-affected minorities such as displaced Rohingya in both Myanmar and India; expressed concern over the rise of religious intolerance such as antisemitism and the discrimination and victimization of minorities in India, in particular of Muslims and Christians.

Delegations that took the floor during the Interactive Dialogue (55 country delegations):

European Union, Brazil on behalf of International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance (Brazil, Hungary, Netherlands, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), Denmark on behalf of the Nordic and Baltic countries (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden), Morocco (on behalf of Group of Arab States), Poland (on behalf of a group of countries), Austria (on behalf of a group of countries), Sovereign Order of Malta, Canada, Egypt, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Sierra Leone, Nepal, Fiji, Venezuela (Bolivarian republic of), France, Malaysia, Iraq, Cuba, Luxembourg, India, Senegal, Namibia, Armenia, Netherlands, Cameroon, Pakistan, Indonesia, Russian Federation, Cambodia, South Africa, Sudan, Holy See, Bangladesh, Slovakia, United States of America, Belgium, Afghanistan, Bahrain, Israel, Albania, Croatia, Italy, Georgia, Malawi, Malta, Jordan, Azerbaijan, Yemen, Ukraine, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kazakhstan, Bulgaria, Saudi Arabia, State of Palestine, Syrian Arab Republic.

NGOs that took the floor during the Interactive Dialogue (9):

World Jewish Congress, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Jubilee Campaign, World Evangelical Alliance, International Fellowship of Reconciliation, Conselho Indigenista Missionário CIMI, British Humanist Association, ACT Alliance - Action by Churches Together, Minority Rights Group, Interfaith International.

To watch full meeting refer to UN Web TV, [part 1](#) and [part 2](#)