

Guidelines on reporting for publicity and advocacy

The Christian leaders gathered in the Issue Group ‘The persecuted church’ at the 2004 Forum held in Pattaya, Thailand found the following guidelines, initially developed by a Christian advocacy agency, helpful for those who are reporting on persecution. We have revised the document and added check lists. The IJRF wishes to contribute towards developing *best practice* among advocacy agencies for religious freedom and human rights. Please let us have other documents of similar nature.

The original source is: David Claydon (ed.). A new vision, a new heart, a renewed call. Lausanne Occasional Papers from the 2004 Forum for World Evangelization hosted by the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization in Pattaya, Thailand. Pasadena: William Carey Library 2005, Vol 1, p.194-198. - All Lausanne occasional papers can be downloaded from www.lausanne.org. [CS]

Keywords Best practice, information, advocacy, prayer

These guidelines relate to information gathering and dissemination of information for advocacy or publicity purposes.

Guiding principle

Challenge: Anyone who is involved with the persecuted Church can cite stories that falls short under any of the following categories: partly inaccurate, mostly inaccurate or completely inaccurate.

Causes: The cause can be the information gathering process: the sources prove to have been unreliable. The cause might also lie in the information dissemination process: media or advocacy organizations might misquote, take information out of context in a way which changes the meaning of the quote, or inflate numbers, etc.

Principle: Whether we are involved in the information gathering process or in the information disseminating process it is imperative that we make every effort to ensure the information does not contain any inaccuracy.

Rationale: This is important for two reasons, first of all the biblical imperative: The Bible commands us not to ‘give false testimony’ (Exodus 20:16) but to rejoice with the truth (1 Corinthians 13:6). Secondly there is an eminently practical imperative: Inaccuracies will have a negative impact for the victims of persecution, the information

source and the disseminator of information. Concerning the victims of persecution, people will become reluctant to help because they do not know what to believe any more. The source of the inaccurate information will be labelled as an unreliable source. The disseminators of the information (media or advocacy group) will lose their credibility which will impair the assistance they can give in current and future cases.

Guidelines for information gathering

Every effort must be made to make sure the information is:

- accurate (verified),
- timely (prompt and updated),
- usable (the type of information needed).

Accuracy

We have to make sure that every aspect of the information that we gather is accurate. That includes information about the victim(s), the perpetrators and the act(s) of persecution. Some guidelines that could increase the accuracy of information:

- Assess the reliability of your sources of information: are they known to you, what is their track record, would they benefit in any way from giving inflated or incorrect information, etc?
- Get as much information as possible from personal sources. Possible sources are: victim(s), eye witnesses, relatives and friends, media or human rights activists and religious or community leaders. Where possible also try to get information from the perpetrator(s).
- As much as possible cross-check every piece of information you have gathered with documentary evidence (court papers, police statements, medical statements, etc.)
- Assess the information and establish if certain evidence is missing (see also below on "3. Usability")
- Compare the alleged violation with similar cases to see if it is part of a pattern.

Timeliness

Usually it is not possible to obtain all the data mentioned above in a short time. It is important though to communicate the minimum of information as soon as possible. If advocacy is requested, the minimum required information is:

- the full name of the victim (if possible also the ID or passport number)
- the real reason for the persecution and why that is assumed to be the real reason (this is important because governments often claim people are arrested for committing a crime)

It is important to communicate more or new information as it becomes available. Also changes in the situation should be communicated as soon as possible.

Usability

Information should try to answer the following basic question: **Who** did **what** to **whom**, **when**, **where** and **why**? See check lists below. Include any other information that you believe may be relevant. If publicity is requested, it is very useful to include a photograph of the victim.

Check-list 1: Accuracy

#	Question	Comment	Ok
1.1	Reliability of information source		
1.2	known		
1.3	track record		
1.4	bias		
1.5	other		
1.6	Personal sources exhausted?		
1.7	victim(s)		
1.8	eye witnesses		
1.9	relatives		
1.10	friends		
1.11	media		
1.12	human rights activists		
1.13	religious leaders		
1.14	community leaders		
1.15	perpetrators		
1.15	other		
1.17	Documentary evidence used for cross checking?		
1.18	court papers		
1.19	police statements		
1.20	medical statements		
1.21	other		
1.22	Assessment of information done?		
1.23	evidence missing?	(See check-lists 2, 3, 4 on usability)	
1.24	Pattern when compared to similar cases?		

Check-list 2: Biographical data

#	Item		OK
2.1	Full name (as specified on identity card or passport)		
2.2	Number of passport or identity card		
2.3	Assumed or adopted name		
2.4	Profession		
2.5	Date of birth or approximate age		
2.6	Sex		
2.7	Nationality/ethnic group		
2.8	Religion on identity card		
2.9	Address		
2.10	Family details	marital status	
		number of dependants	
2.11	Names and ages of dependants		
2.12	1.	6.	
2.13	2.	7.	
2.14	3.	8.	
2.15	4.	9.	
2.16	5.	10.	
2.17	Details of church membership		
2.18	Name of church		
2.19	Denomination (or house church)		
2.20	Date of baptism (if a convert)		

Check-list 3: Information on persecution

#	Question	OK
3.1	Describe in chronological order what happened . Include time, date, location and agencies, groups and individuals involved.	
3.2	Explain the current situation .	
3.3	Does the victim have a history of persecution ? (If so, please elaborate.)	
3.4	Reason for persecution	
3.5	Real reason	
3.6	Reason that is officially given, including relevant legislation that is applied	

Check-list 4: Information in case of imprisonment

#	Question	Comment	OK
4.1	Place of arrest		
4.2	Forces who carried out the arrest or are believed to have carried it out		
4.3	Did they show a warrant or decision by a public authority? (If so who issued the warrant or decision?)		
4.4	Any detail of abuse, ill-treatment or illegality in the course of the arrest		
4.5	Is the victim formally charged? If so what are these charges? (Include relevant legislation)		
4.6	Place of detention		
4.7	Forces holding the victim in custody		
4.8	Is the prisoner allowed visitors, especially family and lawyer (and, in the case of an expatriate, consular officers)?		
4.9	Does the victim have a lawyer (contact details)? If so, who chose the lawyer?		
4.10	Under what conditions is the victim held?		
4.11	What is the victim's state of health?		
4.12	Has the victim been subjected to torture or ill-treatment (either physical or psychological) since arrest?		
4.13	Has the victim been tried? If so, give details including date and place of trial(s), kind of court, court rulings.		
4.14	If not, is a trial scheduled?		

Guidelines for information dissemination

Before disseminating any information of events of persecution we need to ensure:

- Authorization
- Confidentiality
- Accuracy
- Information management (circulation codes)

Authorization

Before any action on behalf of the victim(s) of persecution can be taken we need to have authorization. We need to know what the relevant parties want us to do on behalf of the victim(s).

There are often three parties involved: the victim him/herself, the immediate family (if they have a favourable attitude towards the victim) and the Christian leadership they relate to (church leader or main discipler). Each might have a different perspective on the situation and consideration should be given to the genuine concerns of each party.

Confidentiality

We need to ensure that we provide the protection of our source(s) of information that they require. Confidentiality is important because it 1) protects the source(s) from harm, 2) strengthens a relationship of trust with the source and 3) ensures a continued flow of information from that source.

- We can never use somebody's name or information they have shared with us without their prior approval.
- If people require confidentiality we should be very careful that pieces of information cannot be traced back to persons by logical deduction and elimination.
- Consider the use of initials or pseudonyms, geographical areas (e.g. province instead of a city), etc.

Accuracy (See accuracy check list above.)

Also, where possible we should give our sources the opportunity to review the information before it is disseminated so they can correct mistakes or misunderstandings.

Information management

In times of crisis, information falling into the wrong hands can often lead to serious consequences. Many problems have been caused by information that was disseminated for prayer or advocacy purposes that ended up in the media. The media is a powerful tool, but also a dangerous one.

Although complete control over information is very difficult, the use of circulation codes can be helpful. Also your mailing list for each circulation code should be limited to people who understand the limitations and have agreed to abide by them.

Possible Circulation Codes

For prayer requests	
1. Confidential	Limited to internal circulation. Do not circulate this outside your organization. May not be cited or quoted.
2. Restricted	For internal circulation within your organization and with trusted groups or individuals known to you. This circulation code MUST be included. Not for release to the press.
3. Public	May be circulated to general mailing lists, outside organizations, the media and quoted from freely in reports.
For advocacy requests	
Request for discreet advocacy	May be circulated to selected politicians or human rights organizations. This circulation code <i>must</i> be included. Not for release to the press or for public letter-writing campaigns.
Request for public advocacy	May be circulated to any politicians or human rights organizations. Can be used for public letter-writing or media campaigns.

Check-list5: Information dissemination

#	Question	Comment	Ok
5.1	Authorization		
5.2	victim		
5.3	immediate family		
5.4	Christian leadership		
5.5	balancing of concerns		
5.6	Confidentiality		
5.7	confidentiality required?		
5.8	approval for use of names/ information		
5.9	back tracing avoided		
5.10	anonymisation		
5.11	generalisation of localities		
5.12	other		
5.13	Accuracy		
5.14	accuracy check completed		
5.15	reviewed by sources		
5.16	corrections implemented		
5.17	Information management		
5.18	Prayer Request Code assigned	<input type="checkbox"/> confidential <input type="checkbox"/> restricted <input type="checkbox"/> public	
5.19	Advocacy Code assigned	<input type="checkbox"/> discreet <input type="checkbox"/> public	

Check list 6: Quality control

#	Question	Who	When	Ok
6.1	accuracy checked			
6.2	usability checked			
6.3	biographical information sufficient			
6.4	persecution description sufficient			
6.5	imprisonment information sufficient			
6.6	still up to date?			
6.7	authorizations obtained			
6.8	confidentiality established			
6.9	circulation codes assigned			
6.10	proof read			
6.11	photograph of victim			
6.12	additional items			
6.13	dissemination authorized			

Noteworthy

The Noteworthy section points to findings and reports published elsewhere. The editors invite all researchers and organizations to proactively keep us up to date about their latest output. We currently include what we came across in our research but we would like this section turn into a vibrant market place of information sharing. Please indicate whether material you submit is for publication or for background information of the editors only.

After the Personalia item, all entries are sorted alphabetically according to the name of the originating organization. With few exceptions the materials were published in 2008. Unless otherwise stated they are available online. [CS]

Personalia

James D. Standish has been appointed new Executive Director of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, an independent, federal agency advising the Administration and Congress. Prior to that he has served as Director of Legislative Affairs at the Seventh-day Adventist Church World Headquarters for seven years representing fifteen million church members on Capitol Hill.

Mr. Standish is widely published, has discussed religious freedom issues on nationally broadcast television and radio, and has testified on religious freedom matters before the United States House of Representatives. He received his undergraduate degree from Newbold College in England, a M.B.A. from the University of Virginia and a J.D., cum laude, from Georgetown University. He is a member of the Bar of Virginia State and the District of Columbia, and has been admitted to practice before the U.S. Supreme Court and the Fourth Circuit.

The Commission, established by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (IRFA), monitors violations of the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief abroad, as defined in IRFA and set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and related international instruments. It provides independent policy recommendations to the President, Secretary of State, and Congress, and is the first government commission in the world with the sole mission of reviewing and making policy recommendations on the facts and circumstances of violations of religious freedom globally.

Barnabas Fund

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“Barnabas Fund was established in 1993 with the aim of providing practical help to Christians in Muslim environments. Since that time our ministry has grown and we now bring hope and aid to the persecuted Church in over 50 countries. [...]”

The Other Nine Campaign

1 out of 10 Christians live with persecution. Well prepared popular material available for download, some of which is listed below. - www.barnabasfund.org/theothernine/downloads.php

What persecution really means...(6p) <http://tinyurl.com/5v9k2r>

- You live in daily fear of violence, kidnap, rape or even death
- Talking to a non-Christian friend about Jesus could land you in jail.
- You carry a social stigma, affecting the jobs you can get, or how your children are treated in school.
- You live in utter poverty, trapped by a system which limits your opportunities to break free.
- The police are not interested in helping you if you are attacked, and may even arrest you although you were the victim.

Types of persecution (5p) <http://tinyurl.com/57hemt>

Poverty and persecution (5p) <http://tinyurl.com/6z7vyv>

Christians in Burma (Myanmar) (15p)

By Patrick Sookhdeo 2007 <http://tinyurl.com/6xpm63>

Council on Faith and International Affairs (CFIA)

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CFIA is a research and education division of the Institute for Global Engagement (IGE): “The Council equips members of the international affairs community with a balanced understanding of the role of religion in public life worldwide. It fosters a pluralistic forum where people of different faiths and worldviews can constructively discuss religion's impact on the world today. This approach provides rigorous analysis and thoughtful commentary to scholars, policy makers, and practitioners.”

The Review of Faith and International Affairs

“CFIA launched *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* in the spring of 2003. Now published quarterly, it is the only journal focusing on the premier issue of our times—the relation of religion to international relations. It is not a peer reviewed journal of academic specialization. Rather it is a journal of rigorous analysis, timely reportage, and thoughtful commentary for both professionals and educated general audiences.”

Some articles are freely available online.

- September 2008 issue: “Faith & Foreign Policy: Recommendations for the Next President.”
- June 2008 issue: “Religious Freedom and U.S. Foreign Policy: Taking Stock, Looking Forward.”
 - Religious Freedom: Good for What Ails Us? Brian J. Grim
 - Methodology, Metrics, and Moral Imperatives in Religious Freedom Diplomacy. By Robert A. Seiple, Summer 2008.

China Aid Association *info@ChinaAid.org, www.ChinaAid.org*

Annual Report of Persecution by the Government on Christian House Churches within Mainland China, January 2007 - December 2007, China Aid Association USA, February 2008, 26 p.

Every year, China Aid publishes a Persecution Report with statistics on persecution in China, sorted by province.

Chinese Law and Religion Monitor Journal

www.monitorchina.org

“Since 2004, in partnership with the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), China Aid publishes the biannual Chinese Law and Religion Monitor Journal, the only journal of its kind in this field. Two thousand copies of each volume are published and disseminated to human rights and religious freedom-related individuals, institutions and organizations, key U.S. government leaders and the United Nations Council on Human Rights. Each edition contains the most current research and analysis of religion and the law. Its purpose is to provide Chinese scholars and researchers, policy makers, lawyers, judges and human-rights advocates with the best available information on the current challenges in the struggle for religious freedom in China, particularly in the area of legislation and rule-making.”

Christian Solidarity Worldwide

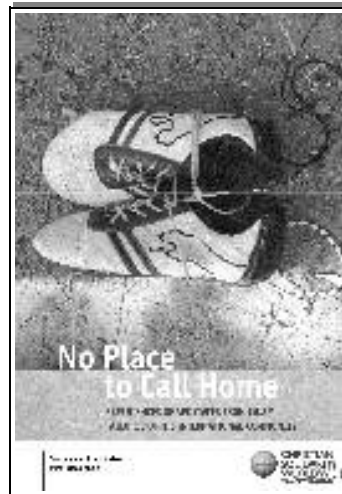
admin@csw.org.uk, www.csw.org.uk

Material on the following countries: Columbia, Cuba, Peru; Belarus, Bulgaria, Turkey; Algeria, Egypt, Iran; Eritrea, Nigeria, Sudan; India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka. Press releases dating back to 1998, more extensive reports/briefings dating back to 2002, depending on country. In 2008 15 *Briefings* or longer documents have been published to date, which are briefly presented below with the most outstanding/ recent first.

Maral, Ziya 2008. No place to call home:

Experiences of Apostates from Islam. Failures of the International Community. New Malden, Surrey: CSW, 116 p, 29 April 2008.

Apostasy is the renunciation of religious faith, and apostasy from Islam in particular has always been a contentious issue. Although the Qur'an does not prescribe a temporal punishment for apostasy, the vast majority of traditional Islamic theology and jurisprudence has advocated the death penalty for a mentally sane male apostate and life-long imprisonment or harsh treatment for a female apostate. [The implementation thereof is varied in today's Muslim nations ...].



Apostates are subject to gross and wide-ranging human rights abuses including extra judicial killings by state-related agents or mobs; honour killings by family members; detention, imprisonment, torture, physical and psychological intimidation by security forces; the denial of access to judicial services and social services; the denial of equal employment or education opportunities; social pressure resulting in loss of housing and employment; and day-to-day discrimination and ostracism in education, finance and social activities. The affect of all this on the personal lives of apostates and their families can be significant and far-reaching. As the number of apostate communities has significantly increased in the Middle East, North Africa and Asia over the past twenty years, human rights abuses have been more regularly reported.

[...] these nations and the international community have failed in their duty to uphold the rights of apostates by neglecting to guarantee their personal safety and their full and fair participation in society. This report calls on Muslim nations, the international community, the UN and the international media to resolutely address the serious violations of human rights suffered by apostates.

Algeria

Increasing persecution of Christians in Algeria and the application of legislation defining ‘conditions and rules for the exercise of religious worship other than Islam’. CSW Briefing, 7 p, 01 March 2008.

During 2006 and 2007, Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) raised concerns over a new Algerian law entitled “The conditions and rules for the exercise of religious worship other than Islam”. This law was adopted in September 2006. In May 2007, two Presidential decrees were issued which established the government committees required to enforce the law. The new law effectively criminalizes the basic, internationally recognised rights of freedom of assembly, association, and the freedom to manifest a religion. It also has negative implications for the right of religious minorities engaged in propagating their faith amongst Muslims.

[..] The new law has opened the way for Christian leaders to be accused of proselytism and blasphemy, and they have been threatened with imprisonment and monetary fines. It has also led to the closure of ten churches by local authorities.

Iran - Religious freedom profile

CSW Briefing, 12 p, 01 July 2008.

Since the 1979 revolution, Iran’s religious and ethnic minorities have suffered gross human rights violations, including extra-judicial and judicial killings, incommunicado detentions, confiscation of property, denial of education and inequality in legal matters. Though the intensity of the persecution of minorities decreased during the initial years of reformist President Khatami’s government, the last years of his administration and the new government of President Ahmadinejad has seen a renewed deterioration in human rights. This has been a cause of great concern for religious and ethnic minorities in Iran. During the last two years, there have been fresh waves of arrests, detention and intimidation of Muslim converts to Christianity and Bahá’ís.

Egypt - Religious freedom profile

CSW Briefing, 16 p, 1 July 2008.

Egypt is a dynamic and influential country in the Middle-East and North African (MENA). As international attention on Egypt focuses predominantly on the tensions between secular, modernising rule and the growing political power of the Muslim Brotherhood, a worrying trend of human rights violations and sectarian clashes continue largely unnoticed. Although Egypt is party to many international human rights treaties, non-Muslims in particular have faced increasing abuse between 2006 and 2008 from the state security apparatus and political institutions, as well as attacks by mobs.

China

Persecution of Protestant Christians in the approach to the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games. CSW Briefing, produced in cooperation with China Aid, 12 p, 1 June 2008.

The approach of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games has been accompanied by a significant deterioration in religious freedom for China's unregistered Protestant Church, also known as the house church. China continues to seriously restrict religious freedom, requiring religious activity to take place within the confines of the restrictive state-controlled bodies. Those practising their faith outside these bodies risk sanction, with penalties including discrimination, fines, confiscation and destruction of property, arrest, humiliating treatment, torture, imprisonment and forced labour. Alongside these punishments, meetings are raided, Bibles and religious materials are confiscated and churches are destroyed.

Turkey – Religious freedom profile

CSW Briefing, 15 p, 1 May 2008.

Freedom of religion and belief, including the freedom to manifest and to proselytise a religion or belief, are protected in Turkey by the Turkish Constitution and Turkish Criminal Law. These freedoms are further protected by binding international human rights treaties to which Turkey is a party. This includes the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923, the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights. However, this promising legal position is overshadowed by a long history of human rights abuses in Turkey, which has resulted in social and political pressure on

today's minority ethnic and religious communities, and has also contributed to the decline of these populations.

European Union (EU) negotiation talks and accession requirements have resulted in some welcome new legislation pertaining to freedom of religion and belief in Turkey. However, the implementation of this legislation is often fraught with difficulties, and religious persecution continues as a result of direct or indirect involvement of the state structures. During 2007 and 2008, an increasing number of mob attacks against Christians were reported.

Cuba

Religious liberty in Cuba. CSW Briefing, 12 p, 1 April 2008.

Despite Cuba's recent accession to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights the government has yet to make any significant improvements in the area of religious liberty. Instead, over the past two years there has been an increase in reported violations of religious freedom, including harassment of church leaders and the forced closure, confiscation or destruction of church buildings. Church leaders who have openly called on the government to respect religious freedom and those who have refused to work on behalf of the government (as informers or by lending public support to government initiatives) have been targeted for particularly severe harassment.

Cuba

Religious freedom violations in Cuban prisons. CSW Briefing, 6 p, 1 March 2008.

The Cuban government systematically violates the religious rights of political prisoners, in contravention of the UN Standard Minimum Rules on the Treatment of Prisoners, by arbitrarily denying them access to clergy, confiscating bibles and other religious literature and materials (including rosaries), and prohibiting them from attending religious services. These violations are reported repeatedly and consistently as occurring in high security prisons across the country indicating that they are not simply a result of decisions made by local prison authorities, but rather state policy instigated at the highest levels. [...] suggests that these policies are specifically directed at Christian political prisoners, particularly those whose faith has played a significant role in their human rights and/or pro-democracy activity,

and are likely part of a general policy of applying pressure on all political prisoners in an effort to punish them and to break them down psychologically.

India

Religious violence and discrimination against Christians in 2007. CSW Briefing, 55 p, 1 March 2008.

Despite the existence of strong constitutional and legislative protections for freedom of religion and belief in India, 2007 saw a continued pattern of societal opposition to the religious activities of minorities (particularly including Christians), which often erupted into violent attacks. There continued to be a chronic problem of impunity for perpetrators of religiously-motivated violence. These issues are compounded by specific legislative obstructions to religious freedom, in the form of state-level Freedom of Religion Acts (known dysphemistically as ‘anti-conversion laws’) and the religious conditionality attached to the definition of the Scheduled Castes, which governs eligibility for the ‘reservation’ system of quotas in the public sector. A consistent pattern of religiously-motivated violence against Christians was recorded throughout 2007 [...]

Burma

CSW visit to the Thailand-Burma border and Malaysia. CSW Briefing 24 p, 25 February 2008.

Burma continues to deteriorate into further political, human rights and humanitarian crises. The assassination of the General Secretary of the Karen National Union (KNU), Padoh Mahn Sha Lah Phan, on 14 February 2008, is a major setback for the Karen people and for the entire movement for democracy in Burma. In addition, the announcement by Burma’s military regime, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), of plans to hold a referendum on the new Constitution in May 2008 and elections in 2010, is a blatant attempt to rubber-stamp military rule and ignore the repeatedly expressed will of the people of Burma, the United Nations, and the international community. The regime’s so-called “roadmap to democracy” blatantly excludes the genuine representatives of the Burmese people [...]. Furthermore, the dire humanitarian crisis facing the internally displaced people (IDPs) in eastern Burma continues unabated.

Vietnam

Analysis: 2007 Revision of Internal Training Manual ‘Concerning the Task of the Protestant Religion in the Northern Mountainous Region’ CSW Briefing, 10 p, 1 February 2008.

In 2006, an internal religious affairs training manual covering the northern highland provinces was leaked from the government Committee on Religious Affairs (CRA). This document implicated the government in a plan to ‘resolutely subdue the abnormally rapid and spontaneous development of the Protestant religion in the region’ (p. 44). After widespread international criticism, the government undertook to revise the manual, and a new edition was provided to foreign diplomatic officials in 2007. Although the revised version involves a lessening of the inflammatory language which was more characteristic of the 2006 manual, there is no change to its core objective to ‘solve the Protestant problem’ by subduing its development. [...] This indicates a severe deficiency in the normalisation process of Protestant congregations in the northern highlands, and brings into question the efficacy of Vietnam’s current policy framework for religious activities.

Democratic Republic of Congo

Urgent human rights cases in government-controlled areas of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), 6 p, 16 January 2008.

The international community is currently expending billions of dollars in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) with the ultimate goal of ensuring the development of stability, an end to impunity and the establishment of the rule of law. To this end, it has assembled the largest mission in the history of the United Nations (UN), which is mandated to both keep peace and to enforce it wherever and whenever such action is deemed necessary. [...] Unfortunately, events in government-controlled areas increasingly provide worrying indications that the government of Joseph Kabila is not altogether willing to commit to these principles. Instead, while the Congolese government benefits from an unusual degree of international support, the harassment of members of civil society, journalists and political opponents, the manipulation of the judicial system, and extra-judicial execution regularly occur in the areas under its control.

India

Preliminary Report: Communal violence in Kandhamal District, Orissa. CSW Briefing 12 p, 01 January 2008.

During the week following 24 December 2007, the Kandhamal district of Orissa state was the scene of widespread violence, targeted primarily at Christians in Dalit and tribal communities. The All India Christian Council (AICC) estimated the damage at 95 churches or Christian institutions and 730 properties damaged or destroyed alongside an unknown number of deaths, and judged this to constitute 'the largest attack on the Christian community in the history of democratic India'. [...] The roots of the violence lay predominantly in a lengthy process of incitement of anti-Christian feeling by Hindutva organisations, particularly the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) [...].

Belarus

Religious freedom violations, 22 p, 1 January 2008.

In recent years, respect for human rights and civil liberties, including freedom of speech, assembly, association, religion, worship and expression, have continued to deteriorate in Belarus. International standards of human rights are not upheld by the government. Instead, the government itself repeatedly violates the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) to which it is a party. Religious freedom is restricted both directly and indirectly by the authorities. Nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), religious institutions and religious leaders are subjected to frequent harassment, prosecution, fines, repression and even imprisonment under the terms of the 2002 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organisations. Over the past eighteen months, two pastors and one human rights defender were arrested for so-called unregistered activities, a practice not heard of since the fall of the Soviet Union.

Columbia

A prophetic call, report no.2: Columbian Protestant churches document their suffering and their hope. Case Registry: July to December 2006. A publication of the Christian Center for Justice, Peace and Non Violent Action (JUSTAPAZ) and the Commission for Restoration, Life and Peace of the Evangelical Council of Columbia, CEDECOL. Bogotá, August 2007, 100 p, Supported by Christian Solidarity and others.

Justapaz and the Commission for Restoration, Life and Peace of CEDECOL last jointly reported on the violence related to the armed conflict as it affects churches in August 2006 in the first edition of *A Prophetic Call: Colombian Protestant Churches Document Their Suffering and Their Hope*. This second edition of the joint grass-roots documentation report provides findings from all of 2006. [...] Also during 2006, 68 cases of human rights violations against people associated with the churches occurred, with 223 victims and 289 individual acts of aggression. Death threats were the most frequent form of violence (147 victims). Other violations included forced displacement, forced disappearances, torture, arbitrary arrests, attacks, and the use of civilian populations as human shields by armed actors.

Evangelical Fellowship of Canada

Broken Promises: The Protestant experience with religious freedom in China in advance of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. June 2008, 26 p. www.evangelicalfellowship.ca

Human Rights Without Frontiers Int'l

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“In 1989, a number of human rights defenders founded an NGO called Bruxelles-Droits de l’Homme/ Brussels- Human Rights/ Brüssel Menschenrechte”, later re-named to Droits de l’homme sans frontières. The organization has gradually expanded into Human Rights Without Frontiers International (2001) to embrace its branch offices in Belgium, China, USA, and Nepal as well as its associate members in Armenia (Pro-Democracy Association), Bulgaria (Tolerance Foundation), Georgia (Human Rights Information and Documentation Centre), Iraq (Assyrian Aid Society), and Japan (Life Funds for North Korean Refugees), Russia, and South Korea. Since 1997, the Belgian branch of HRWF Int. has been an associate member of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights.

From its inception, the main focus of our activities has been monitoring, research, and analysis in the field of human rights as well as promotion of democracy and the rule of law on national and international level. In these endeavours, we have been guided by the understanding that it is not sufficient for international norms and standards in the field of human rights to be approved and adopted by

governments. States enjoy different levels of approximation to democratic development and the rule of law and human rights norms do not always have a “taken-for-granted” quality. In many cases, they still need to undergo a long, and sometimes painful, process of socialization in order to become integrated into state policies. The success of this process would be predicated, among other things, on the strength of non-governmental human rights networks to instigate changes towards human rights promotion.”

Country projects: Belgium, Bhutan, China, East Timor, Iraq, Macedonia (FYROM), Nepal, North Korea, Turkey

Freedom of Religion and Belief → News 2008 (catalogued by country going back to 1999)

Sample documents:

- Human rights reports on Turkey. 2007, 4 p. – A list of links
- Human rights violations in non-EU countries: Directions for use of the European Parliament mechanisms by human rights defenders by Willy Fautré, 7 p.
- Handbook of Advocacy for Indigenous Peoples. By Shamiran Mako, 2004, 27 p.

International Christian Network

http://www.institut-diakrisis.de/downloads_en.html

Blankenburg Appeal & Pastoral Directive: Readiness to suffer for Christ

It is noteworthy how some Christians in Europe are rediscovering the privilege of suffering for Christ and do so in an ecumenical spirit, discovering that suffering can unite across confessional boundaries. The Blankenburg Appeal is the message of a conference in short form. The full declaration is entitled ‘Readiness to Suffer for Christ: A Pastoral Directive from the Second Ecumenical Congress of the International Christian Network in Bad Blankenburg, Germany, 15 – 18 October 2006’ www.institut-diakrisis.de/PDEnglishVersion.pdf. A documentary volume with some of the conference papers has been published in German: Peter PJ Beyerhaus (ed.), *Weltweite Gemeinschaft im Leiden für Christus*. Nürnberg: VTR 2007, 208 p.

National Evangelical Christian Fellowship (NECF) Malaysia

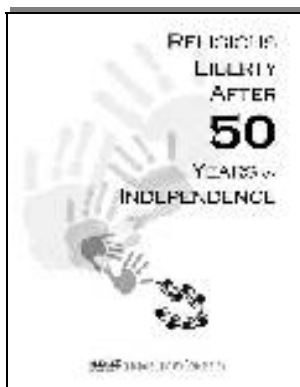
www.necf.org.my

Report on the state of religious liberty in Malaysia for the year 2007. Presented by The Religious Liberty Commission of the National Evangelical Christian Fellowship (NECF) Malaysia to The Executive Committee National Evangelical Christian Fellowship (NECF) Malaysia, June 2008, 44 p. – <http://tinyurl.com/5oxpua>

“This report intends to review both government (local and federal) and judicial actions in three principal areas: the right to profess, the right to practise and the impact of Islamisation. All court’s decisions made in 2008 (before July) on cases mentioned in this report are placed on the footnote.”

From the introduction: “The Malaysian socio-political landscape grew even grimmer in 2007 as inter-ethnic, inter-religious and, of course, political tensions, which were already high in 2006, further heightened. Despite clear and increasing evidence of cracks in the nation’s social fabric, the top political leadership continued to insist that the bonds holding the different communities together were strong. In contrast to the past, when such religious matters were treated with much greater sensitivity, there were multiple high-profile incidents, such as conversions out of Islam, destruction of places of worship, confiscation of religious material and enforced burials by religious authorities in 2007. Confronted with aggressive denials by the government that anything was wrong and the apparent unwillingness to do anything about them, all ethnic minorities, especially Malaysians of Indian origin, grew more overtly frustrated and resentful. This led to growing support for the Hindu Rights Action Force (HINDRAF) and for the subsequent street protests organised by it to voice the community’s discontent.”

Religious liberty after 50 years of independence



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The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom

www.uscirf.gov

This commission was created by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 to monitor the status of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief abroad, as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and related international instruments, and to give independent policy recommendations to the President, Secretary of State, and Congress.

Countries of Particular Concern

One of the most significant human rights acts of the U.S. government is the designation of "countries of particular concern," or CPCs, for ongoing, egregious violations of religious freedom. CPC designation is not an end point, but the beginning of focused diplomatic activity required by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (IRFA) from which important obligations in the form of consequent actions flow. Pursuant to the IRFA statute, the Commission issues recommended responses for the President, Secretary of State, and Congress to follow up on the CPC designations. The Commission has

recommended that the following countries be designated as CPCs: Burma, China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Vietnam.

Watch List

In addition to its CPC recommendations, the Commission has established a Watch List of countries where religious freedom conditions do not rise to the statutory level requiring CPC designation but which require close monitoring due to the nature and extent of violations of religious freedom engaged in or tolerated by the governments: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Cuba, Egypt, Indonesia, Iraq, Nigeria.

Additional countries monitored

In addition to countries designated as "countries of particular concern" (CPC) and Watch List countries, the Commission monitors conditions for freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief in several other countries, some of which have previously been designated a CPC or Watch List country: Georgia, India, Kazakhstan, Laos, Malaysia, Russia, Turkey. Among the more extensive documents issued by the USCIRF are its annual reports, policy briefs and special reports.

North Korea

A prison without bars: Refugee and defector testimonies of severe violations of freedom of religion or belief in North Korea: Update on religious freedom conditions in North Korea and new interviews with former North Korean security agents. [Washington, D.C.:] United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, March 2008, 64 p, <http://tinyurl.com/6ygkyz>

Religious freedom and other human rights conditions in North Korea remain among the world's most repressive, as the testimony of 32 refugees who fled to China from 2003 to 2007 and six former North Korean security agents who defected to South Korea during the past eight years confirms. There continues to be a pressing need on the international level for further, more effective action that addresses the ongoing repression of religious freedom and other human rights in North Korea and the problems of North Korean refugees in China. Refugees and religious adherents are particularly vulnerable, whether living in North Korea or the border regions in China. The findings

update a 2005 publication entitled: *Thank You Father Kim Il Sung – Eyewitness Accounts of Severe Violations of the Freedom of Thought, Conscience, and Religion in North Korea*.

Vietnam Policy Focus

Summer 2008, 32 p, 25 August 2008, <http://tinyurl.com/5za9aa>

The report, which includes findings from the Commission's 2007 trip to Vietnam, highlights government-sponsored harassment, detention, and imprisonment faced by individuals and leaders of diverse religious communities. In light of these severe and widespread violations of religious freedom, the Commission calls on the U.S. State Department to re-designate Vietnam a 'country of particular concern' (CPC), under the terms of the 1998 International Religious Freedom Act.

2008 Annual Report

United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, Annual Report, May 2008, 326 p, <http://tinyurl.com/6ejqn6>

While the work of the Commission is conducted year round, the Commission compiles an annual report of its policy recommendations in May to the President, the Secretary of State, and Congress. This report covers the period from May 2007 – April 2008. Special focus is laid on three countries: Saudi Arabia, Vietnam and Turkmenistan.

“This annual report reviews the Commission’s activities during the past year and specifically describes conditions for religious freedom and related human rights in the countries of central concern to the Commission and highlights key findings; presents the Commission’s policy recommendations to ensure that the promotion of freedom of religion or belief becomes a more integral part of U.S. foreign policy, furthering both our nation’s humanitarian and national security interests; and reports on the actions the Commission has taken to raise public awareness of religious freedom violations, and summarizes the Commission’s efforts to keep Congress and the Administration informed of religious freedom conditions throughout the world. The wide array of activities and publications in this reporting period illustrates the major impact the Commission has on developing U.S. policy to promote religious freedom abroad. Commissioners have testified before congressional committees and caucuses, met with highranking U.S. Administration officials including Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, held hearings and

press conferences on pressing religious freedom issues, conducted fact-finding missions to other countries, and published numerous policy papers, press releases, and op-eds.”

Public Hearing on Advancing Religious Freedom and Related Human Rights in Iran

February 21, 2008, <http://tinyurl.com/55tstu>

Testimonies of Witnesses:

- Jeffrey Feltman, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs
- Barbara Slavin, Senior Fellow, U.S. Institute of Peace & Senior Diplomatic Reporter, USA Today
- Suzanne Maloney, Senior Fellow, Saban Center for Middle East Policy, Brookings Institution
- Payam Akhavan, Co-Founder, Iran Human Rights Documentation Center & Professor of Law, McGill University
- Roya Boroumand, Executive Director, Boroumand Foundation for the Promotion of Human Rights and Democracy in Iran
- Paul Marshall, Senior Fellow, Center for Religious Freedom, Hudson Institute

WEA Mission Commission

Mission in contexts of suffering, violence, persecution and martyrdom. Connections: the Journal of the WEA Mission Commission. Vol. 7. 1-2 2008, 84 p. 37 articles from practitioner, theological and best practice perspective. www.weaconnections.com

