

Noteworthy

The noteworthy items are structured in three groups: annual reports and global surveys, regional and country reports, and specific issues. Though we apply serious criteria in the selection of items noted, it is beyond our capacity to scrutinize the accuracy of every statement made. We therefore disclaim responsibility for the contents of the items noted. The compilation was produced by Janet Epp Buckingham.

Annual Reports and Global Surveys

2023 report on international religious freedom

US Office of International Religious Freedom, 26 June 2024

<https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-report-on-international-religious-freedom/>

This report is submitted annually by the US Department of State to Congress. It is a searchable website that covers the religious freedom situation in nearly 200 countries and territories and describes strategies to promote religious freedom around the world.

2024 annual report

USCIRE, 1 May 2024

<https://tinyurl.com/mte68w6s>

This annual report documents developments during 2023. It recommends that 17 countries be designated Countries of Particular Concern and that 11 more be put on the State Department's Special Watch List.

Peace and freedom of religion or belief

UN Special Rapporteur on Religious Freedom, 18 July 2024

<https://tinyurl.com/h9rxty94>

The Special Rapporteur considers the relationship between the rights to peace and to freedom of religion or belief. One of the distinct observations of the report is that freedom of religion or belief creates the conditions, motivations, rationales and movements for peace to emerge, strengthening conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding.

Globally, government restrictions on religion reached peak levels in 2021, while social hostilities went down

Pew Research Center, 5 March 2024

<https://tinyurl.com/ykx52c3y>

This is the 14th in a series of annual reports by the Pew Research Center analyzing the extent to which governments and societies around the world impinge on religious beliefs and practices.

Freedom of religion or belief in a turbulent world

Platform of Freedom of Religion or Belief Worldwide, April 2024

<https://tinyurl.com/ue746cby>

This report is an academic analysis of freedom of religion or belief in select non-EU countries in 2022.

Regional and Country Reports

Afghanistan: Country update

USCIRE, 7 August 2024

<https://tinyurl.com/d5p73z7e>

Under de facto Taliban rule, Afghanistan has experienced a continual and significant decline in religious freedom conditions.

Burma: The persecution of Christians in Burma

Chin Association of Maryland, January 2024

<https://tinyurl.com/yj8uas8y>

CAM's 2023 annual report investigates and documents the persecution of religious minority groups in Myanmar, especially since the 2021 coup, and particularly events that occurred during 2023.

Cuba: Repression and resistance – a return to hardline tactics

Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 14 March 2024

<https://www.csw.org.uk/2024/03/14/report/6186/article.htm>

The number of documented cases involving violations of freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) in 2023 remained steady, around 622, as compared to 657 in 2022. CSW observed a return to hardline tactics.

India: Hate and targeted violence against Christians in India

Evangelical Fellowship of India, Religious Liberty Commission, 21 March 2024

<https://tinyurl.com/439w5zs3>

The year leading up to the general elections of spring 2024 saw an unfortunate increase in divisive rhetoric and inflammatory language. Data from the Evangelical Fellowship of India Religious Liberty Commission (EFIRLC) shows an alarmingly steep rise in the number of violent incidents against the Christian community, climbing from 413 in 2022 to 601 in 2023.

India: Policy brief

Open Doors, 3 May 2024

<https://tinyurl.com/2s4dxft5>

There has been an escalation of violence, social ostracism, property destruction, hate speech, disruption and condemnation of peaceful non-Hindu religious activities, and false accusations of “conversion” activities. Mob violence against Christians where victims report severe injuries and often death, along with property looting and destruction, is concerningly on the rise.

Nicaragua: Country update

USCIRF, 28 June 2024

<https://tinyurl.com/3nnafr9>

This country update summarizes Nicaragua’s repressive legal framework, the Ortega-Murillo regime’s religious freedom violations against the Catholic and Protestant communities, and international efforts to hold violators accountable.

Nigeria: A case for Nigeria’s Country of Particular Concern status

International Christian Concern, 10 July 2024

<https://tinyurl.com/5n8bactk>

This report thoroughly examines Nigeria’s poor state of religious freedom and makes a case for its CPC status. The clear documentation and evidence laid out in this report demonstrate how Nigeria meets the legal threshold for CPC status under the International Religious Freedom Act of the USA.

Nigeria: Country update

USCIRF, 9 August 2024

<https://tinyurl.com/n6chf993>

This country update addresses the government’s use of blasphemy laws and Sharia codes in several states. The report also examines the role of violent nonstate actors in restricting religious freedom in Nigeria and explains how the government has responded to the violence.

Nigeria: Countering the myth of religious indifference in Nigerian terror (10/2019 - 10/2023)

Observatory of Religious Freedom in Africa, 29 August 2024

<https://tinyurl.com/gusegmtj>

This report documents the widespread violence against religious communities in parts of Nigeria over a four-year period. Many civilians live with high levels of fear and insecurity.

Nigeria: No road home: Christian IDPs displaced by extremist violence in Nigeria

Open Doors International, International Institute for Religious Freedom, World Evangelical Alliance, 1 September 2024

<https://tinyurl.com/3uvs9f2m>

This report results from interviews conducted with Christian IDPs in Nigeria and includes recommendations for how to provide practical assistance as well as government policy changes. It calls for an international commission of inquiry.

Saudi Arabia: Country update

USCIRF, 1 August 2024

<https://tinyurl.com/yc3kbhub>

The Saudi government continues to implement particularly severe restrictions on FoRB and imposes harsh penalties upon individuals who deviate from the state's singular interpretation of Sunni Islam. Religious minorities and women are often the primary targets of these FoRB violations.

Sri Lanka: Country update

USCIRF, 27 June 2024

<https://tinyurl.com/3xdsvftd>

This country update provides an overview of the current religious freedom conditions in Sri Lanka and key observations from USCIRF's trip in October 2023, such as religiously motivated land disputes, registration challenges, and the use of discriminatory legislation to target and detain religious minorities.

Sri Lanka: Fading Beliefs: Addressing the lacunae in the right to religious worship in Sri Lanka

Verité Research and the National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka, 28 May 2024

<https://tinyurl.com/6pjc2phr>

This is a comprehensive report on the challenges churches face in Sri Lanka in maintaining houses of worship. It documents attacks against churches. It also makes policy recommendations to facilitate establishing and maintaining places of worship.

Turkey: 2023 human rights – violation report

Association of Protestant Churches (Turkey), 26 June 2024

<https://tinyurl.com/232bzxaz>

This annual report documents the increasingly difficult situation for Protestant Christians in Turkey. They are subject to hate crimes, they cannot find places to worship freely, and foreign missionaries have been expelled from the country.

Turkey: Country update

USCIRF, 26 July 2024

<https://tinyurl.com/3wymkazj>

This country update outlines how Turkish religious nationalism has contributed to restrictions on freedom of religion or belief and explains the violations religious minority communities and secularists in Turkey continue to face. The report also notes attacks by nonstate actors on the basis of religion.

Yemen: Policy brief

Open Doors Canada, 30 July 2024

<https://tinyurl.com/5c8z5wjr>

This report finds that religious minorities in Yemen are particularly vulnerable to rising sectarianism and religious extremism. It makes four recommendations to stop the continuous and severe violations of fundamental rights of Yemenis.

Specific Issues

Misinformation and disinformation: Implications for freedom of religion or belief

USCIRF, 8 August 2024

<https://tinyurl.com/bdtvcnba>

This fact sheet addresses how governments spreading false claims about religious minorities represent a global challenge to freedom of religion or belief (FoRB). It uses China, India, Iran, Pakistan, and Russia as examples.

Protection of religious sites during armed conflict

USCIRF, 14 May 2024

<https://tinyurl.com/4j5px5ba>

This issue update provides a summary of international humanitarian law's protections of places of worship and religious sites. It also examines cases in which parties to conflicts have targeted houses of worship and religious sites, including the Burmese civil war, the Israel-Hamas conflict, the conflict involving the Nigerian government and U.S.-designated entities of particular concern, the Sudanese civil war, and the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

How society cares for the dead – a matter of human dignity!

Justicia et Pax, July 2024

<https://tinyurl.com/39yv5sm2>

This report makes recommendations on the need to ensure that the dead are cared for in a manner that is appropriate to human dignity in order to respect the rights of the next of kin, and to avoid placing the normative foundation of society at risk. Recommendations are addressed to the international community, national, regional and local authorities, as well as the church and religious communities.

Parental rights: Your rights and duties as parents

Alliance Defending Freedom, May 2024

<https://tinyurl.com/bdfngrue>

This booklet helps parents understand their rights as parents and equips them to defend these rights in the face of increasing autonomy of children.

Secularism: Militant secular worldviews as state religions

International Institute for Religious Freedom, 18 March 2024

<https://tinyurl.com/yckfszuh>

Thomas Schirrmacher gave this address at the R20 Princeton Conference on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, held in conjunction with the 75th anniversary of the adoption of the UDHR by the United Nations General Assembly. It was subsequently published as a report by the IIRF.

Universal Periodic Review: UPR toolkit on freedom of religion or belief

IPPFoRB, 12 September 2024

<https://tinyurl.com/4z3vpe7r>

This toolkit provides resources for Parliamentarians to engage with the UPR process at the United Nations to promote FoRB.