

## Interim report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief

United Nations General Assembly, A/67/303

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### Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief

In the present report, the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Heiner Bielefeldt, provides an overview of his mandate activities since the submission of the previous report to the General Assembly (A/66/156), including his country visits, communications and other activities.

The Special Rapporteur then focuses on the right of conversion as part of freedom of religion or belief. In this context, he distinguishes the following four sub-categories: (a) the right to conversion, in the sense of changing one's own religion or belief; (b) the right not to be forced to convert; (c) the right to try to convert others by means of non-coercive persuasion; and (d) the rights of the child and of his or her parents in this regard. The Special Rapporteur outlines the international human rights framework and specific violations for each of these subcategories and addresses some typical misunderstandings. In his conclusions and recommendations, the Special Rapporteur calls upon States to consistently respect, protect and promote the human right to freedom of religion or belief in the area of conversion. He reiterates that the right to conversion and the right not to be forced to convert have the status of unconditional protection under international human rights law. Freedom of religion or belief includes the right to try to persuade others in a non-coercive manner; any restrictions on missionary activities deemed necessary by States must strictly abide by article 18 (3) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The rights of the child and his or her parents must be guaranteed effectively in the context of conversion issues. Lastly, the Special Rapporteur provides specific recommendations with regard to domestic legal provisions, various areas of administration and school education and non-State actors.

Editorial note: The full 23-pages report can be read at: <http://tinyurl.com/Bielefeldt2012>



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