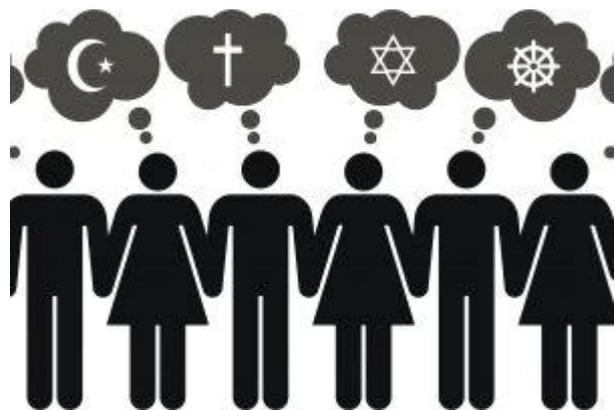


The Issue of Protection of Religious Rights of Minorities

Freedom of religion or belief is, in theory, guaranteed by the following formal expressions by the United Nations:

- Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
- Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- The Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief.
- In addition to Article 9 of the ECHR.



The right to practice religion freely means it is absolute and cannot be interfered with by the state, it contains internal and external dimensions as it interacts with other human rights, it can never be suspended (even in a state of emergency) and it is protected by various declarations. Nonetheless, the persecution of religious minorities is rife in the modern age. To clarify, this issue refers to religious and not ethnic minorities, in other words those whose religious beliefs

do not match those of the majority of the people around them. These communities or individuals are often subject to numerous violations of their religious (and human) rights. Perhaps the most obvious example would be that of Uyghur Muslims in China. As seen on countless Instagram infographics, anywhere from 120,000 to 1 million Uyghurs are detained in mass detention camps. However, we must make sure not to neglect lesser-known instances such as state level discrimination of Muslims and Christians in India on behalf of Hindu Nationalists, MODI (2019 Citizenship Amendment Act). Additionally, the complete absence of religious freedom in the DPRK is highly notable, for instance, wherein an estimated 150,000 to 200,000 persons are believed to be held in political prison camps.

While most countries provided for the protection of religious freedom in their constitutions or laws, only a quarter of those countries were found to fully respect these legal rights in practice according to the Pew Research Centre. In 75 countries governments limit the efforts of religious groups to proselytise and in 178 countries religious groups must register with the government. In 2013, Pew classified 30% of countries as having restrictions that tend to target religious minorities, and 61% of countries have social hostilities that tend to target religious minorities.

Protection of religious rights is becoming more crucial due to the increase in religiously motivated hate crimes. For example, in 2018-2019, the government recorded a [3%](#) increase (up to 8,566 offences) in religiously motivated hate crimes in England and Wales. This included [1,805](#) antisemitic incidents during the year,



Points to consider

- How have former resolutions failed to maintain the religious rights of minorities? How can we amend them so that they work just as well in our complicated reality as in the idealistic neatness of a debating chamber?
- How can we do so while minimising our infringement upon the sovereignty of our member nations and while keeping international tensions to a minimum?
- How can we ensure protection of rights is preserved?
- Should suspension of religious rights be allowed under any circumstances?
- The state can interfere if an individual is manifesting their beliefs in a harmful way, what differentiates preventing harm from preventing freedom of religious expression?

Useful Links

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_of_religion
- https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Guide_Art_9_ENG.pdf
- <https://www.libertyhumanrights.org.uk/right/freedom-of-religion-or-belief/>
- <https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/freedomreligion/pages/standards.aspx#:~:text=ICCPR-,Art.,observance%2C%20practice%20and%20teaching.%22>