

Jubilee Campaign Highlights The Plight of Religious Minorities in Four Key Locations of Conflict

In addition to engaging with United Nations Mechanisms such as the Human Rights Council, General Assembly, Universal Periodic Review, and Commission on the Status of Women, Jubilee Campaign also regularly submits reports to Special Rapporteurs. For example, in 2021 we [wrote a letter](#) to the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities regarding the case of Pakistani Christian man Stephen Masih who was falsely accused of blasphemy and faces imprisonment in spite of his mental disability. In March of this year, Ms. Mama Fatima Singhateh spoke at our Human Rights Council parallel event [No One Left Behind](#) regarding faith minority girls who are abducted and enslaved in Nigeria and Pakistan.

Recently, Dr. Ahmed Shaheed, Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, sent out a request for civil society organizations to provide information on the plight of faith minorities in situations of conflict and insecurity. Jubilee Campaign has engaged with Dr. Shaheed already on numerous occasions; he participated as a keynote speaker in our Human Rights Council parallel event [No Penalty for Apostasy](#). In response to his recent call for input, Jubilee Campaign entered four submissions, which we briefly summarize below:

Afghanistan

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The August 2021 withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan and the Taliban's subsequent consolidation of power struck fear in the hearts of the Afghan populace.



In the months immediately following the takeover, Afghan Christians reported receiving menacing phone calls and letters from the Taliban threatening that, if they did not turn themselves in for being Christian, they would be arrested and punished. Moreover, because the entirety of Afghanistans Christians are converts from Islam, many are worried that a return to Sharia law could spell the death sentence for their religious conversion, a 'crime' known as apostasy. Non-Sunni Muslims such as ethnic Hazara Muslims and Shi'a Muslims face even more violent attacks. While the Taliban was taking over the provinces of Ghazni and Daykundi, troops tortured and killed at least 20 Hazara Muslims. Meanwhile, the Islamic State in October conducted suicide bombs on two Shi'a mosques, killing a total of 135 worshippers. Even the only 250 or so remaining Hindu and Sikh minorities are not safe; a group of unidentified armed men set off an explosion in the Kart-e Parwan province where between 70 and 90 Hindus and Sikhs are in hiding; though no casualties were reported, the entire area has been shut off and those inside are unable to leave.

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Following the February 2021 in Myanmar in which the military forces (Tatmadaw) overthrew the democratically elected National League for Democracy (NLD). Immediately following the coup, the Tatmadaw began engaging in horrific violence against both peaceful protesters and faith minorities. In Chin state, military troops targeted multiple churches such as the Hakha Baptist Church for relentless shelling and have arrested Christian leaders. In late October, when the Tatmadaw attacked the town of Thantlang, they shot to death and sliced off the finger to steal the wedding band of local Baptist Pastor

Chung Biak Hum who had attempted to stop the fires that the military's shelling caused on residences. In Kachin State, the Tatmadaw detained three pastors on false allegations that they had been "causing fear, spreading false news, and agitating" by praying for an end to the hostilities. In July, three soldiers raped and stabbed to death an ethnic Kachin Christian woman before abandoning her battered body in the forest. In Kayah (Karenni) state, the Tatmadaw has shelled three prominent churches - Catholic Sacred Heart Church; St. Joseph's Church; Our Lady, Queen of Peace Church - in attacks that have led to civilian and pastor deaths. It is also reported that military forces have used kidnapped civilians in Kayah state to use as human shields against anti-junta militias.

Though Rohingya Muslims have not come under attack by the Tatmadaw yet since its February coup, they remain in fear that they will be the next targets for violence and extrajudicial killings. Their worry is justified, as the Tatmadaw four years ago in 2017 embarked on a campaign to eradicate the Rohingya population via massacres and sexual violence.

Ethiopia: Tigray

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Just over a year ago in November 2020, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed ordered an offensive into the region of Tigray against the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). PM Ahmed's goal was to diminish regional authorities and bolster his own governmental power over the entire nation, including Tigray. Following the involvement of Eritrean troops into the conflict, they and Ethiopian soldiers began engaging in mass human rights violations against the predominantly Christian population of the region. For example, they descended upon Ethiopia's 'holies city' of Axum where they massacred and shot to death hundred of civilians. Meanwhile, survivors who were trying to gather the dead and transport them to the church for proper burial were similarly shot down, leaving many of the dead to be buried in mass graves. It is also important to note that Ethiopian and Eritrean forces have engaged in widespread sexual violence against these predominantly Christian civilians. Not only is sexual violence and rape in Tigray seen as a tactic of population control of the ethnic group, but it is secondarily impacting the growth rate of Christianity in the region by stemming births among Christian women as a result of lasting rape-related injuries to reproductive organs.

Military forces have also engaged in the desecration and looting of numerous houses of worship in Tigray. For example, the Catholic Eparchy of Addigrat in Tigray reported that many of its churches, private buildings, priests' residences, clinics and pharmacies, and even the St. Mary's Agricultural University were nearly completely emptied of benches, pews, medicines, computers,

The Sahel: Burkina Faso & Nigeria

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Within the past few years and especially since 2018, African countries in the Sahel – Mali, Niger, Chad, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire – have experienced an exponential uptick in violence by and between non-state jihadist insurgent groups and government forces. Burkina Faso and Nigeria are two of the worst-affected nations, with civilian deaths on the rise.

In Burkina Faso, one of the worst incidents of the insurgency occurred when two members of Jama'at Nasr al-Islam (JNIM) ambushed the town of Solhan and massacred every individual they saw; the death toll was no fewer than 132 civilian casualties and one young boy named Philip watched as his father, Pastor Daniel, was shot dead right in front of him. y in February 2020, terrorists attacked the town of Pansi in Yagha province, where they separated male and female citizens located near or at a Protestant church and killed 24 civilians including Christians and Muslims, murdered a pastor, looted oil and rice from local stores, set fire to the aforementioned church, and kidnapped three individuals.⁸ One week prior also in Yagha province, insurgents killed a retired pastor and abducted another. In May 2021, armed insurgents interrupted a baptism ceremony in Adjarara and killed 15 Christian attendees.

In Nigeria's predominantly Muslim north, Christian communities, worshippers, and churches are facing an existential threat as they are under nearly daily attacks by radical Islamist terrorists including Boko Haram, Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), and bands of extremist Fulani militants. In October 2021, the Nigeria-based International Society for Civil Liberties and Rule of Law reported that no fewer than 4,400 Nigerian Christians had been killed by jihadists within ninemonth period between January and September 2021.

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