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Jubilee Campaign to Hold Virtual UN Human Rights Council Event - *Protecting Life: Repealing the Death Penalty for Apostasy and Blasphemy*

Jubilee Campaign is pleased to announce that on Tuesday, 8 March 2022, we will be holding a virtual side event to the United Nations Human Rights Council's 49th Session. Our event, titled *Protecting Life: Repealing the Death Penalty for Apostasy and Blasphemy*, will take place via Zoom at 6:30 AM Eastern (12:30 PM Geneva), and will be co-chaired by Ms. Ann Buwalda (Executive Director Jubilee Campaign) and Mr. Jos Douma (The Netherlands' Special Envoy for Religion and Belief). We gratefully accepted country co-sponsors from the Permanent Missions of Australia, Denmark, the Netherlands, Sierra Leone, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Among our list of confirmed distinguished speakersDr. Ahmed Shaheed (United Nations Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief), Mr. Morris Tidball-Binz (United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions), Dr. Mai Sato (Director, Eleos Justice; Associate Professor, Monash University), Dr. Khalid Masud (Judge, Supreme Court of Pakistan; Former Chairman, Government of Pakistan's Council of Islamic Ideology), Ms. Anietie Awang (Nigeria Researcher, Human Rights Watch), Mr. Kola Alpinni (Defense Attorney; Trustee, Foundation for Religious Freedom), Mrs. Fiona Bruce (United Kingdom Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief), Ms. Nadine Maenza (Chair, United States Commission on International Religious Freedom), Dr. Ibrahim Salama (Chief, Human Rights Treaties Branch, United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights).

United Nations Human Rights Council
Hybrid Side Event

Protecting Life: Repealing the Death Penalty for Apostasy and Blasphemy

Date: 8 March 2022

Time: 6:30 AM (Eastern)
12:30 PM (Geneva)

Register: https://tinyurl.com/5pfatjmx

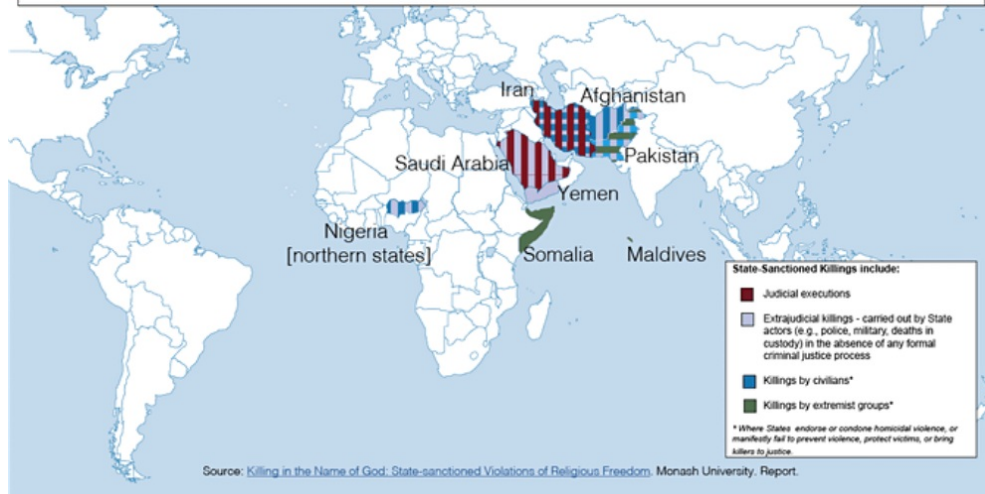***Click on the above graphic to view and download the event flyer***

Register for the event here:

[eventbrite]

Background

Nearly 70 UN members states have laws which penalize individuals for exercising their fundamental human rights of religion or belief and expression and at least 12 states maintain the death penalty as a punishment for the enjoyment of these rights through anti-apostasy, anti-blasphemy and related laws. Of these 12, five are members of the Human Rights Council, a membership which mandates states to uphold high human rights standards.

Countries which maintain the death penalty for apostasy or blasphemy who have carried out state-sanctioned killings for religion or belief since 2010.

State-Sanctioned Killings include:

- Judicial executions
- Extrajudicial killings - carried out by State actors (e.g., police, military, deaths in custody) in the absence of any formal criminal justice process
- Killings by civilians*
- Killings by extremist groups*

* Where States endorse or condone homicidal violence, or manifestly fail to prevent violence, protect victims, or bring killers to justice.

Source: Killing in the Name of God: State-sanctioned Violations of Religious Freedom. Monash University. Report.

The UN Secretary General in his annual report on the question of the death penalty made clear that the death penalty, "must never be imposed as a sanction for specific forms of nonviolent conduct such as apostasy, blasphemy, adultery, and consensual same-sex relations." The UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief also made an early call for the repeal of laws which restrict religious choice and expression of belief. Moreover, the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial killings has noted that carrying out a death sentence for a "victimless crime," such as apostasy and blasphemy, constitutes a form of summary or arbitrary execution.

This side-event is convened to bring together the cross-sectional advocacy regarding freedom of religion, belief, and expression, and activism to repeal the death penalty, acknowledging the "chilling effect" anti-apostasy and anti-blasphemy laws have on a plethora of other freedoms for individuals from diverse religious and belief backgrounds. The side-event will build on the Monash University Report *Killing in the Name of God* (panelist Dr. Mai Sato is one of the authors of the report in discussion) which compiled trends and patterns in the 12 states that maintain the death penalty for religion or belief and also address vulnerabilities women face as a result of these laws.

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