



Jubilee Campaign Engages with United Nations Human Rights Council on Nigeria, Apostasy Laws, Arbitrary Detention, and Myanmar

Each year in March, June, and September, Jubilee Campaign engaged with the United Nations Human Rights Council by submitting written statements on our most pressing concerns. For the upcoming 49th Session of the Human Rights Council taking place in March 2022, we submitted reports on daily genocidal violence in Nigeria, the state of Myanmar one year after the coup, the inhumanity of apostasy and anti-conversion laws, and arbitrary detention of faith minorities.

Daily Genocidal Violence in Nigeria

Jubilee Campaign has raised the issue of the humanitarian crisis in Nigeria to the Human Rights Council more times than we can count. For years, Nigerian civilians - including Christians - have been targeted by Islamic militant groups such as Boko Haram, and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). The year 2021 was no exception. The Observatory of Religious Freedom in Africa (ORFA) reported that between 1 October 2019 and 30 September 2021, jihadist assailants killed 8,560 Nigerian Christians and were responsible for a substantial portion of the 2,417 Muslim deaths during this period. While Boko Haram's terrorist activity has experienced periods of stagnancy, in November 2020 the group killed between 70 and 110 civilians after storming rice farms and slitting farmers' throats in Borno State villages; the United Nations marked this incident as "the most violent direct attack against innocent [Nigerian] civilians this year".



*****Click on the graphic on the right to view and download the full submission.*****



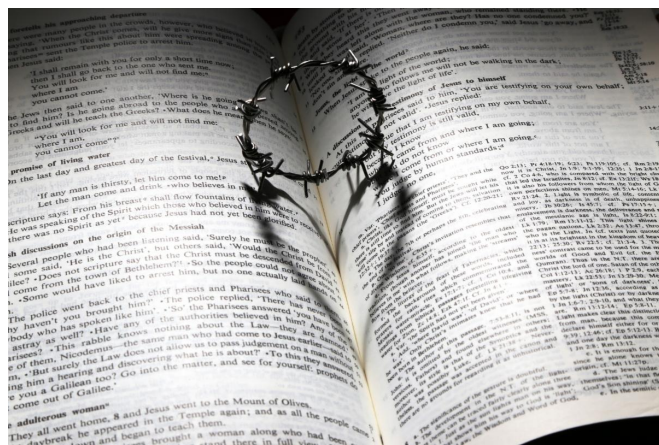
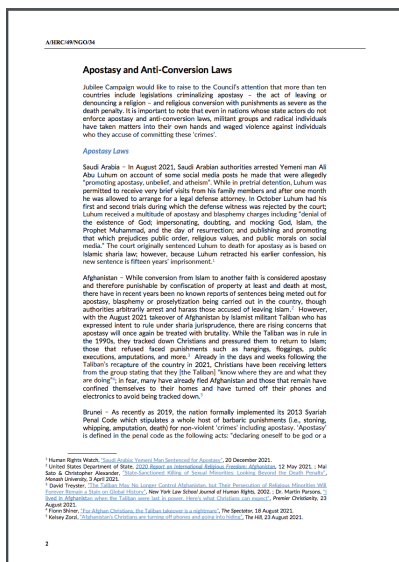
Fulani militants, who operate primarily in Nigeria's Middle Belt, continued to wreak havoc on predominantly Christian farming communities in midnight attacks. In October 2021, the Nigeria-based International Society for Civil Liberties and Rule of Law estimated that in

just the first nine months of the year, jihadist Fulani militants were responsible for no fewer than 3,140 Nigerian Christian casualties Christian Solidarity International (CSI) recorded at least 615 civilian deaths at the hands of radical Fulani “bandits”, “herdsmen”, “gunmen”, and “militants” in the first three weeks of 2022; moreover, they documented approximately 231 kidnapped individuals. In separate occasions, bands of armed men suspected to be Fulani militants based on their dress, accents, and location of activities, conduct kidnappings of civilians, often students from educational institutions. Suspected Fulani militants were responsible for at least 12 abductions targeting nearly 900 individuals - mostly children - in 2020 and 2021.

Apostasy and Anti-Conversion Laws

More than ten countries include legislations criminalizing apostasy – the act of leaving or denouncing a religion – and religious conversion with punishments as severe as the death penalty. It is important to note that even in nations whose state actors do not enforce apostasy and anti-conversion laws, militant groups and radical individuals have taken matters into their own hands and waged violence against individuals who they accuse of committing these ‘crimes’.

In Saudi Arabia in August 2021, authorities arrested Yemeni man Ali Abu Luhum on account of some social media posts he made that were allegedly “promoting apostasy, unbelief, and atheism”. The court originally sentenced Luhum to death for apostasy as is based on Islamic sharia law; however, because Luhum retracted his earlier confession, his new sentence is fifteen years’ imprisonment. In Afghanistan, while conversion from Islam to another faith is considered apostasy and therefore punishable by confiscation of property at least and death at most, there have in recent years been no known reports of sentences being meted out for apostasy, blasphemy or proselytization being carried out in the country, though authorities arbitrarily arrest and harass those accused of leaving Islam. However, with the August 2021 takeover of Afghanistan by Islamist militant Taliban who has expressed intent to rule under sharia jurisprudence, there are rising concerns that apostasy will once again be treated with brutality. While the Taliban was in rule in the 1990s, they tracked down Christians and pressured them to return to Islam; those that refused faced punishments such as hangings, floggings, public executions, amputations, and more.



*****Click on the graphic on the left to view and download the full submission.*****

Some nations, rather than laws specifically criminalizing "apostasy", are de facto apostasy laws as they target religious conversions. In India for example, Indian states such as Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh have enacted legislations in response to the 'love jihad' baseless conspiracy theory running rampant in India that Muslim boys and men are marrying Hindu women and girls for the purpose of forcing them to convert to Islam. Under these laws, Hindu nationalists to falsely accuse faith minorities of engaging in fraudulent marriages and faith conversions; without evidence that such activities were taking place, and despite that the targeted marriages were legitimate, Indian authorities have detained

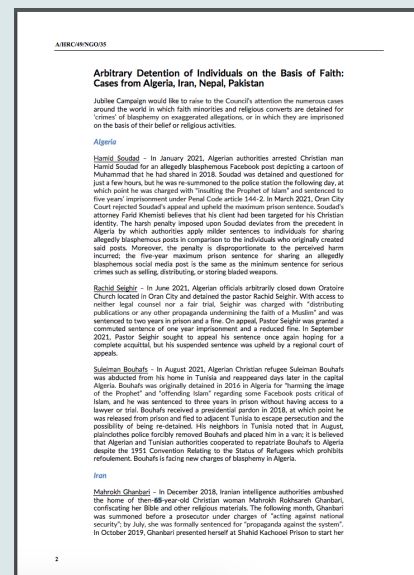
Arbitrary Detention on the Basis of Faith

Algeria: In January 2021, Algerian authorities arrested Christian man Hamid Soudad for an allegedly blasphemous Facebook post depicting a cartoon of Muhammad that he had shared in 2018. Soudad was detained and questioned for just a few hours, but he was re-summoned to the police station the following day, at which point he was charged with “insulting the Prophet of Islam” and sentenced to five years’ imprisonment under Penal Code article 144-2. In June 2021, Algerian officials arbitrarily closed down Oratoire Church located in Oran City and detained the pastor Rachid Seighir. With access to neither legal counsel nor a fair trial, Seighir was charged with “distributing publications or any other propaganda undermining the faith of a Muslim” and was sentenced to two years in prison and a fine.

Iran: In December 2018, Iranian intelligence authorities ambushed the home of then-65-year-old Christian woman Mahrokh Rokhsareh Ghanbari, confiscating her Bible and other religious materials. The following month, Ghanbari was summoned before a prosecutor under charges of “acting against national security”; by July, she was formally sentenced for “propaganda against the system”. In March 2020, in a positive turn of events, Ghanbari was temporarily released from prison in a move to reduce the population of Iranian detention centers and stymie the spread of COVID-19; in April, authorities informed Ghanbari that she was not required to return to prison. However, in January 2022, she was summoned to Karaj Revolutionary Court and is now facing the same set of charges of propaganda against the regime.



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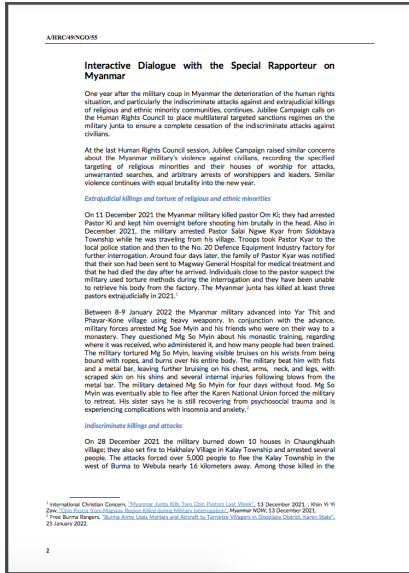
Pakistan: In January 2022, Christian man Nadeem Samson - who had originally been falsely charged with blasphemy in 2017 after two men had opened a fake Facebook account in Samson's name and posted material offensive to Islam - was granted bail after four years in prison, though his lawyer expressed less confidence about the possibility of a complete acquittal. Also in January 2022, the Lahore High Court ordered a new decision to be made in the case of Christian convert Stephan Masih; Masih was originally arrested in 2019 after a neighbor falsely accused him of making blasphemous remarks during a dispute, and he has remained in custody in spite of - and without treatment for - his mental disabilities.

Myanmar One Year after the Coup

One year after the military coup in Myanmar the deterioration of the human rights situation, and particularly the indiscriminate attacks against and extrajudicial killings of religious and ethnic minority communities, continues. On 11 December 2021 the Myanmar military killed

pastor Om Ki, they had arrested Pastor Kyar Ki and kept him overnight before shooting him brutally in the head. Also in December 2021, the military arrested Pastor Salai Ngwe Kyar from Sidoktaya Township while he was traveling from his village; Pastor Kyar later died at a hospital from what his family believes were acts of physical torture during detention by the military. The Myanmar junta has killed at least three pastors extrajudicially in 2021.

On 28 December 2021 the military burned down 10 houses in Chaungkhuah village; they also set fire to Hakhalay Village in Kalay Township and arrested several people. The attacks forced over 5,000 people to flee the Kalay Township in the west of Burma to Webula nearly 16 kilometers away. On the 9th January 2022, mortars fired by the military wounded two farmers and destroyed their homes; days later on 13 January, the military killed two farmers and wounded a 6-year-old boy in Karen state.



*****Click on the graphic on the left to view and download the full submission.*****

The indiscriminate attacks and bombings in Myanmar have both direct and longterm implications on the ethnic and religious minorities of Myanmar. There are the current pressing needs of emergency medical aid, food, clean water, and healthcare; there are also the long-term effects of the trauma of witnessing and being victim to the military's violence, the lack of education for children, and the absence of a stable home.

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