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Human Rights Index

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HUMAN RIGHTS INDEX

*Prepared by the University of Iowa Center for Human Rights (UICHR)**

Article 18 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights declares that “[e]veryone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.” Article 18 of the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights enters this ideal into formal international law, adding that “[t]his right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his [sic] choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his [sic] religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.” The right to freedom of religion enjoys at least nominal acceptance in most countries of the world. In practice, however, the right is regularly violated, which violations are exacerbated by lack of formal, legal protection, direct governmental interference, and official disregard of third-party abuse.

- 1/16 Fraction of a Muslim male’s compensation for accidental death or injury that a Buddhist, Hindu, or Sikh plaintiff receives for the same harm in Saudi Arabia—which recognizes no religion but Islam and regularly sends “religious police” to arrest and deport immigrant members of the Ahmadi sect alleged to be heretic Muslims (Human Rights Watch, 2006; U.S. Dept State, 2007)
- 2 Years of imprisonment to which a religious official in Turkey may be sentenced for criticism of the government in the course of clerical duty notwithstanding that the Turkish constitution guarantees freedom of religion—a circumstance reminiscent of the criminal prosecution of Nobel laureate Orhan Pamuk for “denigrating Turkishness,” later rescinded following international outcry (Amnesty International, 2006; U.S. Dept State, 2007)
- 15 Years the Myanmar (Burmese) military junta has closely controlled the Burmese Buddhist hierarchy, jailed or defrocked monks critical of government policies, and used military courts to try monks who have urged reconciliation with pro-democracy forces—all this in addition to the three to four thousand people killed, among them numerous Buddhist monks, during peaceful anti-government demonstrations in 1988, 1990, and 2007 (CNN, 2007; France 24, 2007; U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, 2007)

- 188** Number of Muslims out of Turkmenistan's ordained quota of 4,600 practitioners allowed to leave the country (equal to one plane load) to participate in the annual Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca in 2006, all of them handpicked by Turkmenistan's president and subject to government mandates requiring reading of the spiritual guidebook of the late dictator Sapurmurat Niyazov (the Ruhnama) and its use in religious services alongside the Qur'an (Radio Free Europe, 2007; U.S. Dept State, 2007)
- 800** Number of Baha'i students whose university admission test scores the Iranian government refused to release in October 2007, effectively preventing their pursuit of higher education but consistent with Teheran's treatment of an estimated 300,000 Baha'i in the country, Iran's largest religious minority, as religious apostates not worthy of official recognition (Human Rights Watch, 2007; Radio Free Europe, 2007)
- 32,009** Number of Israelis obliged to marry outside Israel between 2000 and 2004 because civil marriages are not recognized in Israel—for example, anyone wishing to marry in a secular ceremony, Jews wishing to wed in non-Orthodox religious ceremonies, Jews not officially recognized as Jewish by the Orthodox Jewish establishment but wishing to wed in Jewish ceremonies, and Jews wishing to wed someone of another faith (U.S. Dept of State, 2007)
- 450,000** Number of Kim Il-Sung Revolutionary Research Centers in North Korea at which North Koreans are required to receive weekly instruction, inspiration, and self-criticism so as to ensure acceptance of Kim Jong-Il, son of Kim Il-Sung, as the supreme authority of North Korea, any opposition on religious or other grounds being considered contrary to the national interest, therefore subject to severe punishment (U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, 2005; U.S. Dept of State, 2006)
- 1,500,000** Approximate number of books, video tapes, and compact discs containing Falun Gong religious teachings seized by the Chinese Government following a proclamation by President Jiang Zemin banning the Falun Gong in July 1999, and continuing to be banned ever since on the grounds that the Falun Gong is a cult and its practitioners consequently subject to arrest, detention, and imprisonment (International Journal of Legislative Information, 2006; U.S. Dept of State, 2007)

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