

THE TANDEM PROJECT
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**UNITED NATIONS, HUMAN RIGHTS,
FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF**

*The Tandem Project is a UN NGO in Special Consultative Status with the
Economic and Social Council of the United Nations*

Separation of Religion or Belief and State

Universal Periodic Review reports in six languages

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/dzsession1.aspx>

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Universal Periodic Review - Algeria

*Only contributions submitted in one of the United Nations official languages are admissible and
posted on this webpage*

Date of consideration: Monday 14 April 2008 - 9.00 a.m. - 12.00 p.m.

National Report, Compilation of UN information, Stakeholder's information, Report of the
Working Group, Related Webcast Archives (open above).



Main Country Page: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/countries/MENARegion/Pages/DZIndex.aspx>

Inter-active Dialogue: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/DZWebArchives.aspx>

**Universal Periodic Review in April 2008 as Preparation for the Universal Periodic Review on 29
May 2012. This is NOT a submission to the UN for a Universal Periodic Review. The tentative
schedule for the Algeria second cycle review is Tuesday 29 May from 14:30-18:00. The inter-active
dialogue can be viewed live on the OHCHR website, www.ohchr.org**

BACKGROUND HUMAN RIGHTS & FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

General Comment 22 on Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
[http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/9a30112c27d1167cc12563ed004d8f15?Opendocument](http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/9a30112c27d1167cc12563ed004d8f15?Opendocument)

The 1981 UN Declaration on the Elimination of all Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief http://www.tandemproject.com/program/81_dec.htm.

List of Religion or Belief by Countries: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_religious_populations

**REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP – RECOMMENDATIONS
RELATING DIRECTLY TO FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF**

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/dzsession1.aspx>

Working Group Report: Paragraph # 52. The criminalization of religious activities applies to persons who, lacking the necessary capacity or authorization, seek to persuade citizens to renounce their religion, in most cases by coercion or blackmail. This provision applies to all religions, including the majority religion in Algeria, namely Islam. Conclusions and Recommendations: #6. That Algeria continue a dialogue with minority religions (The Holy See).

REPORTS OF THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomReligion/Pages/FreedomReligionIndex.aspx>

Mr. Abdelfattah Amor, UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief made a Country Visit to Algeria in 2002 (E/CN.4/2003/66/Add.1). Open Rapporteur's website above and click to open Country Visits. The Resolution on Freedom of Religion or Belief A/HRC/19/L.23 was adopted by consensus at the nineteenth session of the UN Human Rights Council on March 22, 2012.

http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/19/L.23

CONSTITUTION OF ALGERIA

<http://www.algeria-un.org/default.asp?doc=-const>

Article 1 - Algeria is a People's Democratic Republic. It is one and indivisible.

Article 2 - Islam is the religion of the State.

A CULTURE OF TOLERANCE AND PEACE BASED ON RELIGION OR BELIEF

On December 19, 2011 resolution A/RES/66/167 was **adopted by consensus** by the United Nations General Assembly, after several years of contentious issues between the European Union (EU), Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), and other UN Member States. A/RES/66/167 is a hopeful beginning for resolution of these issues.

United Nations Resolution – a Culture of Tolerance & Peace Based on Religion or Belief

Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping, stigmatization, discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons, based on religion or belief

Introduced by Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) adopted by consensus without a vote. - Resolution A/HRC/16/18/L.38, Geneva, March 24 2011

Recognizes that the open public debate of ideas, as well as interfaith and intercultural dialogue at the local, national and international levels can be among the best protections against religious intolerance, and can play a positive role in strengthening democracy and combating religious hatred, and convinced that a continuing dialogue on these issues can help overcome existing misperceptions.

Calls for strengthened international efforts to foster a global dialogue for the promotion of a culture of tolerance and peace at all levels, based on respect for human rights and diversity of religions and beliefs, and decides to convene a panel discussion on this issue at its seventeenth session within existing resources.

Pakistan (on behalf of the OIC) Mr. Zamir Akram [\[English\]](#) 10 minutes **Saudi Arabia** Mr. Ahmed Suleiman Ibrahim Alaquil [\[English\]](#) [\[Arabic\]](#) 1 minute **Norway** Ms. Beate Stirø [\[English\]](#) 2 minutes **United States of America** Mr. Eileen Chamberlain Donahoe [\[English\]](#) 5 minutes **Hungary (on behalf of the European Union)** Mr. András Dékány [\[English\]](#) 3 minutes

UN Human Rights Council Panel Statements, Resolution A-HRC-16-18, 2010 General Assembly Third Committee Actions

Introduced by United Arab Emirates on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) adopted by consensus without a vote – Resolution A/C.3/66/L.47, New York, 15 November 2011

UN Third Committee Press Release - Resolution L.47 Adopted by Consensus

http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/C.3/66/L.47/Rev.1

The Resolution identified as A/RES/66/147 by the General Assembly welcomes the establishment of the “King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural dialogue in Vienna, initiated by King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia on the basis of purposes and principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and acknowledging the important role that this Centre is expected to play as a platform for the enhancement of interreligious and intercultural dialogue.” - King Abdulaziz Dialogue Center – Vienna <http://www.kacnd.org/eng/>

Surely one of the best hopes for humankind is to embrace a culture in which religions and other beliefs accept one another, in which wars and violence are not tolerated in the name of an exclusive right to truth, in which children are raised to solve conflicts with mediation, compassion and understanding. **REFLECTIONS - The Tandem Project**

ISSUES & CHALLENGES

Anders Behring Breivik is the ethnic Norwegian perpetrator of the most horrific acts of terrorism in Norway since WW II. In an opinion page article in the New York Times, 31 July 2011, by Thomas Hegghammer, Senior Research Fellow of the Norwegian Defense Research Establishment, Breivik is quoted as saying he is “extremely proud of his Odinic/Norse heritage and while he is Christian admits ‘I’m not a very religious person.’ “While Breivik’s violent acts are exceptional, his anti-Islamic views are not. His goal is to reverse what he views as the Islamization of Western Europe.”

[Assimilation’s Failure, Terrorism’s Rise](#)

FOCUS GROUPS ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

Focus Groups on Freedom of Religion or Belief are proposed at local levels to support United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/66/167. Suggestion for Focus Group Questions:

Will A/RES/66/167 matter at a local level to manifest the right to freedom of religion or belief, cultural identity, principles and values in tandem with international human rights law, principles and values on freedom of religion or belief?

Islam is the religion of the state. Focus Groups on Freedom of Religion or Belief, at a local level, must abide by the Constitution, laws and ordinances of the state. Within these restrictions can A/RES/66/167, adopted by Algeria in the UN General Assembly, be used for inclusive and genuine dialogue at a local level?

EXCERPTS FOR DISCUSSION

“The constitution provides for freedom of belief and opinion and permits citizens to establish institutions whose aims include the protection of fundamental liberties of the citizen. The constitution declares Islam the state religion and prohibits institutions from engaging in behavior incompatible with Islamic morality. Ordinance 06-03 provides for the freedom of non-Muslims to practice religious rites, on condition that the exercise thereof is in keeping with the ordinance, the constitution, and other laws and regulations and that public order, morality, and the rights and basic freedoms of others are respected. The ordinance regulates non-Muslim religious practice by regulating non-Muslim worship and stipulating fines against attempting to convert Muslims to another religion. Depending on the severity of the infraction (e.g., selling Bibles as opposed to actively proselytizing), one-time fines against Christians can range from \$6.80 (500 dinars) to \$6,802 (500,000 dinars). The prohibition against efforts to proselytize Muslims was not always enforced.” - U.S. State Department 2010 International Religious Freedom Report, Algeria

“The Committee observes that the concept of morals derives from many social, philosophical and religious traditions; consequently, limitations on the freedom to manifest a religion or belief for the

purpose of protecting morals must be based on principles not deriving exclusively from a single tradition. - General Comment 22 on Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

In 1984, the United Nations Secretariat sponsored a two week Geneva Seminar on ways to implement the 1981 UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination based on Religion or Belief, *Seminar on the Encouragement of Understanding, Tolerance and Respect in Matters Relating to Freedom of Religion or Belief* (1984) ST/HR/SER. A/16 Geneva.

The Tandem Project is a nonprofit organization founded in 1986. The organization serves a global audience through its mission to build understanding and respect for diversity of religion or belief and prevent discrimination based on religion or belief world-wide. In 1986, The Tandem Project organized the first International Conference, *Tolerance for Diversity of Religion or Belief*, on the 1981 UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief: <http://www.tandemproject.com/tolerance.pdf>

SEPARATION OF RELIGION OR BELIEF AND STATE

www.sorobas.com

Separation of Religion or Belief and State – SOROBAS is a proposed website by The Tandem Project to support United Nations General Assembly Resolution, A/RES/66/167, a *Culture of Tolerance and Peace Based on Religion or Belief*.

Separation of Religion or Belief and State – SOROBAS is a term used by The Tandem Project to express the core principles of international human rights law on freedom of religion or belief. The term has a long history with diverse interpretations. [Separation of Church and State](#).

Modern technology, travel and communications have brought religions and other beliefs, and cultures closer than ever before in human history. The balance between assimilation and multiculturalism is a great challenge for our age. *Separation of Religion or Belief and State – SOROBAS* brings separation of church and state, separation of synagogue and state, separation of mosque and state, separation of temple and state, and separation of other sacred places and associations and state, together under an umbrella term of respect for each other and international human rights law on freedom of religion or belief.

There is an increase in dialogue today between religions and other beliefs to embrace diversity, but few persons, less than one percent of any population, ever participate. The value of such dialogues is proportionate to the level of participation. *Separation of Religion or Belief and State - SOROBAS* will create opportunities for inclusive and genuine human rights education on freedom of religion or belief.

HISTORY

<http://www.tandemproject.com/program/history.htm>

In 1962, The General Assembly adopted a resolution requesting ECOSOC to ask the Commission to

prepare a draft declaration and a draft convention on the elimination of racial discrimination. It also adopted a similarly worded resolution requesting ECOSOC to ask the Commission to prepare a draft declaration and a draft convention on the elimination of all forms of religious intolerance. Both resolutions referred in their respective preambles to the desire to 'put into effect the principle of equality of all men and all peoples without distinction as to race, color or religion. The General Assembly set deadlines for submission of the special instruments on religious intolerance: its eighteenth session (1963) for the draft declaration and its twentieth session (1965) for the draft convention.

In 1968, the United Nations deferred passage of a legally-binding convention on religious intolerance saying it was too complicated and sensitive. In 1981, they adopted a non-binding declaration on the elimination of all forms of intolerance and of discrimination based on religion or belief. While very worthwhile, the declaration does not carry the force and commitment of a legally-binding international human rights convention on freedom of religion or belief.

http://www.tandemproject.com/program/81_dec.htm.

In 1998, the Oslo Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief was the catalyst for change of title from Special Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance to Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief [1998 UN Conference Report](#)

In 2006, the 25 Year Commemoration of the 1981 UN Declaration was celebrated in Prague, Czech Republic, sponsored by the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights with contributions from the Netherlands. [1981 UN Declaration – 25 Year Commemoration](#)

2012 marks the 50th anniversary of the UN General Assembly request to ECOSOC to prepare a draft convention on religious intolerance, deferred due to complexity and sensitivity.

The Tandem Project believes until a core legally-binding human rights treaty, a Convention on Freedom of Religion or Belief, is adopted, international human rights law will be incomplete.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

U.S. State Department 2010 International Religious Freedom Report, Algeria

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148812.htm>

Excerpts

Ordinance 06-03, enforced since February 2008, limits the practice of non-Muslim religions, restricts public assembly for the purpose of worship, and calls for the creation of a national commission to regulate the registration process for non-Muslim religious groups. The ordinance requires organized religious groups to register with the government, controls the importation of religious texts, and orders fines and punishments for individuals who proselytize Muslims.

Government officials asserted that ordinance 06-03 is designed to apply to non-Muslims the same constraints that the penal code imposes on Muslims. In practice ordinance 06-03 and the penal code enabled the government to shut any informal religious service that took place in private homes or in

secluded outdoor settings.

Some aspects of the law and many traditional social practices discriminate against women. The family code, which draws on Shari'a (Islamic law), treats women as minors under the legal guardianship of a husband or male relative. Under the code Muslim women are prevented from marrying non-Muslims, although this regulation was not always enforced. The code does not prohibit Muslim men from marrying non-Muslim women, but it prohibits them from marrying a woman of a nonmonotheistic religious group. Under the law children born to a Muslim father are Muslim, regardless of the mother's religion. In rulings on divorce, custody of the children normally is awarded to the mother, but she may not take them out of the country without the father's authorization. Under the 2005 family code amendments, women no longer need the consent of a male tuteur (guardian) to marry.

Section I. Religious Demography

The country has an area of 919,595 square miles and a population of 36 million. More than 99 percent of the population is Sunni Muslim. There is a small community of Ibadi Muslims in the province of Ghardaia. Unofficial estimates of the number of Christian and Jewish citizens varied between 12,000 and 50,000. The vast majority of Christians and Jews fled the country following independence from France in 1962. In the 1990s many of the remaining Christians and Jews emigrated due to acts of terrorism committed by Muslim extremists. For security reasons due mainly to the civil conflict, Christians concentrated in the cities of Algiers, Annaba, and Oran in the mid-1990s. According to Christian community leaders, evangelical Christians, including Seventh-day Adventists accounted for the largest number of Christians. Most evangelicals lived in the Kabylie region. Next in size were the Methodists and members of other Protestant denominations, followed by Roman Catholics. A significant proportion of Christian foreign residents, whose numbers were difficult to estimate, were students and illegal immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa seeking to reach Europe. One religious figure estimated there were between 1,000 and 1,500 Egyptian Christians living in the country.

During the reporting period, there were fewer press reports that Christian proselytizing had resulted in significant numbers of Muslims in the Kabylie region converting to Christianity. There were no standardized statistics on the number of religious conversions. Reporting from media, NGOs, and churches suggested that citizens, not foreigners, were the majority of those actively proselytizing in Kabylie.

Since 1994 the Jewish community has diminished to less than 2,000 members due to fears of terrorist violence. The Jewish community was not active, and the synagogues remained closed or unused. While the government allowed for the reopening of 25 synagogues around the country, none are in use.

In Algiers, church services were attended primarily by members of the diplomatic community, foreign resident Westerners, sub-Saharan African migrants, and a few local Christians.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The constitution provides for freedom of belief and opinion and permits citizens to establish institutions whose aims include the protection of fundamental liberties of the citizen. The constitution declares Islam the state religion and prohibits institutions from engaging in behavior incompatible with Islamic morality. Ordinance 06-03 provides for the freedom of non-Muslims to practice religious rites, on condition that the exercise thereof is in keeping with the ordinance, the constitution, and other laws and regulations and that public order, morality, and the rights and basic freedoms of others are respected. The ordinance regulates non-Muslim religious practice by regulating non-Muslim worship and stipulating fines against attempting to convert Muslims to another religion. Depending on the severity of the infraction (e.g., selling Bibles as opposed to actively proselytizing), one-time fines against Christians can range from \$6.80 (500 dinars) to \$6,802 (500,000 dinars). The prohibition against efforts to proselytize Muslims was not always enforced.

The constitution prohibits non-Muslims from running for the presidency. Non-Muslims may hold other public offices and work within the government; however, there was considerable anecdotal evidence that non-Muslims were not promoted to senior posts. As a result many non-Muslims hid their religious affiliation.

Ordinance 06-03, enforced since February 2008, limits the practice of non-Muslim religions, restricts public assembly for the purpose of worship, and calls for the creation of a national commission to regulate the registration process for non-Muslim religious groups. The ordinance requires organized religious groups to register with the government, controls the importation of religious texts, and orders fines and punishments for individuals who proselytize Muslims.

Government officials asserted that ordinance 06-03 is designed to apply to non-Muslims the same constraints that the penal code imposes on Muslims. In practice ordinance 06-03 and the penal code enabled the government to shut any informal religious service that took place in private homes or in secluded outdoor settings.

However, Christian leaders claimed to have improved relations with the government during the reporting period. Several church leaders reported receiving help from the Ministry of Religious Affairs to complete and file applications to register non-Muslim religious groups under the ordinance correctly. Nevertheless, many representatives of churches and some human rights organizations reported that the government had not provided the administrative means to process and approve requests to register non-Muslim religious groups under the ordinance. The National Commission for Non-Muslim Religious Services, which is the governmental entity responsible for regulating the registration process for non-Muslim religious groups, reportedly approved one request for accreditation by non-Muslim religious associations on July 1, 2009, for the representation of the Jewish community. The government also allowed for the reopening of 25 synagogues. None of the synagogues is in use, and the "reopening" stands as a technical permission that is not being implemented. According to the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the National Commission has 12 or 13 applications for accreditation from various Protestant denominations. Members of the non-Muslim religious community alleged that the number was higher. Christian citizens who converted from Islam

reportedly constituted the vast majority of the groups who sought legal registration.

Executive decree 07-158, which came into effect in early 2009, gives greater precision to ordinance 06-03 by specifying the composition of the National Commission for Non-Muslim Religious Services and the regulations that govern it. It establishes that the Minister of Religious Affairs and Awqaf (religious endowments) presides over the commission, which is composed of senior representatives of the Ministries of National Defense, Interior, Foreign Affairs, National Security, the national police, the national gendarmerie, and the governmental National Consultative Commission for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (CNCPPDH). Individuals and groups who believe they are not being treated fairly by the Ministry of Religious Affairs may address their concerns to the CNCPPDH.

Conversion is not illegal under civil law, and apostasy is not a criminal offense. The government permitted missionary groups to conduct humanitarian activities as long as they did not proselytize.

Under ordinance 06-03, proselytizing is a criminal offense and carries a punishment of one to three years in jail and a maximum fine of \$6,800 (500,000 dinars) for violations by lay individuals and three to five years' imprisonment and a maximum fine of \$13,600 (one million dinars) for violations by religious leaders. The law stipulates a maximum of five years in jail and a \$6,800 (500,000 dinars) fine for anyone who "incites, constrains, or utilizes means of seduction tending to convert a Muslim to another religion; or by using to this end establishments of teaching, education, health, social, culture, training...or any financial means." Anyone who makes, stores, or distributes printed documents, audiovisual materials, or the like with the intent of "shaking the faith" of a Muslim may also be punished in this manner, but this was not always enforced. During the reporting period, no new cases against proselytizing could be confirmed.

Some aspects of the law and many traditional social practices discriminate against women. The family code, which draws on Shari'a (Islamic law), treats women as minors under the legal guardianship of a husband or male relative. Under the code Muslim women are prevented from marrying non-Muslims, although this regulation was not always enforced. The code does not prohibit Muslim men from marrying non-Muslim women, but it prohibits them from marrying a woman of a nonmonotheistic religious group. Under the law children born to a Muslim father are Muslim, regardless of the mother's religion. In rulings on divorce, custody of the children normally is awarded to the mother, but she may not take them out of the country without the father's authorization. Under the 2005 family code amendments, women no longer need the consent of a male tuteur (guardian) to marry.

The family code also affirms the Islamic practice of allowing a man to marry as many as four wives; however, under the 2005 family code amendments, he must obtain the consent of the current spouse, or spouses, as well as the intended new spouse and a judge. Furthermore, a woman has the right to a non-polygamy clause in a prenuptial agreement. Polygamy rarely occurred in practice, accounting for only 1 percent of marriages.

Women suffer from discrimination in inheritance claims. The family code, which derives inheritance rules from Shari'a, states that women, including widows, are entitled to a smaller portion of a deceased

husband's estate than his male children or brothers. Non-Muslim religious minorities may also suffer in inheritance claims when a Muslim family member lays claim to the same inheritance.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs provided financial support to mosques and paid the salaries of imams. Imams are hired and trained by the state, and observances of Muslim services, with the exception of daily prayers, can be performed only in state-sanctioned mosques.

The penal code states that only government-authorized imams can lead prayer in mosques and establishes strict punishments, including fines of up to \$2,720 (200,000 dinars) and prison sentences of one to three years, for anyone other than a government-designated imam who preaches in a mosque. Harsher punishments exist for any person, including government-designated imams, who acts "against the noble nature of the mosque" or acts in a manner "likely to offend public cohesion." The law does not specify what actions would constitute such acts. The government legally may prescreen and approve sermons before they are delivered publicly during Friday prayers. In practice each wilaya (province) and daira (county) employed religious officials to review sermon content.

The government and private contributions of local believers funded mosque construction. The ministry's educational commission is composed of 28 members who are in charge of developing the educational system for teaching the Qur'an. The commission was responsible for establishing policies for hiring teachers at the Qur'anic schools and ensuring that all imams are well qualified and follow governmental guidelines aimed at stemming Islamic extremism.

The government observes the following religious holidays as national holidays: the Birth of the Prophet Muhammad, Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, Awal Moharem, and Ashura.

The Ministries of Religious Affairs, Foreign Affairs, Interior, and Commerce must approve the importation of non-Islamic religious writings. Often, delays of five to six months occurred before obtaining approval, and there have been further delays when books reached customs. The government periodically restricted the importation of Arabic and Tamazight (Berber) translations of non-Islamic religious texts. The government stated that its purpose was to ensure that the number of texts imported was proportional to the estimated number of adherents of religious groups.

It is legal for citizens and foreigners to bring personal copies of non-Islamic religious texts, such as the Bible, into the country. Non-Islamic religious texts, music, and video cassettes were available, and two stores in the capital sold Bibles in several languages, including Arabic, French, and Tamazight (Berber). Government-owned radio stations continued to broadcast Christmas and Easter services in French. The government prohibited the dissemination of any literature that portrayed violence as a legitimate precept of Islam.

According to the Ministry of Religious Affairs, female employees of the government are allowed to wear the hijab (headscarf) or crosses but are forbidden to wear the niqab (Islamic veil that covers the face).

Ordinance 06-03 outlines enforceable restrictions, which stipulate that all structures intended for the

exercise of non-Muslim worship must be registered by the state. The ordinance also requires that any modification of a structure to allow non-Muslim worship must have prior government approval and that such worship may take place only in structures exclusively intended and approved for that purpose. Officially, non-Muslim worship must take place only in a structure intended for such worship; however, examples existed where this was not enforced.

Executive decree 07-135 gives greater precision to ordinance 06-03 by specifying the manner and conditions under which religious services of non-Muslims may take place. The decree specifies that a request for permission to observe non-Muslim special religious events must be submitted to the wali (governor) at least five days before the event and that the event must occur in buildings accessible to the public. Requests must include information on three principal organizers of the event, its purpose, the number of attendees anticipated, a schedule of events, and its planned location. The organizers also must obtain a permit indicating this information and present it to authorities upon request. Under the decree the wali can request that the organizers move the place of observance of an event or deny permission for it to take place if it is deemed a danger to public order. No events were denied during the reporting period.

If an imam's sermon is suspected by a ministry inspector of being inappropriate, he can be summoned to a "scientific council" composed of Islamic law scholars and other imams who assess the correctness of the sermon. An imam can be relieved of duty if summoned multiple times. During the reporting period the government's right of review was not exercised with non-Islamic religious groups. The government also monitored activities in mosques for possible security-related offenses and prohibited the use of mosques as public meeting places outside of regular prayer hours.

The law requires religious groups to register their organizations with the government prior to conducting any religious activity. The Catholic Church traditionally has been the only officially recognized non-Muslim religious group in the country. In July 2009 the government accredited the first official Jewish organization. The Anglican, Seventh-day Adventist, and other Protestant churches have registration requests that have been pending with the government for up to five years but reported no government interference in holding services.

The Ministry of Interior (MOI) has the sole authority to grant association rights to religious or nonreligious groups. The difficulties faced by religious groups in obtaining legal status were the same as those faced by nonreligious civil society groups, nongovernmental organizations, and others, whose petitions to the MOI were generally met with silence rather than documented refusal. According to the government, applications to register associations have been deferred pending a revision of the 1973 law on associations. The revision has been pending since it was first announced in 2008. While the newly appointed minister of the interior pledged in June 2010 to reconsider applications of associations, the required legislative action had not been scheduled by the end of the reporting period.

Because the government has not registered any new churches since ordinance 06-03 entered into force in February 2008, many Christian citizens continued to meet in unofficial "house churches," which were often homes or businesses of church members. Some of these groups met openly, while others secretly

held worship services in homes.

REFLECTIONS

The Tandem Project

The First Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights reads: Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

Surely one of the best hopes for humankind is to embrace a culture in which religions and other beliefs accept one another, in which wars and violence are not tolerated in the name of an exclusive right to truth, in which children are raised to solve conflicts with mediation, compassion and understanding.

There is an increase in dialogue today between religions and other beliefs to embrace diversity, but few persons, less than one percent of any population, ever participate. This is a challenge. The value of such dialogues is proportionate to the level of participation. For civil society increased participation would create opportunities for education on inclusive and genuine approaches to human rights and freedom of religion or belief.

In 1968 the United Nations deferred passage of a legally-binding convention on religious intolerance saying it was too complicated and sensitive. Instead, they adopted a non-binding declaration on the elimination of all forms of intolerance and of discrimination based on religion or belief. While very worthwhile, the declaration does not carry the force and commitment of a legally-binding international human rights convention on freedom of religion or belief.

Religions and other beliefs historically have been used to justify wars and settle disputes. This is more dangerous today as the possible use of nuclear and biological weapons of mass destruction increases. Governments need to consider whether religions and other beliefs trump human rights or human rights trump religions and other beliefs or neither trumps the other. Can international human rights law help to stop the advance and use of such weapons in the face of this historic truth?

- **QUESTION:** Weapons of mass destruction as history teaches are often legitimized for national security and justified by cultural, ethnic, religious or political ideology. The U.N. Review Conference on the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and studies on biological and cyber weapons demonstrate advances in science and technology is being used to increase their potential for mass destruction. The question is whether an International Convention on Human Rights and Freedom of Religion or Belief, elevated and supported equally by the U.N. Human Rights Council and U.N. Security Council, would help offset the risk of weapons of mass destruction. Recognition of the need for synergy to balance rights and security is a foundation for solving this issue.

“I am become death, the destroyer of worlds”

- Robert Oppenheimer, quote from the Bhagavad Gita after exploding the first atomic bomb, Trinity
1945.

The Tandem Project believes until a core legally-binding human rights Convention on Freedom of Religion or Belief is adopted international human rights law will be incomplete. It may be time to begin to consider reinstating the 1968 Working Group to bring all matters relating to freedom of religion or belief under one banner, a core international human rights legally-binding treaty.

The Tandem Project a non-governmental organization (NGO) founded in 1986 to build understanding, tolerance, and respect for diversity of religion or belief, and to prevent discrimination in matters relating to freedom of religion or belief. The Tandem Project has sponsored multiple conferences, curricula, reference material and programs on Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights- Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion – and the 1981 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief.