

RUSSIAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE PROTECTION OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

**REPORT**  
**THE FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE**  
**AND RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE**  
**IN TODAY'S WORLD**

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The one-and-a-half-year report "Freedom of Conscience and Religious Intolerance in the Today's World" is published by the Russian Association for the Protection of Religious Freedom in order to highlight the most important events taking place in the field of the protection of the right to freedom of conscience and religion, on the basis of regular monitoring.

The report in a systematic form presents an overview of materials on this topic recorded from June 2020 to December 2021 in domestic and foreign periodicals and news agencies. The report provides an analysis of the most characteristic features of the oppression of religious freedoms. The situation in countries where crimes against believers are committed is demonstrated by examples, and trends and causes of persecution are analyzed.

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## Introduction

The 18-month report "Freedom of conscience and religious intolerance in today's world" is published by the Russian Association for the Protection of Religious Freedom (RARF) in order to highlight the most important events taking place in the field of protecting the right to freedom of conscience and religion, based on regular monitoring of trends in religious intolerance in the modern world.

The report in a systematic form is a review of materials on the specified topics, recorded from June 2020 to December 2021 in domestic and foreign periodicals and news agencies. The report provides an analysis of the most characteristic features of the oppression of religious freedoms. By the examples the situation in a country where crimes are committed against believers is demonstrated and the trends and causes of persecution are analyzed. It should be clarified that RARF adheres to the following understanding of religious freedom. Religious freedom is the right to openly confess and practice one's religious beliefs, both individually and collectively. From this point of view, religious freedom is no different from those most important social freedoms, or human rights, which are given exceptional importance in the modern world<sup>1</sup>.

Religious freedom in the context of multi-confessionalism is one of the fundamental principles of church-state and church-society relations, as well as interreligious dialogue. At the same time, we warn against attempts to use freedom of conscience in order to question the traditional values of Russian society, as well as the sovereign right of the state to maintain such attitudes towards the traditional religions of Russia that correspond to the historical contribution of each of them. Religious freedom is also called upon to protect the rights and dignity of believers, to ensure the inviolability of their shrines from encroachment by anyone. Religious freedom corresponds to the obligation of the state to provide believers with the opportunity to recourse to religious practices in the army, school, hospital, places of detention.

The report materials are grouped into five sections. Section 1 introduces the reader to the most important evidence of acts of Physical violence against Christians, Muslims and Jews, provides information on the nature of the persecution and the level of the observed crisis. Other forms of violations of the right to freedom of conscience and religion are presented.

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<sup>1</sup> See Church and time. 1999. No. 1 (8).

Section 2 contains information on activities of international and national structures in the field of religious liberty.

Section 3 highlights the events associated with the strengthening of religious phobia and the spread of secular values, primarily in Western countries (Christianophobia, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, juvenile justice, the legalization of same-sex marriages, the promotion of non-traditional values, the destruction of the family institution, etc.), contains comments on the spread of religiophobia in the world.

Section 4 is devoted to the analysis of the implementation of measures aimed at protecting religious freedom on the initiatives of civil society, the situation of religious minorities and assistance to these communities.

Section 5 is devoted to various forms of interreligious dialogue.

The sections have their own subsections that focus the reader's attention on the aspects and features of the observed processes.

The conclusion identifies countries that are of particular concern to RARF in connection with violations of religious freedom.

# I. Violation of the right to freedom of conscience and religion

## 1. Physical violence

### 1.1. Physical violence in Asian countries

In the period under review, India was the undisputed leader in terms of violence against religious minorities in Asian countries, where attacks by radical Hindus on Christians and Muslims and their places of worship steadily increased both in number and in degree of cruelty. In states where anti-conversion laws have been passed in recent years, radical Hindu nationalists are using these laws as legal cover to persecute Christians who constitute just over 2% of the country's population. Tendencies to increase pressure on minorities emerged as early as 2014, when the the nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its leader N. Modi came to power in this country. In June 2020, a 16-year-old Christian boy was stoned to death by a group of Hindus in the village of Kenduguda, Odisha<sup>1</sup>. In the same month, radicals threatened a Christian family twice in northern India,<sup>2</sup> and in the state of Haryana, a group of radicals beat a Christian preacher and desecrated the church by setting up a statue of a Hindu deity<sup>3</sup>. To attack members of minorities, radicals unite in groups using messenger apps and social networks<sup>4</sup>. In July 2020, massive Christian protests erupted in Tamil Nadu following the killing of two believers by police officers<sup>5</sup>. In the state of Chhattisgarh, the body of a Christian Bajo Bai Mandavi, mother of 4 children, was found, she was raped before she died<sup>6</sup>. On July 1, 2020, in the village of Mohanbeda (Chhattisgarh state), a Christian family was brutally attacked after refusing to renounce their faith<sup>7</sup>. On July 10, a Maoist activist killed Christian missionary Munshi Dev Tado in Maharashtra<sup>8</sup>. On the night of July 19, Suman Mundane, a Christian

<sup>1</sup> URL: <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/odisha-boy-crushed-to-death-with-stone-body-chopped-into-pieces-1686597-2020-06-0806/08/2020>

<sup>2</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/06/27/radicals-northern-india-threaten-kill-christian-family/06/27/2020>

<sup>3</sup> URL: <https://vom.com.au/india-hindu-militants-install-idol-inside-church/07/01/2020>

<sup>4</sup> URL: [https://www.hindustantimes.com/delhi-news/delhi-riots-charge-sheet-hindus-incited-on-whatsapp-group-to-attack-muslims/story-05FgWKrf2xAM8kIOxDqJVO\\_amp.html04.07.2020](https://www.hindustantimes.com/delhi-news/delhi-riots-charge-sheet-hindus-incited-on-whatsapp-group-to-attack-muslims/story-05FgWKrf2xAM8kIOxDqJVO_amp.html04.07.2020)

<sup>5</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/07/02/christian-father-son-murder-police-india-sparks-public-protests/07/02/2020>

<sup>6</sup> URL: <http://www.bnnews.net/55057/christian-mother-of-four-in-india-persecuted-before-her-death07/07/2020>

<sup>7</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/07/07/christian-family-brutally-attacked-chhattisgarh/07/07/2020>

<sup>8</sup> URL: <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Young-Indian-missionary-killed-by-a-member-of-a-Maoist-group-50568.html07/13/2020>

woman, was murdered in the state of Jharkhand<sup>9</sup>. On July 21, in the village of Badaguda (Odisha), a group of radicals attacked the house of a Christian who was sheltering seven believers.<sup>10</sup> In July 2020, in the village of Regadi, four Hindu men killed a Christian woman who was protecting her daughter from being raped.<sup>11</sup> On August 21, a group of Hindus brutally beat a Christian preacher in Uttar Pradesh.<sup>12</sup> On September 13, in the same state, a group of radical Hindus attacked a Pentecostal community in the village of Bela.<sup>13</sup> On September 14, in the village of Jikatia (Bihar), a Hindu mob attacked pastor Vinuvu Das and his family. The preacher and his newborn child suffered.<sup>14</sup> On September 16, Hindu mobs attacked seven Christians in Jharkhand state being falsely accused of killing a cow.<sup>15</sup> On September 22, in India, radicals beat and deprived fifteen Christian families of their homes.<sup>16</sup> Hindus carried out two attacks on Christian communities on September 22 and 23 in the Kondagaon district (Chhattisgarh state)<sup>17</sup>. On September 29, a Hindu mob brutally beat three Christians in the state of Odisha.<sup>18</sup> In October 2020, in a village in the state of Odisha two families converted to Christianity, a crowd of fellow villagers severely beat the newly converted Christians<sup>19</sup>. On October 4, a crowd of Hindu radicals attacked a Christian parish in the state of Uttar Pradesh during a service, the pastor of the community was injured<sup>20</sup>. On October 16, in the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh, a mob of radical Hindus attacked Christians who had gathered for worship.<sup>21</sup> On October 20, a mob of 60 radical Hindus attacked a Christian pastor in the state of Karnataka because he refused to worship their deity.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>9</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/07/21/another-christian-woman-killed-rural-india/07/21/2020>

<sup>10</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/07/29/eight-christians-assaulted-radical-nationalists-indias-odisha-state/07/29/2020>

<sup>11</sup> URL: <https://www.thealabamabaptist.org/mother-of-four-killed-in-india-while-protecting-daughter-from-attack/20.09.2020>

<sup>12</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/08/26/pastor-northern-india-severely-beaten-mob-extremists/26.08.2020>

<sup>13</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/09/16/radicals-india-use-rumor-conversions-terrorize-small-christian-community/09/16/2020>

<sup>14</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/09/29/christian-family-eastern-india-attacked-bamboo-sticks/09/29/2020>

<sup>15</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/10/04/seven-indian-christians-attacked-mob-falsely-accused-slaughtering-cow/04.10.2020>

<sup>16</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/09/24/fifteen-christian-families-left-homeless-attack-india/09/24/2020>

<sup>17</sup> URL: <https://news.barnabasfund.org/Indian-Christians-in-fear-and-shock-after-extremists-warn-leave-faith-or-die/05.10.2020>

<sup>18</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/10/01/three-christians-india-severely-beaten-villager-chooses-new-faith/01.10.2020>

<sup>19</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/10/05/two-families-beaten-unconsciousness-converting-christianity/06.10.2021>

<sup>20</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/10/08/pastor-left-hospitalized-attack-religious-fanatics-northern-india/08.10.2020>

<sup>21</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/10/22/church-service-central-india-raided-mob-radical-nationalists/22.10.2020>

<sup>22</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/11/07/christian-family-attacked-socially-boycott-southern-india/07.11.2020>



In November 2020, about 1,500 Hindu radicals attacked members of the Christian community in Gagari (Jharkhand state). After that the police groundlessly detained about 40 Christians.<sup>23</sup> On November 25, a Hindu mob attacked Christians in the village of Chingwaram (Chhattisgarh state). 21 people were seriously injured<sup>24</sup>. In the state of Karnataka, a mob of radical Hindus attacked a Protestant church and wounded pastor Soma Avaradhi, accusing him of proselytizing.<sup>25</sup> In September 2020, a 14-year-old Christian boy from the untouchable caste (Dalites) died, who was attacked by radicals who poured acid on the boy<sup>26</sup>. On November 4, 2020, radical Hindus attacked pastor Vinod Nayak in the Shivmog district (Karnataka state)<sup>27</sup>.

The year 2021 in India began with a new surge of Hindu violence against Christians and Muslims. Throughout the year, reports of cases of persecution of Christians with particular cruelty continued to come from India. In the state of Meghalaya (located in the north-east of India on the border with Bangladesh, Christians make up 70% of the population in the state), unknown people attacked people who were in the building of the Jesuit mission at night. Christians were severely beaten, one of them died<sup>28</sup>. In March 2021, a mob of members of the radical Bairang Dal movement in the state of Karnataka stormed into the birthday party of the son of a Protestant pastor and began beating the participants. Six people, including two pastors, were injured, three of them were hospitalized<sup>29</sup>. A pastor in Jharkhand state was tied up and publicly beaten by fellow villagers after he refused to contribute funds for the ritual worship of tribal deities.<sup>30</sup> In the state of Chhattisgarh, a mob of Hindus armed with improvised tools attacked a prayer meeting attended by more than 150 members of the Pentecostal church. As a result of beatings, 8 Christians were hospitalized<sup>31</sup>. In February 2021, in the state of Karnataka, a mob of radical Hindus attacked a Christian prayer meeting, beating people. 28 Christians sustained various injuries as a result of the attack<sup>32</sup>. In the same month, Pastor Chandra Muli was attacked by two civil servants, members

<sup>23</sup> URL: <https://news.barnabasfund.org/Indian-Christian-community-of-40-arrested-as-angry-mob-of-1-500-storm-village-meeting/11/24/2020>

<sup>24</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/12/08/21-christians-hospitalized-following-mob-attack-central-india/08.12.2020>

<sup>25</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/indian-pastor-injured-after-mob-barges-into-church/9461810/20/21>

<sup>26</sup> URL: <https://www.sedmitza.ru/text/10045706.html>

<sup>27</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/11/24/biased-media-reporting-india-helps-fuel-persecution-christians/11/24/2020>

<sup>28</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/one-killed-as-jesuit-mission-attacked-in-eastern-india/9160103.03.2021>

<sup>29</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/03/03/three-indian-christians-hospitalized-attack-birthday-party/04.03.2021>

<sup>30</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/03/05/indian-pastor-bound-beaten-refusal-contribute-tribal-rituals/>

<sup>31</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/eight-indian-christians-hospitalized-after-attack-by-hindu-mob/9175503/17/2021>

<sup>32</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/02/04/another-christian-worship-service-brutally-attacked-radicals-southern-india/05.02.2021>

of the radical Hindu party BJP, in Hyderabad, Telangana state.<sup>33</sup> In March 2021, a message came that Christian Jagu Padiami and his wife were expelled from the village because they did not want to renounce the Christian faith<sup>34</sup>. In an Indian village, a family of Christian proselytes were severely beaten and expelled by their own relatives for refusing to perform Hindu rituals.<sup>35</sup> In April 2021, a pastor in the Indian state of Karnataka was severely beaten and forced to perform Hindu rituals. Local church leaders claim the incident is just one of eight attacks on local Christians.<sup>36</sup> In May 2021. A 52-year-old Christian man was shot dead in an attack on a Christian family in the Indian state of Rajasthan. Mob attacked family after they refused to renounce their Christian faith<sup>37</sup>. Since the summer of 2021, radical Hindus have continued their terror against Christians with even greater effort. Pastor Vinod Kumar was killed by Hindu Sonu Kashyap in the Karnal region of northern India for converting the killer's brother to Christianity.<sup>38</sup> In July 2021, Hindus attacked Christian Anamika Gautam in Uttar Pradesh state.<sup>39</sup> In August 2021, the pastor and his relatives were harassed and threatened with death by radical Hindu nationalists. Incidents of intimidation and threats are often the beginning of harassment incidents, especially when local authorities take no action against perpetrators<sup>40</sup>. In Madhya Pradesh state radicals beat pastor Bharat and vandalized his prayer center after violent argument<sup>41</sup>. In the past year, there has been an increase in the number of attacks on Christians in the Indian state of Karnataka. This increase in violence followed the state government's announcement of its intention to pass a law in Karnataka prohibiting conversion. While the state of Karnataka has yet to pass a law against conversion, many radical Hindu nationalists on the ground act as if the law already exists. Local police often ignore violence against Christians due to false accusations of abuse<sup>42</sup>. A pastor and his wife were brutally attacked by a mob of radical Hindu nationalists in the Indian state of Karnataka.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>33</sup> URL: <https://barnabasfund.org/news/indian-pastor-assaulted-by-two-government-workers-after-anti-conversion/08.02.2021>

<sup>34</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/78056-v-indii-khristian-izgnali-iz-derevni-za-nezhelanije-otkazatsya-ot-khrista>

<sup>35</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/03/17/christian-family-expelled-village-india/03/19/2021>

<sup>36</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/04/22/mob-india-beats-forces-pastor-perform-hindu-rituals/>

<sup>37</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/05/20/52-year-old-christian-shot-killed-radical-hindu-nationalists-india/>

<sup>38</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/07/06/christian-pastor-northern-india-beaten-death/>

<sup>39</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/07/19/christian-family-assaulted-falsely-accused-forced-conversions-northern-india/>

<sup>40</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/08/03/pastor-northern-india-receives-death-threats-radicals/>

<sup>41</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/08/04/pastor-central-india-brutally-beaten-radical-hindu-nationalists/>

<sup>42</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/rise-in-attacks-on-christians-in-southern-indian-state/9535112/14/21>

<sup>43</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/08/12/christian-couple-india-brutally-assaulted-iron-chain-clubs/>

On August 15, 2021, 11 Christians were brutally attacked by anti-Christian activists in Madhya Pradesh<sup>44</sup>. In one of the villages, a crowd of 100 Hindus attacked a pastor during worship, beat him up and ransacked his house.<sup>45</sup> A young Christian pastor was acid-attacked by radical Hindus while on a market trip. He got 65% body burns<sup>46</sup>. Another pastor and two Christians were beaten by radical Hindus at a police station in Raipur, Chattingsgarh state<sup>47</sup>. Pentecostal pastor was arrested after distributing Gospel brochures, and Bible in Lalas Village, state Himachal Pradesh<sup>48</sup>. In October, radicals disrupted a Christian wedding ceremony. Local clergy reported that after the adoption of the anti-proselyte law in the state of Madhya Pradesh, such cases have become more frequent.<sup>49</sup> In the state of Uttarakhand, a mob of 200 Hindus attacked Methodists praying in a church on Sunday afternoon. Three women were injured in the attack and were hospitalized.<sup>50</sup> A Bihar pastor was forced to flee his home village after being attacked by radical Hindu nationalists. It is reported that the radicals used violence, threats to expel this pastor from his home and close his church.<sup>51</sup> In the village of Kathenar in the state of Chhattisgarh, locals beat a Christian named Gaju Kawasi for refusing to stop practicing Christ and return to Hinduism. After that, a Christian pastor from a nearby village took him to the hospital in critical condition and filed a complaint with the police. However, law enforcement officers refused to initiate a case, accusing the pastor of inciting religious hatred.<sup>52</sup> In the village of Metapal in the state of Chattingsgarh, a mob of 50 radicals armed with sticks began to smash houses and beat Christians under the slogan of cleansing the village from Christianity. As a result of the attack, three Christians were taken to intensive care in a critical condition, six were seriously injured with broken bones and dislocations. Previously Christians in the village received threats from Hindus, several families left the village forever<sup>53</sup>. Radical Hindu nationalists broke into the prayer meeting, disrupting the worship service, and accused Pastor Lema Cherian of participation in the forced religious

<sup>44</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/08/23/christians-india-brutally-beaten-refusing-denounce-jesus/>

<sup>45</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/attacks-on-christians-go-unpunished-in-indian-state/9392401.09.2021>

<sup>46</sup> URL: <https://barnabasfund.org/news/indian-pastor-16-severely-burned-with-acid-for-refusing-to-stop-praying/07.09.2021>

<sup>47</sup> URL: <https://barnabasfund.org/news/pastor-and-two-other-christians-attacked-by-extremists-in-chhattisgarh-i/08.09.2021>

<sup>48</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/10/03/pastor-arrested-falsely-accused-forcefully-converting-hindus/>

<sup>49</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/indian-police-probe-christian-wedding-over-conversion-claims/9435702.10.2021>

<sup>50</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/indian-christians-demand-action-against-church-attackers/9441706.10.2021>

<sup>51</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/11/02/pastor-forced-flee-village-india-following-brutal-attack-radicals/>

<sup>52</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/11/29/villager-india-beaten-unconscious-refusing-recant-christian-faith/>

<sup>53</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/11/08/radical-hindu-nationalists-brutally-attack-christian-community-india/109.11.21>

conversion.<sup>54</sup> In Jaipur, Rajasthan, a mob of radicals broke into a Christian Sunday prayer meeting and called the police under the pretext of alleged conversions from Hinduism.<sup>55</sup> In the state of Odisha in November 2021, a Christian husband and wife were beaten unconscious, the attackers intended to kill them<sup>56</sup>. On November 28, a Christian home in central India was set on fire by radical Hindu nationalists. As a result, a Christian family that had been persecuted for years because of their faith lost all their possessions, including their home, household, and harvested crops.<sup>57</sup> There have been attacks in other states as well. In the state of Haryana, a mob of Hindus attacked a local church<sup>58</sup>. On December 11, in the village of Srinivasapura, radicals attacked a group of Protestants who were carrying religious literature and Christmas gifts to Christian homes.<sup>59</sup>

Violence in India was also carried out against Muslims. The activation of Islamophobia happened in the spring of 2020, when the Muslim community of India was demonized by Hindu nationalists under the pretext of the coronavirus pandemic. Radicals use misinformation and false rumors to compel the society, with the association between Muslims and the COVID-19 epidemic. In March 2021, two cases of illegal massacres of Muslims took place in the Indian state of Jharkand in a week. In both cases, the mob accused them of stealing and beat them to death.<sup>60</sup> The predominantly Muslim state of Jammu and Kashmir is home to thousands of Rohingya Muslim refugees fleeing repression in Myanmar. However, the Indian authorities, represented by Prime Minister N. Modi and the ruling nationalist party BJP in pursuit of the votes of the population on the eve of the parliamentary elections declared Muslim refugees a threat of extremism and promised to deport them. The first 175 people have already been placed in a migrant detention center<sup>61</sup>. In the Indian state of Haryana, Muslim Mewata Asif Khan was killed in May 2021 after being beaten to death by unknown assailants for refusing to glorify a Hindu deity.<sup>62</sup> In Uttar Pradesh, Hindu cow guards attacked a group of Muslims who were accused of trying to steal cattle. As a result of the ensuing skirmish, a Muslim was killed, and his companions were beaten nearly to

<sup>54</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/11/10/radicals-forcefully-detain-christians-gathered-worship-southern-india/>

<sup>55</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/hindu-mobs-storm-sunday-prayer-services-india/9490911/11/21>

<sup>56</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/11/23/christian-couple-india-survives-deadly-attack-radicals/11/23/21>

<sup>57</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/12/10/christian-home-central-india-burned-ash-suspected-radicals/>

<sup>58</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/12/14/police-northern-india-thwart-mob-attack-church/12/14/21>

<sup>59</sup> URL: <https://www.asianews.it/news-en/Priest-attacked-with-a-machete-as-Karnataka-discusses-anti-conversion-law-54705.html#4.12.2021>

<sup>60</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/nine-arrested-over-mob-lynching-in-eastern-india/9178603/17/2021>

<sup>61</sup> URL: <https://religionunplugged.com/news/2021/3/10/india-begins-promised-detention-deportation-plan-of-rohingya-refugees03/11/2021>

<sup>62</sup> URL: <https://islamnews.ru/news-mnogodetnogo-otssa-musulmanina-ubili-za-otkaz-vosslavit-yazycheskoe-bozhestvo>

death. Earlier within two weeks, there were at least three incidents in Uttar Pradesh in which Hindus attacked Muslims.<sup>63</sup> The return to power of the Taliban movement (banned in the Russian Federation) in Afghanistan in August 2021 led to a surge of Islamophobia in India, where more than one hundred million Muslims live. Muslim politicians, writers, journalists and ordinary citizens have become victims of anti-Islamic hysteria fueled by right-wing Hindus, including members of the ruling Bharatiya Janata party. Last month posts with the hashtag #GoToAfghanistan were trending on Indian social networks. In the northeastern state of Assam, 15 Muslims, including Islamic scholars, a politician and a journalist have been arrested on charges of supporting the Taliban on social media.<sup>64</sup> India's unexpected loss to Pakistan in the World Cricket Championship unleashed a new wave of Islamophobia and aggression on Indian Muslims from the nationalist majority. Primarily, the player of the Indian national team Mohammed Shami, the only Muslim in the team, got the worst - Hindu fans accused him of deliberately "bad game" and "setup". Although team captain Virat Kohli stood up for his comrade, the fans continued to incite hatred against Shami. In recent days, there have been reports of Muslims being fired from civil service and public institutions in India who were overjoyed at the victory of the Pakistan national team, and in Kashmir even local residents were arrested on charges of "terrorism" based on their public joy over the loss. Indian cricketers.<sup>65</sup> In December 2021, the radicals were able to organize a massive mayhem through the spread of fake news, during which hundreds of radical Hindus attacked Muslims, desecrating four mosques and looting their houses and property. The reason for the riots was the incident on the border of India and Bangladesh, in which Hindus harmed by Muslims.<sup>66</sup>

Violent crimes against religious minorities have also been recorded in India's neighboring Bangladesh. Currently, Hindus make up 10% of the population of this Muslim-majority country, while Christians make up no more than 0.5 percent. However, violence is committed not only by representatives of the majority, but also by Hindus themselves. On September 4, 2020, an explosion occurred in a mosque in the city of Narayanganj. At least 24 people died<sup>67</sup>. On October 29 in Burimari a mob beat to death a Muslim who was developmentally delayed<sup>68</sup>. On November 14, about 60 armed men attacked Christians in the village of Ichkhachkhara. One person was injured

<sup>63</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/cow-vigilantes-shoot-muslim-man-dead-in-india/92793>

<sup>64</sup> URL: <https://islamnews.ru/2021/9/2/uspekh-talibana-sprovotsiroval-rost-islamofobii-v-indii>

<sup>65</sup> URL: <https://islamnews.ru/2021/11/8/indiyskie-radikaly-ustroili-islamofobskiy-terror-vsem-kto-poradovalsya-pobede-sbornoy-pakistana-po-kriketu>

<sup>66</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/check-india-hunts-fake-news-spreaders-after-anti-muslim-attacks/9487008.11.21>

<sup>67</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/74361-v-bangladesh-24-cheloveka-pogibli-v-rezultate-vzryva-v-mecheti07.09.2020>

<sup>68</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/mob-lynches-bangladeshi-muslim-for-alleged-blaspheymy/9009902.11.2020>

in the attack<sup>69</sup>. During the religious festival Dunga Purja on October 2, 2020, a wave of attacks by radical Muslims on Hindu communities took place in Bangladesh. The attacks killed five Hindus, injured more than 100, abused several women and destroyed places of worship.<sup>70</sup> After the end of the festival, clashes continued due to a rumor about the desecration of the Koran, which resulted in the death of 5 Muslims and 2 Hindus, and hundreds more people were injured. The rumor about the desecration of the Islamic holy book arose in the city of Kumilla on October 14 and instantly caused a storm of resentment. Mobs of outraged Muslims attacked dozens of Hindu temples, and the police opened fire on the rampaging crowd. At least seven people died in the riots. About 10 Hindu temples and shrines were attacked and vandalized. As a result, more than 80 festive sacred statues, created specifically for the Durga Puja holiday, were attacked by crowds, about 150 Hindus who protected the statues were injured and two died. Many Hindu religious leaders believe that the attacks indicate a thoroughly wilful conspiracy for the purpose of intimidation Hindu communities in the country<sup>71</sup>. Bangladesh had the second highest number of incidents of mob violence related to blasphemy allegations in December 2020<sup>72</sup>.

In neighboring India Sri Lanka, on July 19, 2020, in the Batticaloa region, a crowd of Hindus, who make up the majority in this country, attacked a Christian parish during a service. The pastor and members of the congregation were severely beaten<sup>73</sup>. On July 19 and August 8 of the same year, Hindu radicals attacked representatives of Christian communities in this country.<sup>74</sup> The pastor of the Evangelical Tabernacle in Polgoll, along with another member of his congregation, were beaten by Buddhists and forced to seek medical attention.<sup>75</sup>

In **Laos'** Sarawan province, villagers expelled seven Christians from their homes after refusing to renounce their faith.<sup>76</sup>

In **Myanmar**, in addition to the Physical violence presented in the first section of this report, the military that came to power in a coup discriminated against Rohingya Christians and Muslims during the period under review. A video appeared online showing Myanmar army personnel claiming their involvement in the massacre and rape of Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine State<sup>77</sup>.

<sup>69</sup> URL: <https://www.christianpost.com/amp/muslim-mob-attacks-christian-village-bangladesh.html11/14/2020>

<sup>70</sup> URL: <https://bitterwinter.org/bangladesh-hindus-attacked-at-durga-puja-5-dead/10/20/21>

<sup>71</sup> URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/oct/16/four-die-after-violence-erupts-at-hindu-festival-in-bangladesh>

<sup>72</sup> URL: <https://www.uscirf.gov/>

<sup>73</sup> URL: <https://news.barnabasfund.org/Church-attacked--pastor-and-congregation-beaten-by-Hindu-extremist-mob-in-Sri-Lanka/07/21/2020>

<sup>74</sup> URL: <https://vomcanada.com/lk-2020-09-10.htm09/10/2020>

<sup>75</sup> URL: <https://vomcanada.com/lk-2021-12-16.htm12/17/21>

<sup>76</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/lao-villagers-force-christians-from-homes-over-faith/8995320.10.2020>

<sup>77</sup> URL: <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/09/09/asia/rohingya-massacre-soldier-testimony-intl-hnk/index.html09/10/2020>

In Shan state police officers arrested 11 Christians from the local Baptist congregation during a raid. They were subsequently released, but were severely beaten by the police.<sup>78</sup> In Kachin state, about 200 Catholics were forced to leave their homes and seek refuge in the Catholic Church of Our Lady of the Queen of Heaven in the village of Thang Khpre after conflict between the government and the military escalated. The army did not allow them to enter the refugee camp.<sup>79</sup> Military planes dropped bombs on two villages in Karen state in the area of Papun, which is largely populated by Christians. The refugee camp was also hit. As a result of the bombing, three people were killed and eight injured. 3,000 people were forced to flee to Thailand, where they face the threat of deportation<sup>80</sup>. In May 2021, the military killed four Catholics in an attack on a church. The military attacked the church around 1:00 AM near Loiko, the capital of the state of Kaya.<sup>81</sup> The Burmese military detained three soldiers to investigate a crime against a 55-year-old Christian woman named Hou Eve. Her body was found in the forest, she received multiple stab wounds.<sup>82</sup> On September 18, 2021, the army set fire to the city of Thang Tlang, one of the nine cities in western Myanmar Chin state<sup>83</sup>. Chin State has a compact Christian minority. Soldiers from the Burmese Tatmadaw Army fired on a minibus carrying Christians doing social work in the villages. Two 70-year-old Christians died from their wounds, two more were injured<sup>84</sup>. In the Magwai region of Chin province, Tatmadaw soldiers killed two Christian pastors. One was killed during interrogation, the other was arrested and shot the next day.<sup>85</sup>

In **Indonesia**, attacks on Christians continued during the analyzed period. 86.88% (236 million) of the country's population are Muslims, 7.49% (20 million) are Protestants, 3.09% (8.42 million) are Catholics.

On November 27, 2020, four Christians from the Protestant Salvation Army were killed in a terrorist attack on the island of Sulawesi.<sup>86</sup> On October 26, 28-year-old catechist Rufinus Tigau was shot dead by police in Intan Jaya district, Papua province.<sup>87</sup> Indonesian Archbishop Petrus Canisius Mandagi

<sup>78</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/03/03/kachin-christians-beaten-police-release/04.03.2021>

<sup>79</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/hundreds-of-kachins-flee-fighting-in-northern-myanmar/91792/03/17/2021>

<sup>80</sup> URL: <https://barnabasfund.org/news/myanmar-army-fighter-jets-bomb-karen-villages-killing-three-and-injuring/03/30/2021>

<sup>81</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/05/24/four-killed-military-attack-myanmar-church/>

<sup>82</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/07/22/burmese-soldiers-not-brought-justice-rape-murder-kachin-woman/>

<sup>83</sup> URL: <https://sedmitza.ru/text/10044244.html>

<sup>84</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/10/05/elderly-chin-christians-shot-dead-tatmadaw-chin-state/06.10.2021>

<sup>85</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/12/13/myanmar-junta-kills-two-chin-pastors-last-week/12/14/21>

<sup>86</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/11/27/indonesian-terrorist-burns-church-christian-homes-killing-four/11/27/2020>

<sup>87</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/11/08/indonesian-bishops-condemn-killing-catechist-papua/08.11.2020>



said he has been targeted by terrorists twice this year. Two attempts to kill him were first at his residence and then at the cathedral in Merauke, Indonesia's easternmost city.<sup>88</sup> Two suicide bombers blew themselves up in April 2021 near a Catholic cathedral church in the city of Makassar on the Sulawesi island, when Catholics celebrated the Palm Sunday. About 20 people were injured in the attack, mostly parishioners and church staff, the terrorists belonged to the group *Jamaat Ansharut Daula*<sup>89</sup>, which is responsible for blowing up churches in Indonesian Surabaya in 2018<sup>90</sup>.

## 1.2. Physical violence in Africa

Incidents of Physical violence against Christians were recorded in the second half of 2020-2021 in various African countries where extremist groups are strong.

In Egypt, the authorities have mostly managed to stop the violence against Christians, which was massive before President Al-Sisi came to power. But individual attacks by extremists took place during the period of study. Hundreds of radicals attacked Coptic Christian homes in Minya governorate because of a 'blasphemous' Facebook comment<sup>91</sup>. On December 10, extremists attacked three Coptic Christians in Alexandria. One believer was killed, two were injured<sup>92</sup>. 19-year-old Copt Marian Rafat was attacked while leaving a church in the center of Al-Fashn, Beni Suef province. A man named Gamal Nasser beat her, hit her in the face with a broken bottle<sup>93</sup>. "Islamic State"<sup>94</sup> published a video in which three terrorists in Bir-el-Abd kill 62-year-old Egyptian Copt Nabil Habshi Salam in northern Sinai. The murdered Copt was kidnapped a few months before the tragedy, he was known as an entrepreneur who contributed to the construction of temples<sup>95</sup>. Christian students of the Al-Thawra school in Ezbat-Beshri, Minya province, were ordered to remove all items with a cross and were then beaten. The principal and other teachers gave the order, after that the students and teachers beat some of the Christian students. In one incident in early November, a teacher reportedly attacked a Christian student to take away his cross pendant and destroy the cross.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>88</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/06/03/indonesian-archbishop-survives-two-assassination-plots/>

<sup>89</sup> Designated a terrorist organization by the United Nations Security Council.

<sup>90</sup> URL: <https://ria.ru/20210328/vzryv-1603166943.html>

<sup>91</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/76183-v-jegipte-musulymane-atakujut-doma-i-khramy-khristian-iz-za-posta-v-socsetyah01.12.2020>

<sup>92</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/12/15/christian-murdered-two-injured-egypt/12/15/2020>

<sup>93</sup> URL: <https://www.rfp.org/passing-of-hh-most-ven-aggamaha-panditha-kotugoda-dham-mawasa-mahanayake-thera/>

<sup>94</sup> The organization is banned in the Russian Federation.

<sup>95</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/04/19/isis-executes-sinai-christian/>

<sup>96</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/11/18/egyptian-christian-students-persecuted-teacher-led-incident/>



**South Sudan** — a country with a Christian majority that gained independence in 2011. 60% of the inhabitants profess Christianity, and 6% — Islam<sup>97</sup>. As a result of the actions of pseudo-Islamic groups, the Christian population of the country suffers. On July 27, 2020, unidentified militants killed 32 Christians, including 6 children, in Jonglei state<sup>98</sup>. Italian prelate Comboni Christian Carlassare was shot by unknown assailants on the night of April 25-26, 2021. The incident took place late at night, and evidence suggests that it was a targeted and planned attack on a missionary who was to be ordained a local bishop on May 23rd. The diocese of Rumbek, located in the center of the country, has been left without a bishop for almost a decade<sup>99</sup>. The Primate of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan, Archbishop Justin Badi-Arama, called for prayers after militants attacked Christians in the village of Dugob Aley in the north of the country, which left 13 people dead and 8 injured.<sup>100</sup> In the summer of 2021, armed gunmen killed two Catholic nuns<sup>101</sup>. Armed masked thugs, allegedly Islamists, have beaten a Christian civil rights activist in public service for trying to return church property to the Sudanese Presbyterian Evangelical Church and threatened him with death if he does not stop trying. Civil servant was hospitalized with multiple injuries<sup>102</sup>. In the east of South Sudan, unidentified persons ambushed Catholic pilgrims who were returning home in a minibus after participating in church celebrations. The shooting killed 5 people, including 2 Catholic nuns. Earlier in September unidentified gunmen opened fire from the bushes at a group of Anglican Christians who had gathered at the cemetery for a memorial ceremony.<sup>103</sup>

In **Sudan**, which borders South Sudan to the north, radical groups continue to operate. In Khartoum, the son of a Christian preacher, his cousin and aunt were attacked by radicals<sup>104</sup>. On October 27, 2020, in Sudan, Christian and Muslim leaders signed a declaration on religious freedom, which is aimed to provide interreligious peace in the country.<sup>105</sup> Since then there has been no news of interreligious violence in Sudan.

In **Cameroon**, on August 1, 2020, Boko Haram militants attacked the village of Ngetchev, killing at least 28 Christians, including 7 children<sup>106</sup>.

<sup>97</sup> URL: <https://rossaprimavera.ru/news/5cc971f9>

<sup>98</sup> URL: <https://news.barnabasfund.org/Six-hostage-children-among-32-killed-after-gunmen-storm-cathedral-in-South-Sudan/04.08.2020>

<sup>99</sup> URL: <https://www.churchinneed.org/in-south-sudan-a-bishop-elect-is-shot/>

<sup>100</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/05/20/south-sudanese-archbishop-calls-prayer-barbaric-attack/>

<sup>101</sup> URL: [http://www.fides.org/en/news/70660-AFRICA\\_SOUTH\\_SUDAN\\_Two\\_nuns\\_killed\\_in\\_an\\_ambush\\_Murdered\\_cold\\_bloodedly\\_denounce\\_the\\_sisters](http://www.fides.org/en/news/70660-AFRICA_SOUTH_SUDAN_Two_nuns_killed_in_an_ambush_Murdered_cold_bloodedly_denounce_the_sisters)

<sup>102</sup> URL: <https://sedmitza.ru/text/10016087.html>

<sup>103</sup> URL: <https://religionunplugged.com/news/2021/9/7/catholic-pilgrims-killed-in-south-sudan-latest-victims-of-violence08.09.2021>

<sup>104</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/10/13/three-christians-one-family-beaten-khartoum/10/13/2020>

<sup>105</sup> URL: <https://news.barnabasfund.org/Sudanese-Christian-and-Muslim-leaders-agree-declaration-promoting-religious-freedom/03.11.2020>

<sup>106</sup> URL: <https://chvnradio.com/articles/28-people-including-7-young-christians-killed-in-suicide-bomber-attack08/13/2020>

The Roman Catholic Church of Cameroon said that priests are being attacked, kidnapped, tortured and killed because of the conflict between the English-speaking separatists and the government of French-speaking areas. At least six priests were beaten and tortured by the military or rebels in early June 2021<sup>107</sup>. On August 20, 2021, a student of a Catholic school and a parishioner were killed in a shootout near a church school, and a priest was wounded. The conflict in the Anglophone regions of southwest and northwest Cameroon has been going on for more than four years and has intensified since then<sup>108</sup>. Boko Haram militants who arrived in Cameroon in November 2021 from neighboring Nigeria<sup>109</sup> shot civilians in the city of Turu. Three men and a woman were killed in the attack and four people were injured.<sup>110</sup>

According to monitoring data, a high level of violence against Christians, although not reaching to murders, persists in Kenya. After the conversion of a local Muslim imam to Christianity radicals carried out several attacks on Kenyan pastor Moses Nabwan and his family in February 2021. The pastor, his wife and children suffered injuries of varying severity<sup>111</sup>. In the western part of Kenya, unidentified people have committed a series of arsons and desecrations of Christian churches. Catholic and four Protestant churches were damaged. Christian leaders of the country in a joint statement demanded to investigate the incidents and find those responsible<sup>112</sup>. Two passenger buses on the Mandera-Nairobi route in Kenya were ambushed by al-Shabaab militants based in Somalia. The attackers were looking for Christian travelers<sup>113</sup>.

Despite the fact that the vast majority (85-90%) of the population of the Democratic Republic of the Congo are Christians, the extremist group Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), also called Madinat Tawhidwa-l-Muwahidin (literally "City of monotheism and monotheists") still act nowadays in the eastern part of the country. For years, dozens of armed militias have wreaked havoc in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a predominantly Christian country. ADF - ISIS affiliate<sup>114</sup>, the main goal of which is the creation of an Islamic caliphate in Central Africa<sup>115</sup>. The terrorist group ADF originated in western Uganda and is currently active in eastern DR Congo. On September 8 and 10, 2020, ADF fighters attacked Christian settlements in the province of Ituri. At least 58 people died<sup>116</sup>. On October 30, at least 21 Christians were

<sup>107</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/06/09/priests-abducted-cameroon/>

<sup>108</sup> URL: [http://www.fides.org/en/news/70679AFRICA\\_CAMEROON\\_Bishops\\_of\\_Bamenda\\_call\\_for\\_an\\_end\\_to\\_the\\_conflict\\_Our\\_people\\_are\\_tired\\_of\\_living\\_in\\_uncertainty\\_and\\_fear](http://www.fides.org/en/news/70679AFRICA_CAMEROON_Bishops_of_Bamenda_call_for_an_end_to_the_conflict_Our_people_are_tired_of_living_in_uncertainty_and_fear)

<sup>109</sup> The organization is banned in the Russian Federation.

<sup>110</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/11/11/boko-haram-terrorists-kill-4-civilians-cameroon/11/11/21>

<sup>111</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/02/02/pastors-family-attacked-second-time-one-month/03.02.2021>

<sup>112</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/02/06/five-churches-burned-kenya/08.02.2021>

<sup>113</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/06/09/three-killed-kenya-ambush-two-buses/>

<sup>114</sup> Banned in Russia.

<sup>115</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/07/01/least-10-killed-drc-overnight-attack/>

<sup>116</sup> URL: <https://news.barnabasfund.org/At-least-58-people-killed-in-jihadi-attacks-on-Christian-majority-region-of-DRC/09/15/2020>

killed in an attack on the village of Lisasa in North Kivu province. Several people were abducted<sup>117</sup>. From November 20 to December 3, extremists carried out a series of attacks on five Christian villages in North Kivu province. At least 30 people were killed, at least 10 women were raped, 14 Christians were hospitalized, at least 15 were kidnapped<sup>118</sup>. 32 civilians were killed in a week in early March in northeastern DR Congo. In addition to the victims, there are several others abducted and missing. In North Kivu, terrorists killed a man and a child and set fire to six houses, and in Bwacardi, a city in Ituri, jihadists killed seven civilians and burned two houses<sup>119</sup>. ADF militants in a series of attacks beheaded eight civilians in the village of Boyo and shot two more in the village of Kainama<sup>120</sup>. Later, ADF fighters attacked the village of Bulongo, killing 12 civilians.<sup>121</sup> As a result of a terrorist attack The ADF killed 55 people, including an Anglican clergyman. Christians were targeted<sup>122</sup>. In June 2021 the church was blown up. At least two people were injured when a makeshift bomb exploded inside a Catholic church in the town of Beni in North Kivu province.<sup>123</sup> In August 2021, 19 people were killed in an attack in Kasanzi village, North Kivu province by ADF<sup>124</sup>. Two women were injured in a bomb attack inside a church in the town of Beni. This is a troubled region in the northeast of the DR Congo. In total, three explosions thundered in the city. An improvised explosive device went off in the church shortly before the service was supposed to begin, which was attended by many parishioners with children. A few hours after the explosion in the church, a terrorist was killed during an attack near a bar in the center of Beni<sup>125</sup>. Members of an Islamist militia killed 16 people as they returned from a weekly market in eastern DR Congo. As a result of the ambush, six women and a child were killed, and nine more were wounded in the hospital. The Oicha region is a hotbed of ADF attacks. At least 12 people were killed in an ADF attack in November 2021. A suicide bomber from the ADF committed suicide on Christmas Day on December 25, 2021 in a restaurant in the city of Beni. The attack killed 6 people and wounded several others.<sup>126</sup>

Attacks on newly converted Christians in Uganda continue to be common. The constitution and other laws of the country guarantee freedom of religion,

<sup>117</sup> URL: <https://news.barnabasfund.org/At-least-20-killed--church-desecrated-as-Islamic-militants-suspected-in-attack-on-DRC-village/11/17/2020>

<sup>118</sup> URL: <https://news.barnabasfund.org/At-least-30-Congolese-Christians-murdered--ten-raped-in-string-of-jihadi-attacks/04.12.2020>

<sup>119</sup> URL: <http://fides.org/en/news/69689>

<sup>120</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/03/02/suspected-adf-fighters-shoot-two-decapitate-eight-drc/03.03.2021>

<sup>121</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/03/16/islamic-extremist-group-blamed-latest-drc-attack-least-12-dead/03/17/2021>

<sup>122</sup> URL: <https://barnabasfund.org/news/anglican-minister-among-55-killed-in-islamist-attack-in-democratic-repub/>

<sup>123</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/06/28/church-bombed-dr-congo/>

<sup>124</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/08/30/19-people-burned-hacked-death-dr-congo/>

<sup>125</sup> URL: <http://barnabasfund.ru/ru/vo-vremja-terakta-v-cerkvi-v-demokraticeskoy-respublike-kongo-postradali-dve-zhenshiny/>

<sup>126</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/12/25/suicide-bomber-kills-six-christmas-day/>

including the right to spread one's faith and to convert from one faith to another. Muslims currently make up no more than 12% of the population of Uganda, while their numbers are highest in the eastern regions of the country. On June 22, 2020, in the village of Lugoniola, a pastor and one believer were killed for preaching Christianity<sup>127</sup>. Three teenagers were expelled from their homes for converting from Islam to Christianity<sup>128</sup>. Family displaced and beat Catholic Brenda Namutebi for converting to Christianity<sup>129</sup>. On November 21, 2020, Christian preacher Wilson Nivamanya and his 12-year-old son were killed in an attack by extremists in Cabal. On November 23, 2020, relatives killed the six-year-old son of a former Islamic sheikh after he refused to renounce Christianity<sup>130</sup>. On September 16, 2020, police in Uganda rescued a Christian girl who was kidnapped with her brother in July 2018. The boy was executed by the militants<sup>131</sup>. In February 2020, an imam named Caled Bwambale Hussein, who lives in the city of Kasese in southwestern Uganda, learned that his wife had converted to Christianity. Refusing to return to Islam at the request of her husband, she fled with her five children from home. According to eyewitnesses, the imam hired three men in March 2020 who, as a "warning," raped three young relatives of a local Christian pastor who helped the imam's wife become a Christian<sup>132</sup>. In June 2020, radicals beat the wife of a newly converted Christian, Marijan Olupot<sup>133</sup>. In November 2020, six radicals attacked pastor David Omar and his son in northern Uganda. The preacher died on the spot from beatings<sup>134</sup>. Radicals killed 70-Year-Old Pentecostal Bishop Francis Obo<sup>135</sup>. Another case of a pastor killing: Muslims invited the priest to a public debate about faith, and then killed him. 11 children of the pastor of an independent Pentecostal church were orphaned. The murder came just hours after his participation in a public debate about Christianity and Islam. During his life, the priest founded 50 Christian parishes in eastern Uganda.<sup>136</sup> In August 2021, a father brutally murdered his 20-year-old son who converted to Christianity<sup>137</sup>. On August 18, 2021, a Catholic priest Father Joshefat Kasambula from the diocese of Kiinda-Mityana was murdered in cold blood<sup>138</sup>. Lately, the terrorist group carried out four terrorist attacks in the

<sup>127</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/08/04/two-christians-eastern-uganda-killed-radical-muslims/04.08.2020>

<sup>128</sup> URL: <https://vom.com.au/uganda-three-children-kicked-out-by-grandmother/01.10.2020>

<sup>129</sup> URL: <https://cruxnow.com/church-in-africa/2020/12/in-predominantly-christian-uganda-some-still-fear-attacks/amp/12/21/2020>

<sup>130</sup> URL: <https://vom.com.au/uganda-pastor-and-two-christian-boys-slain/10.12.2020>

<sup>131</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/09/29/christian-siblings-uganda-abducted-sold-witchdoctor/09/29/2020>

<sup>132</sup> URL: <https://vomcanada.com/ug-2021-03-18.htm03/19/2021>

<sup>133</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/06/23/former-muslim-sheikh-attacked-eastern-uganda-following-christ/06/23/2020>

<sup>134</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/11/09/ugandan-mob-kills-pastor-radio-broadcast/09.11.2020>

<sup>135</sup> URL: <https://www.sedmitza.ru/text/10011262.html>

<sup>136</sup> URL: <https://www.christianheadlines.com/blog/pastor-slain-after-leading-muslims-to-christ-at-religious-debate.html>

<sup>137</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/08/23/father-kills-son-converting-christianity/>

<sup>138</sup> URL: [http://www.fides.org/en/news/70663-AFRICA\\_UGANDA\\_Catholic\\_priest\\_victim\\_of\\_an\\_act\\_of\\_violence](http://www.fides.org/en/news/70663-AFRICA_UGANDA_Catholic_priest_victim_of_an_act_of_violence)

capital of Uganda, Kampala.<sup>139</sup> Terrorists from the ADF staged there a series of explosions, as a result of which a waitress in a cafe was killed and several people were injured.<sup>140</sup> Extremists in eastern Uganda killed an reputable 60-year-old Christian headman who converted Muslims to Christianity and received open threats many times. The decapitated body of Alex Mukasa, from the village of Busandha in the municipality of Bukuwa, Luuka district, was found on October 17, 2021. Police arrested two suspects who repeatedly threatened Mukasa and other Christians, local sources said.<sup>141</sup>

In the north of the African continent, a humanitarian crisis continues, caused by the civil war in Ethiopia. Since June 2020, at least 500 Christians have been killed in attacks by Oromo extremists in this country.<sup>142</sup> On the night of June 30, 19 believers of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church were killed in 11 districts of the Arsi region. The total death toll across the country was 239 people, almost 300 people were injured<sup>143</sup>. On November 1, about 60 Oromo Liberation Army fighters attacked a school in the village of Gawa (Oromiya region). At least 54 people died, most of them Christians<sup>144</sup>. In March 2021, militant actions against Coptic Christians intensified. At least 29 people were killed by extremists in an attack on an Ethiopian church temple. On March 5, 2021, unidentified persons attacked a temple in the East Wellega area, where at that time believers celebrated the beginning of the fast. During the attack on the church, the administrator of the parish was killed, and 21 women were also among those killed, some of them with babies. It is specified that the militants took the women into the forest, where their bodies were later found. One of the women managed to escape from captivity. According to a local resident, the attackers belonged to the combat wing of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF).<sup>145</sup> Eritrean troops fighting in the Tigray region of northern Ethiopia have killed hundreds of Ethiopian priests and raped their wives. Ethiopian clergy are targeted in the fighting between Tigray forces and Ethiopian forces. The violence began in November 2020. The Tigrayans and other ethnic groups call for more autonomy from the Ethiopian government. Ethiopian Church sources said among those killed by authorities in November were “at least 78 priests”. In a press statement issued by the charity organization, Eritrean Christian and former prisoner Helen Berhan, who has active ties to Christians in the region, also said that Eritrean troops continued to kill scores of clerics

<sup>139</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/11/23/80-children-rescued-terrorist-training-camps-uganda/>

<sup>140</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/10/27/terrorist-group-blamed-two-bombings-uganda/27.10.21>

<sup>141</sup> URL: <https://sedmitza.ru/text/10059673.html>

<sup>142</sup> URL: <https://news.barnabasfund.org/At-least-500-Ethiopian-Christians-reported-slaughtered-in-relentless-door-to-door-attacks/09/01/2020>

<sup>143</sup> URL: <https://borkena.com/2020/07/12/ethiopia-archbishop-henok-speaks-out-about-massacre-of-orthodox-christians/07/12/2020>

<sup>144</sup> URL: <https://news.barnabasfund.org/At-least-54-ethnic-Amharas--mostly-Christian-women--children-and-elderly--reported-massacred-at-school-in-Ethiopia/06.11.2020>

<sup>145</sup> URL: <https://addisstandard.com/news-gunmen-who-storm-a-local-church-kill-29-in-horogoduru-western-oromia/>

for refusing to recognize their authority. A spokesman for the Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need said: that the Catholic clergy in Ethiopia informed the charity about the killings of priests of the Ethiopian Church. In May, it became known that the head of the Ethiopian Church, 80-year-old Patriarch Abuna Matthias, accused the government of committing genocide against the northern region of the country of Tigray.<sup>146</sup> In Addis Ababa, in November 2021, security forces broke into a salesian center and arrested 17 people, including priests and monks, who were taken away in an unknown direction. Most of them were natives of Tigray and sent aid to the region<sup>147</sup>.

In September 2021, a group of 17 Coptic Christians went missing in Libya<sup>148</sup>.

Violence by extremists in the African Sahel region<sup>149</sup> Africa is steadily increasing, and attacks are becoming commonplace. **Mozambique** was during the period under review the scene of terrorist activities. In the country, Christians compose circa 40% of the population, and Muslims - circa 18%, while jihadist groups are very strong. From 6 to 8 November 2020, fighters from an ISIS-linked terrorist group<sup>150</sup> beheaded more than 50 people in the village of Muatide (province of Cabo Delgado)<sup>151</sup>. Several dozen people were killed in an attack by militants on the city of Palma in northern Mozambique. The authorities carried out the evacuation of about 180 people who could not get out of the hotel in the city for three days because of the terrorist attack. The military announced a successful operation to liberate the city, which took several days<sup>152</sup>. The attack on Palma was carried out by militants operating in the north of Mozambique terrorist groups "Al-Shabaab" and ISCAP ("Islamic State Central African Province"), which is a structure of the Islamic State<sup>153</sup>. Violent attacks in the province of Cabo Delgado in the first half of 2021 resulted in the death of more than 2,838 people, including more than 1,400 civilians. In northern Mozambique, an estimated 800,000 people have fled the region, and those who remain, including women and children, face starvation even when not attacked.<sup>154</sup>. Since 2018 IS-linked fighters<sup>155</sup> kidnapped more than 600 women and girls in the northern province of Cabo Delgado. Al-Sunnah wa Jamaa (ASWJ) and Al-Shabaab forced young, healthy non-Muslim women

<sup>146</sup> URL: <https://sedmitza.ru/text/10059238.html>

<sup>147</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/government-forces-arrest-salesians-in-ethiopian-capital/9491111/11/21>

<sup>148</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/11/07/christians-libya-unwelcome-ignored-minority/08.11.21>

<sup>149</sup> The Sahel is a tropical savannah region in Africa, which is a kind of transition between the Sahara in the north and more fertile lands in the south. It includes ten countries (Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Sudan and Eritrea) and 300 million people.

<sup>150</sup> The organization is banned in the Russian Federation.

<sup>151</sup> URL: <https://news.barnabasfund.org/Jihadists-beheaded-more-than-50-people-in-football-pitch-massacre-in-Mozambique/11/10/2020>

<sup>152</sup> URL: <https://ria.ru/20210328/mozambik-1603225732.html>

<sup>153</sup> An organization banned in the Russian Federation.

<sup>154</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/06/24/grave-violations-children-mozambique/>

<sup>155</sup> Organization banned in the Russian Federation

and girls in detention to “marry” their fighters who sexually abused them<sup>156</sup>. In December 2021, Mozambican terrorists captured a Christian pastor in Cabo Delgado and beheaded him.<sup>157</sup>

Attacks by radicals on Christian villages took place in 2020-2021 in the central part of **Mali**. Extremists have controlled most part of northern Mali since 2012, that allows them to recruit, train and equip fighters for nearly a decade. From there the militants crossed the borders of Niger and Burkina Faso, pursuing Christians. At least 27 people were killed in a series of extremist attacks on the Christian villages of Bankass, Koro and Tille in July 2020<sup>158</sup>. In April 2021 was confirmed the death of a female volunteer, previously taken hostage by extremists. Beatrice Steckley has lived in Timbuktu since 2000, spreading the Gospel and working with women and children in Mali. In 2016, she was captured by the terrorist group Amaat Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin. Beatrice protested against the constant changing of places, so the gunmen shot her dead<sup>159</sup>. In June 2021 a Catholic priest and four of his parishioners went missing. They left their parish in the diocese of Mopti to attend the funeral, but were kidnapped. The community has confirmation that it was a kidnapping by armed men<sup>160</sup>. In June 2021, approximately 160 civilians were killed by terrorists during the most brutal attacks. During the attack on the village of Yaga in the northern part of the country, the militants burned houses for three hours, randomly shooting at men, women and children. 51 people were killed by militants on August 8, 2021 during raids on villages in Mali. Houses were looted and burned to the ground, and herds of cattle were taken away. According to sources the population of the attacked villages belonged to the Christian community.<sup>161</sup> In Mali terrorists use hunger as a weapon to enslave the population: they prevent farmers from harvesting rice fields, burn fields and attack farmers. According to the latest UNHCR data, the number of internally displaced Malians has already exceeded 400,000 by the end of September 2021. In the first half of the year alone, almost 90,000 people were forced to leave their homes. There are both Muslims and Christians among the refugees, although the number of Muslims far outnumbers Christians, given that almost 90 percent of Mali’s population is Muslim<sup>162</sup>. The only good news from Mali came in October 2021: Sister Gloria Cecilia Narvaez, a Colombian nun kidnapped more than four years ago in southern Mali, has finally been released. She worked as a missionary for ten years<sup>163</sup>.

<sup>156</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/12/09/600-women-girls-enslaved-mozambique/>

<sup>157</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/12/17/jihadists-decapitate-pastor-force-wife-carry-severed-head/12/20/21>

<sup>158</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/72033-v-mali-jihadisty-zazhivo-sozhgli-zhitelej-khristianskih-dereveny09.06.2020>

<sup>159</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/04/02/remains-kidnapped-missionary-found-mali/>

<sup>160</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/06/23/five-christians-kidnapped-mali/>

<sup>161</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/08/10/51-people-massacred-jihadists-mali/>

<sup>162</sup> URL: <https://www.churchinneed.org/in-mali-jihadists-use-hunger-as-weapon-to-subjugate-the-population/>

<sup>163</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/10/10/nun-freed-four-years-jihadist-captivity/>



Since 2015, **Burkina Faso**, like the rest of the African Sahel region, has been plagued by terrorists<sup>164</sup>. In the country, Muslims make up 63% of the country's population, Christians - 22%. It is the latter who are the main target of terrorists. During the analyzed period in Burkina Faso, extremists carried out numerous attacks on both civilian and government targets, many times focusing on Christians, their leaders and places of worship.<sup>165</sup> In August 2020, six people were killed in a bomb blast in the predominantly Christian province of Yatenga.<sup>166</sup> Imam Suaysu Cisse, who advocated Christian-Muslim dialogue, was kidnapped and killed<sup>167</sup>. The Catholic Bishops of Burkina Faso and Niger called for an end to violence against Christians in that country. On the night of June 4-5, 2021, at least 150 people were killed in the village of Solhan in the north-east of Burkina Faso by an armed group<sup>168</sup>. Militants killed 10 civilians in northern Burkina Faso and kidnapped four others. The attack took place near the border with Niger, where frequent attacks by ISIS affiliate groups<sup>169</sup> called ISGS (IG "Greater Sahara"), based in Mali<sup>170</sup> occurs.

**Niger** is a Muslim majority country (99%) and a tiny minority of Christians is not particularly protected<sup>171</sup>. Pastor Johann Gyang Bitrus of Skiena Baptist Church in Niger was abducted on March 18, 2021 by militants. A ransom was demanded for him, equal to almost \$158,000. The pastor's family is trying to find funds. The government of Niger reported in March that 137 civilians were killed in attacks by terrorists from an unknown group on three villages in the department of Tillia in the Tehua region on the border with Mali<sup>172</sup>. Armed fighters broke into villages on motorcycles in the evening and randomly fired at people. In the western regions of Niger, adjacent to Mali and Burkina Faso, militants from the extremist terrorist group "Islamic State in West Africa", which is an IS structure, operate<sup>173</sup>. In spring 2021 more than 10,000 people, mostly Christians, have fled the ongoing jihadist attacks in Niger. Mass migration is caused by the increase in violence in the region. In April alone, 20 Christians were killed in Niger, and another 13 were killed in March<sup>174</sup>. In November 2021, 147 Christians from two villages near the border with Burkina Faso were forced to flee to the nearest major city after being threatened by armed extremists who devised plans to attack the villages and kill Christians<sup>175</sup>.

<sup>164</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/06/16/many-afraid-sleep-night-amidst-jihadist-uprising-burkina-faso/>

<sup>165</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/05/21/attack-baptism-party-kills-15-burkina-faso/>

<sup>166</sup> URL: <https://news.barnabasfund.org/Children-among-six-killed-as-bomb-explodes-on-road-in-northern-Burkina-Faso/index.html08/10/2020>

<sup>167</sup> URL: <https://theglobepost.com/2020/09/29/attacks-religious-leaders-africa/09/29/2020>

<sup>168</sup> URL: [http://www.fides.org/en/news/70289-AFRICA\\_BURKINA\\_FASO\\_The\\_Bishops\\_We\\_offer\\_our\\_condolences\\_for\\_the\\_victims\\_of\\_the\\_Solhan\\_massacre](http://www.fides.org/en/news/70289-AFRICA_BURKINA_FASO_The_Bishops_We_offer_our_condolences_for_the_victims_of_the_Solhan_massacre)

<sup>169</sup> Banned in Russia.

<sup>170</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/11/03/jihadists-kill-10-burkina-faso/>

<sup>171</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/03/20/gunmen-kidnap-pastor-niger/>

<sup>172</sup> URL: [https://www.bbc.com/news/world\\_ns\\_mchannel=social&ns\\_source=twitter&ns\\_campaign=bbc\\_live&ns\\_linkname=share23.02.2021](https://www.bbc.com/news/world_ns_mchannel=social&ns_source=twitter&ns_campaign=bbc_live&ns_linkname=share23.02.2021)

<sup>173</sup> URL: <https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/11010931>

<sup>174</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/05/18/10000-flee-ongoing-jihadist-attacks-niger/>

<sup>175</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/11/08/christians-targeted-jihadists-burkina-faso/09.11.21>



**Nigeria** is almost divided into Muslims and Christians, each community representing approximately 45% of the population, with the rest following traditional religions. Almost all Hausa and Fulani profess Islam, the north of the country is the stronghold of Islam in Nigeria. Christians live mainly in the southern parts of Nigeria. This leads to tensions in the center of the country, where the Muslim North meets the Christian South. Many call this tension as the “crisis of the middle belt”. In Nigeria, terrorist activities by Fulani extremists and Boko Haram militants continued: about 10 Christians were killed by militants a day during the period under review, kidnappings of preachers, killings of individual believers and raids on villages for the purpose of intimidation continued. The situation with the persecution of Christian communities is of increasing concern to world leaders, former Aviation Minister of the country Femi Fani-Kayode said, that the Nigerian authorities conceal the real measures of persecutions, thus contributing to them. On paper, Nigeria is a secular federation, where power is divided between the national government and individual governments of 36 states. Sharia law, adopted in 12 states in the north of the country, impose various severe penalties that are contrary to human rights: flogging for drinking alcohol, amputation of limbs for theft and death for apostasy. More than 6,000 Christians have been killed in attacks by Fulani extremists between 2015 and 2020<sup>176</sup>. Many observers say about the genocide of Christians in this country<sup>177</sup>. Since 2020, violence has taken on even more significant proportions. More than 1,200 Christians were killed in the country in the first six months of 2020, according to a report by a Nigerian human rights organization.<sup>178</sup>, and in the three months of spring 2020, 766 Christians became victims of extremists<sup>179</sup>. The largest number of crimes against Christians was recorded in the state of Kaduna, which is inhabited by Muslims in the north and Christians in the south, and in which Sharia law was officially introduced in 2001. On June 3, 2020, Fulani militants killed 10 Christians, including a three-year-old girl, in Kaduna state<sup>180</sup>. On July 19, Fulani militants killed 21 people at a wedding in Kaduna state. On July 20, at least 11 Christians were killed in another attack.<sup>181</sup> Fulani attacks on Christian settlements in Kaduna state killed at least 37 believers in August<sup>182</sup>. On July 24, the Fulani killed 10 Christians in the settlements of Kaduna state, including

<sup>176</sup> URL: <https://www1.cbn.com/cbnnews/world/2020/june/nigerian-christians-like-sheep-to-the-slaughter-why-it-may-be-genocide06/29/2020>

<sup>177</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/06/01/pastor-three-year-old-son-shot-dead-nigeria/>

<sup>178</sup> URL: <https://www.christianpost.com/amp/1202-nigerian-christians-killed-in-first-6-months-of-2020-ngo-report.html07/15/2020>

<sup>179</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/06/01/persecution-continues-nigeria/06/01/2020>

<sup>180</sup> URL: <https://www1.cbn.com/cbnnews/world/2020/june/steadily-being-transformed-into-killing-fields-10-killed-in-horrendous-attack-on-christian-village-in-northwest-Nigeria06/08/2020>

<sup>181</sup> URL: <https://news.barnabasfund.org/It-is-as-if-the-lives-of-Christians-no-longer-matter-says-church-leader-as-Fulani-militants-massacre-32-believers/07/23/2020>

<sup>182</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/08/22/least-37-christians-killed-kaduna-state-alone-august/08/22/2020>

a pastor and a 5-year-old boy, 11 believers injured<sup>183</sup>. On July 22, a Nigerian terrorist group released a video of the execution of five hostages, three of whom were Christians.<sup>184</sup> There have been five attacks on Christian communities in and around the city of Kgoro (Kaduna State). 38 believers were victims<sup>185</sup>. July attack by Fulani militants on a Christian church in Kaduna state took the lives 11 people, including a pastor<sup>186</sup>. At least 33 people were victims of attacks by extremists on Christian settlements in the state of Kaduna on August 5 and 6<sup>187</sup>. On August 18, Boko Haram militants took more than 100 Christians hostage in the city of Kukawa.<sup>188</sup> On August 24, Fulani militants abducted seven people and killed one in an attack on the Christian village of Kasai Dam in Kaduna State<sup>189</sup>. On August 27, a group of Fulani militants abducted four worshipers in Kaduna state, including a 14-year-old girl<sup>190</sup>. The number of Christians killed in August in Kaduna state alone reached 48 people<sup>191</sup>. On September 6, Fulani militants killed a pastor and two worshipers in Kaduna State<sup>192</sup>. On September 18, two Christian girls were kidnapped in Katsina State during an attack by extremists. Their father was wounded<sup>193</sup>. On September 20, Fulani militants killed five Christians in an attack on the village of Tse Apera (Benue state), eight people were hospitalized<sup>194</sup>. In October, Fulani militants carried out several attacks on Christian settlements in Kaduna and Plateau states.<sup>195</sup> On October 5, Fulani militants attacked a Christian settlement in Plateau State, killing six worshipers and seriously injuring three.<sup>196</sup> On October 14, Fulani militants killed Christian

<sup>183</sup> URL: <https://www.christianheadlines.com/blog/pastor-5-year-old-boy-among-10-christians-killed-in-herdsmen-attacks-in-nigeria.html07/28/2020>

<sup>184</sup> URL: <https://vomcanada.com/ng-2020-07-30.htm07/30/2020>

<sup>185</sup> URL: <https://news.barnabasfund.org/Nigerian-Christians-ask-for-prayers-after-38-killed-in-five-attacks-in/index.html07/30/2020>

<sup>186</sup> URL: <https://news.barnabasfund.org/Eleven-Nigerian-Christians-die-in-Fulani-militant-attacks-on-church-in-southern-Kaduna/02.11.2020>

<sup>187</sup> URL: <https://news.barnabasfund.org/Curfew-collusion-with-Fulani-militants-as--genocide--unfolds-in-Nigeria-with-33-Christians-killed-in-new-multiple-attacks/08/11/2020>

<sup>188</sup> URL: <https://news.barnabasfund.org/Jihadi-militants-take-100s-hostage-in-north-east-Nigeria-raid-on-Christian-community/08/27/2020>

<sup>189</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/08/31/fulani-militants-destroy-church-kidnap-seven-southern-kaduna/08/31/2020>

<sup>190</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/08/28/four-abducted-suspected-fulani-attack-southern-kaduna/08/28/2020>

<sup>191</sup> URL: <https://www.eternitynews.com.au/opinion/48-more-christians-killed-in-nigeria-this-month/08/24/2020>

<sup>192</sup> URL: <https://news.barnabasfund.org/Wounded-Nigerian-pastor-shot-dead-in-cold-blood-while-raising-alarm-of-Fulani-militant-attack/09/15/2020>

<sup>193</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/09/23/twin-christian-girls-kidnapped-katsina-nigeria/09/23/2020>

<sup>194</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/09/27/fulani-militants-kill-five-benue-state/09/27/2020>

<sup>195</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/10/05/nigerias-middle-belt-christians-endure-perpetual-violence-fulani-militants/05.10.2020>

<sup>196</sup> URL: <https://news.barnabasfund.org/Six-Nigerian-Christians-killed-in-fresh-Fulani-militant-attack-on-beleaguered-Plateau-State-village/09.10.2020>

Justine Patrick in Plateau State.<sup>197</sup> They also carried out a number of attacks on Christian settlements in the states of Plateau and Adamawa, injuring seven people.<sup>198</sup> On October 19, Boko Haram militants kidnapped two Christian women and pastor Polikarp Zongo in Gombe state.<sup>199</sup> On November 1, Boko Haram militants attacked the village of Takulashi near the city of Chiboka (Borno state). During the attack, 12 Christians were killed, three women and four children were kidnapped.<sup>200</sup> On November 22, a Roman Catholic priest, Matthew Dajo, was kidnapped in the Nigerian capital of Abuja.<sup>201</sup> At least 110 farmers were killed by terrorist group Boko Haram near the city of Maiduguri (Borno state) on November 28<sup>202</sup>. On November 28 and 29, Fulani gunmen killed seven Christians in the villages of Ungwar Bido and Ungwar Pa (Kaduna State). Two children were abducted, four people were injured<sup>203</sup>. On December 1, Fulani extremists attacked the village of Gura Pwana in Plateau State. Three Christians died<sup>204</sup>. On December 11, Fulani militants abducted more than 600 high school students in Kankara City (Katsina State)<sup>205</sup>. Nigerian human rights activists reported that at least 2,200 Christians were killed by Fulani and Boko Haram in the middle belt of Nigeria in 2020<sup>206</sup>. Thousands of Christians fled to the southern regions of the country, where there was not enough food and fresh water in the camps for them.<sup>207</sup> Most hostage-taking and civilian killings in 2020 were perpetrated by Fulani militants, not Boko Haram terrorists<sup>208</sup>, with which the troops are fighting the main fight.

In 2014–2019 at least 7,000 Christians became victims of radical Fulani<sup>209</sup>. Of the crimes committed by Fulani extremists in February 2021, the most significant are the following: In Plateau State, Fulani extremists ambushed and killed four Christians<sup>210</sup>; in Katsina State, they shot a warden and kidnapped

<sup>197</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/10/22/christian-killed-plateau-state/22.10.2020>

<sup>198</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/10/29/multiple-christians-wounded-fulani-militant-attacks-across-nigeria/29.10.2020>

<sup>199</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/10/30/pastor-two-women-nigeria-abducted-iswap-video-released/30.10.2020>

<sup>200</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/11/05/boko-haram-kills-12-christians-kidnaps-others/05.11.2020>

<sup>201</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/nigerian-bishop-seeks-prayers-for-kidnapped-priest/9050511/30/2020>

<sup>202</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/12/01/boko-haram-kills-110-farmers-single-day/01.12.2020>

<sup>203</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/11/30/seven-christians-killed-kaduna-state/11/30/2020>

<sup>204</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/12/07/suspected-fulani-militants-kill-three-christians-plateau-state/07.12.2020>

<sup>205</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/12/14/hundreds-students-kidnapped-school-katsina/14/12/2020>

<sup>206</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/12/20/intersociety-claims-2200-christians-killed-middle-belt-nigeria/12/20/2020>

<sup>207</sup> URL: <https://www.christiancentury.org/article/features/nigeria-christians-are-fleeing-violence-and-fearing-covid-1906/30/2020>

<sup>208</sup> Organization banned in the Russian Federation.

<sup>209</sup> URL: [https://interactive.afp.com/features/The-Fulani\\_613/05.02.2021](https://interactive.afp.com/features/The-Fulani_613/05.02.2021)

<sup>210</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/02/21/four-christians-killed-fulani-jihadists/>; URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/02/21/four-christians-killed-fulani-jihadists/24.02.2021>

three members of the Baptist congregation<sup>211</sup>; they killed pastor John Gbakaan with machete in Niger state<sup>212</sup>. Boarding schools in northern Nigeria targeted by mass kidnappings for ransom by armed gangs<sup>213</sup>. The most resonant event for the world media was the kidnapping of about 300 schoolgirls in the state of Zamfara at the end of February (according to some sources - 317, according to others - 289). Unknown people broke into the school at night, pushed the children into cars and disappeared<sup>214</sup>. In early March, the children were released, probably a ransom was paid. Extremist groups have killed over 37,000 people since 2011, mostly Christians. It was noted that the activities of the groups are uncontrollable and can only be stopped by military means, but the government of Nigeria does not take such steps.<sup>215</sup> The hopelessness of their situation is best understood by Nigerian Christians themselves. A number of Catholic bishops in Nigeria, in sermons on the occasion of Ash Wednesday in March 2021, called on believers to pray intensely, because, according to them, apart from God no one in this country can help them anymore. In episcopate's speeches also repeatedly sounded criticism of the government, which is accused of inaction, corruption and allowing rampant extremism.<sup>216</sup> Christian pastors are also often abducted in Nigeria. Thus, a terrorist group has given the country's government an ultimatum to pay a ransom within a few days for Pastor Bulus Yakuru, who was kidnapped on December 24, 2020. In a video published in March 2021, a pastor wearing an orange robe with a knife being pressed to his throat<sup>217</sup>. In early March, the pastor was released after paying a ransom. Thirty-nine students were abducted during a nighttime raid at the Federal College of Forestry Mechanization in Afaka, Igabi Local Government District of Kaduna State<sup>218</sup>. Eight Christians were abducted by gangsters in Nigeria after their minibus was stopped on their way from Kaduna city to Kafanchan on March 26, 2021. The thugs contacted the church leadership to ask for a ransom of 50 million naira (about \$125,000). Kidnapping of civilians, especially Christians, is a major part of Boko Haram's activities<sup>219</sup>. In March 2021, members of this group kidnapped a priest in order to obtain ransom<sup>220</sup>. It became known that a Christian schoolgirl from Nigeria

<sup>211</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/02/24/jihadist-fulani-kidnap-three-christians-kill-church-elder/25.02.2021>

<sup>212</sup> URL: <http://barnabasfund.ru/ru/v-nigerii-bandity-vooruzhennye-machete-pohitili-i-ubili-hristianskogo-sluzhitelja/>

<sup>213</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/02/28/nigerian-schoolboys-released-317-school-girls-abducted/>

<sup>214</sup> URL: [http://fides.org/en/news/69676-AFRICA\\_NIGERIA\\_Schoolgirls\\_kidnapped\\_in\\_Nigeria26.02.2021](http://fides.org/en/news/69676-AFRICA_NIGERIA_Schoolgirls_kidnapped_in_Nigeria26.02.2021)

<sup>215</sup> URL: <https://www.uscirf.gov/news-room/releases-statements/uscirf-releases-new-report-about-violent-islamist-groups-northern20.02.2021>

<sup>216</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/pray-for-the-country-nigerian-bishops-urge-on-ash-wednesday/9148420.02.2021>

<sup>217</sup> URL: <https://barnabasfund.org/news/boko-haram-death-threat-ultimatum-to-kidnapped-nigerian-pastor/03.03.2021>

<sup>218</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/03/13/39-students-kidnapped-nigeria/>

<sup>219</sup> URL: <https://barnabasfund.org/news/eight-christians-abducted-by-bandits-in-kaduna-nigeria/>

<sup>220</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/gunmen-kidnap-another-catholic-priest-in-nigeria/9184323.02.2021>

Leah Sharibu gave birth to her second child in captivity at Boko Haram. The girl gave birth to both children in 2020. Being captured by terrorists in 2018, she spent three years in captivity (only for being a Christian), was forced to renounce her faith and convert to Islam<sup>221</sup>. Attacks on Christians often resulted in their death. A father of four was hacked to death with a machete by Fulani militants in March 2021. 36-year-old Christian Bitrus Chollom had a wife and four children aged five to twelve.<sup>222</sup> In late March of that year, shocking images were published of the horrific atrocities committed by Fulani militants who ambushed Ebony State, killing at least 18 people. Among the dead was a priest from the local Methodist Church.<sup>223</sup> There were massive cases of attacks by radicals on peaceful Christian processions in Nigeria in 2021. According to the head of the Baptist Conference of the Nigerian state of Kwara Pastor Victor Dada, Christians took to peaceful demonstrations in protest against the decision of the state authorities to make girls wear hijabs in all schools, including Christian ones. The radicals attacked the demonstrators, having received support from law enforcement agencies. More than 20 people, including 4 pastors, were injured. The attackers also tried to set the church on fire.<sup>224</sup> The crowd threw stones for more than an hour and threatened to burn down the church building. Then the radicals attacked another church in Ilorin.<sup>225</sup> In the south of Nigeria in the state of Delta, unidentified people kidnapped a Catholic priest, the rector of St. George Colledge in Obinomb father Harrison Egwuenu<sup>226</sup>. A priest and three other Christians were killed by militants during an attack on a church in the state of Benue, which is located in the Middle Belt of Nigeria, in which at least 240 Christians have died since early July 2020 as a result of attacks by extremists<sup>227</sup>. In April, the Fulani attacked the camp of the Abagena community in the same state, four children were shot dead during the attack.<sup>228</sup> One person was killed and four others were kidnapped in an attack on the Haske Baptist Church in the village of Manini, Kaduna state<sup>229</sup>. In 2021, the number of such mass abductions of children and adolescents has increased significantly<sup>230</sup>. Pastor Yohanna Gyang Bitrus of the Shiona Baptist Church in Nigeria was kidnapped last month when gunmen

<sup>221</sup> URL: <https://dailypost.ng/2021/03/23/boko-haram-leah-sharibu-delivers-second-baby-in-captivity-under-one-year/>

<sup>222</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/03/11/suspected-fulani-jihadists-kill-father-four/>

<sup>223</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/03/31/suspected-fulani-militants-kill-18-ebonyi-state/>

<sup>224</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/03/18/hijab-controversy-sparks-alleged-attack-christian-protesters/03/19/2021>

<sup>225</sup> URL: <https://barnabasfund.org/news/at-least-20-christians-injured-as-muslim-mob-attacks-nigerian-church/>

<sup>226</sup> URL: <https://mospat.ru/ru/authors-analytics/87096/>

<sup>227</sup> URL: <https://barnabasfund.org/news/church-minister-and-three-worshippers-killed-by-gunmen-in-benue-nigeria/>

<sup>228</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/04/29/seven-killed-suspected-fulani-militants-attack-idp-camp/>

<sup>229</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/04/26/one-killed-four-abducted-kaduna-church-attack/>

<sup>230</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/04/05/kidnapping-nigeria-funds-boko-haram-says-kaduna-state-governor/04/06/2021>

broke into his home and took him into the woods. The kidnappers demanded the equivalent of more than \$26,000<sup>231</sup>. Prelate Izu Marcell Onyeocha of Mother Teresa Catholic Church was previously abducted by Fulani militants while driving on the Enugu-Port Harcourt Expressway in Imo State. The release of the priest was announced on April 12 by the secretary of the local Catholic mission. No ransom payment reported.<sup>232</sup>

The northern regions of Kaduna State are predominantly Muslim, while the southern regions are predominantly Christian. This state is located in Middle Nigeria, where at least 240 Christians have been killed in bandit attacks since early July last year. On April 6, another attack was on a church bus on the same stretch of road. The bandits blocked the road and opened fire on the minibus. One Christian was killed, four more were wounded, and four more were abducted—three young girls and one elderly Christian woman. The kidnappers reportedly contacted the church and demanded a ransom of 50 million naira (\$125,000)<sup>233</sup>. A Greenfield University employee was killed early in the morning when gunmen attacked and kidnapped students from another school in northern Nigeria. Details of the incident, including the number of students abducted, remain to be seen.<sup>234</sup> Seven people died, at least five thousand people including women and children were forced to leave their homes due to the attack on April 9 by the terrorist group ISWAP<sup>235</sup> in Adamawa. In attack 50 houses, places of worship, markets and schools were burned. More than 20 people were injured in the attack and at least 20 people are still missing. On April 10, militants of the same group attacked the city of Damasak in the state of Borno. 1,470 Christians were killed in Nigeria and more than 2,200 were kidnapped by jihadists in the first four months of 2021. Of these, more than 800 were killed by Fulani<sup>236</sup>. Over the past year more Christians have been killed for their faith in Nigeria than in the entire Middle East. Christians living in the north and in the Middle Belt of Nigeria face severe and relentless persecution. Thousands of people were crippled, abducted, deprived of property and shelter, over two million became displaced<sup>237</sup>. In May 2021, in Kaduna state, Fulani militants abducted the family of a Christian pastor and two nurses from a public hospital<sup>238</sup>. During an attack by an armed gunman on a church in the Nigerian state of Katsina on May 20, two clergymen were kidnapped. One of them - 33-year-old Alfonsus Bello - was found dead.<sup>239</sup> One priest killed and

<sup>231</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/04/13/ransom-negotiations-ongoing-kidnapped-pastor-niger/>

<sup>232</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/04/12/abducted-priest-freed-nigeria/>

<sup>233</sup> URL: <http://barnabasfund.ru/ru/vosem-hristian-pohishhennyh-iz-cerkovnego-avtobusa-v-kadune-nigerija-osvobozhdeny/>

<sup>234</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/04/22/least-one-dead-latest-school-kidnapping/>

<sup>235</sup> Banned in Russia.

<sup>236</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/05/14/1470-christians-killed-nigeria-within-four-months/>

<sup>237</sup> URL: <http://barnabasfund.ru/ru/komissija-ssha-po-religioznoj-svobode-preduprezhdaet-o-genocide-hristian-v-nigerii/>

<sup>238</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/05/11/christians-kidnapped-kaduna-state/05/11/2021>

<sup>239</sup> URL: <https://barnabasfund.org/news/retired-nigerian-church-minister-freed-by-kidnappers-after-colleague-mur/>

another kidnapped in an attack on a Catholic parish<sup>240</sup>. In the same month, the Fulani killed several more Christians in Plateau State.<sup>241</sup> The killings occurred on the same day that a Catholic priest was found dead in the northwestern Nigerian state of Katsina and another was kidnapped.<sup>242</sup> Fulani terrorists also raided a Roman Catholic church in Malumfashi, Katsina State, killing one priest and kidnapping another.<sup>243</sup> Fulani fighters attacked the village of Kwi, Riem district, near Jos, fourteen Christians were beaten to death, including children. Eight members of one family died<sup>244</sup>. June 2021a Christian pastor was killed by Fulani radicals along with his three-year-old son<sup>245</sup>. Nigerian pastor Frederic Ojo Aramuwa, 50, was found dead days after he was kidnapped by unidentified gunmen who demanded a \$5,000 ransom from his family.<sup>246</sup> Eight Christians were kidnapped by armed Fulani who attacked a church bus on the Akure-Ilesa road in Ondo state<sup>247</sup>. In June 2021, the Fulani attacked the community of Odugbeho in the Agatu Local Government District of Benue State, killing more than 40 residents.<sup>248</sup> On the main campus of the Nuhu Bamalli Polytechnic Institute in Zaire, Kaduna State, one student was killed and at least 10 people were abducted. Human rights organization Global Rights published a study stating that approximately 939 students were abducted from educational institutions across Nigeria from December 2020 till May 2021.<sup>249</sup> 12 Christians have died in another attack by Fulani herders in Nigeria. In addition to the 12 dead, at least 5 residents were injured and taken to a local hospital.<sup>250</sup> 70 students and four teachers were abducted from Federal Government College in Kebbi State. According to eyewitnesses, about 100 militants attacked the school, killing a policeman and injuring two students.<sup>251</sup>

Fulani killed a Christian doctor and 17 other Christians in Plateau State in June 2021<sup>252</sup>. In July, a father and his 7-year-old son were beheaded by Fulani

<sup>240</sup> URL: [http://www.fides.org/en/news/70162-AFRICA\\_NIGERIA\\_A\\_priest\\_killed\\_and\\_another\\_kidnapped\\_in\\_northern\\_Nigeria](http://www.fides.org/en/news/70162-AFRICA_NIGERIA_A_priest_killed_and_another_kidnapped_in_northern_Nigeria)

<sup>241</sup> URL: <https://morningstarnews.org/2021/05/two-more-christians-killed-in-miang-priest-slain-in-nw-nigeria/>

<sup>242</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/05/27/christians-continue-brutally-murdered-nigeria/>

<sup>243</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/05/26/priest-killed-another-kidnapped-nigeria/>

<sup>244</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/80252-v-nigerii-musulymane-ubili-37-khristian-sredi-kotoryh-byli-deti>

<sup>245</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/06/01/pastor-three-year-old-son-shot-dead-nigeria/>

<sup>246</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/04/07/kidnapped-pastor-killed-nigeria/>

<sup>247</sup> URL: <https://barnabasfund.org/news/eight-abducted-as-bandits-attack-church-bus-in-ondo-nigeria/>

<sup>248</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/06/08/40-killed-nigeria-suspected-fulani-jihadists/>

<sup>249</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/06/11/student-killed-several-abducted-college-nigeria/>

<sup>250</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/06/14/12-killed-yet-another-attack-suspected-fulani-herdsmen/>

<sup>251</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/06/19/70-abducted-2-killed-nigeria-school-kidnapping/>

<sup>252</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/06/25/18-christians-slaughtered-religiously-motivated-acts-terror/>



militants<sup>253</sup>. Danlami Yakwoi, pastor of the Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA), was killed on July 24, two weeks after the kidnapping. He and his two sons and nephew were kidnapped. A group of Christians were captured on a trip to Kogi State by Fulani militants. Pastor died after being tortured<sup>254</sup>. “Boko Haram”<sup>255</sup> attacked Christian communities in Adamawa state in July, killing at least 20 people. President Muhammadu Buhari confirmed the attack and expressed regret for the loss of innocent lives<sup>256</sup>. In July 2021, 140 students were abducted from Bethel High School in Kaduna State. In addition, at least eight people, including a one-year-old child, were abducted early Sunday morning from the National Tuberculosis and Leprosy Center in Zaria. The police said in a statement that the gunmen killed the guards and broke into the student dormitory, where they abducted an unspecified number of students. It is estimated that more than 1,000 students have been abducted from educational institutions across Nigeria in the first eight months of 2021. In the village of Rikwechogu, the Fulani came at night and destroyed the Christian farms shortly before the harvest. Several houses were also burned down.<sup>257</sup> Ezekiel Bitrusa was shot dead during the demolition of the church building by the Borno state government. The incident sparked outrage among the Christian community.<sup>258</sup> Fulani militants raided the College of Agriculture and Animal Science in Bakura Local Government Area in Zamfara State<sup>259</sup>. In August 2021, women and young children were hacked to death by Fulani jihadists in Plateau State in August 2021 with machetes. In addition, several houses and a church were completely destroyed by fire.<sup>260</sup> Same month 37 Christians were brutally murdered in Yelvan Zangam community, Jos North, Plateau State<sup>261</sup>. A Christian orphanage in Plateau State was attacked and destroyed on August 2 by jihadists. There were 147 children in the orphanage. The Fulani received support from the Nigerian army. They were accompanied by the military in three army vans.<sup>262</sup> Four Nigerian students abducted from Bethel Baptist High School, Kaduna State, escaped the kidnapers in August. Thus, 83 people are still being held by militants who kidnapped about 120 students of a Christian boarding school in the early hours of July 5<sup>263</sup>. In August 2021, dozens of Christian children were hacked to death and burned

<sup>253</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/07/30/father-7-year-old-son-beheaded-jihadist-herdsmen/>

<sup>254</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/07/28/pastor-tortured-killed-nigeria/>

<sup>255</sup> Banned in Russia

<sup>256</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/07/09/least-20-nigerians-killed-terror-attack/>

<sup>257</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/07/19/christian-farming-villages-continue-destroyed-nigeria/>

<sup>258</sup> URL: <https://christianpersecution.com/nigeria/nigeria-i-will-go-with-jesus-to-any-length-christians-chant-as-man-killed-during-church-demolition-is-buried/>

<sup>259</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/08/16/15-students-abducted-nigerias-latest-school-attack/>

<sup>260</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/08/18/4-year-old-survives-machete-attack-others-tell-harrowing-stories-jihadist-assault/>

<sup>261</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/08/25/37-christians-murdered-jihadists-nigeria/>

<sup>262</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/08/11/christian-orphanage-attacked-nigeria/>

<sup>263</sup> URL: <https://barnabasfund.org/news/four-students-abducted-from-nigerian-baptist-school-escape-kidnappers/>



alive by Fulani militants in the Jos region<sup>264</sup>. Pastor Silas Yakubu Silas of the Evangelical Church Winning All in Kaduna State was hacked to death at the same time with African swords - machetes. Such weapons are traditionally used by radical militants from the Fulani tribe.<sup>265</sup> Fulani militants killed 50 villagers, destroyed 254 houses and attacked seven churches in just one month in Kaduna state alone, home to Atyapets, about 84% of whom are Christians. Attacks on the settlement began on September 11. Among the victims were six women (two were in the last trimester of pregnancy), three men and three children.<sup>266</sup> At least 30 people were killed in an attack on two villages in the Nigerian state of Kaduna.<sup>267</sup> In October 2021, four Christians, including a Catholic priest, were killed in another attack by Fulani militants on a Christian settlement<sup>268</sup>.

Extremists from the Fulani tribe in the Middle Belt of Nigeria kidnapped three evangelical Christians right from the church, then demanded a ransom for them<sup>269</sup>. They also killed a Nigerian pastor and another civilian in Kaduna state<sup>270</sup>. In October 2021, the main seminary of Christ the King in the state of Kaduna was attacked by unknown gunmen. During the attack, three seminarians were abducted, six more were injured<sup>271</sup>. Fulani fighters killed three Christians and wounded one in a village that had been abandoned after a massacre in 2017<sup>272</sup>. Father Godfrey Chimezie, rector of the Catholic parish of St. Teresa in the state of Abia, was kidnapped by extremists<sup>273</sup>. Pastor Habila Solomon, widely known for his philanthropic work, was gunned down in his home by alleged Fulani terrorists. Previously, they had already tried to kill the Christian leader, but he escaped death.<sup>274</sup> In November 2021, militants raided the University of Abuja in central Nigeria and abducted six people<sup>275</sup>. In the state of Kaduna armed bandits kidnapped five Baptists, opened fire on the hostages, so two of them were killed<sup>276</sup>. Fulani militants in the Plateau state killed 10 Christians, including 5 old people and 3 children. Another 3 people were injured. Almost 700 people were forced to flee, leaving their homes<sup>277</sup>.

<sup>264</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/09/06/christian-children-burned-beyond-recognition-jihadists-nigeria/>

<sup>265</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/09/14/pastor-macheted-death-nigeria/>

<sup>266</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/09/23/50-killed-incessant-attacks-nigerian-christian-community/>

<sup>267</sup> URL: <https://ria.ru/20210927/napadenie-1752039798.html>

<sup>268</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/10/01/four-christians-including-priest-murdered-fulani-militants/>

<sup>269</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/10/05/abducted-christian-killed-rescue-mission/06.10.2021>

<sup>270</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/10/14/suspected-jihadists-kill-pastor-nigeria/>

<sup>271</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/10/13/gunmen-abduct-three-seminarians-nigeria/>

<sup>272</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/10/18/fulani-militants-kill-three-injure-one-nigeria/>

<sup>273</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/10/19/priest-abducted-morning-mass-nigeria/10/20/21>

<sup>274</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/10/26/beloved-pastor-murdered-nigeria/26.10.21>

<sup>275</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/11/02/6-abducted-nigerias-latest-school-attack/>

<sup>276</sup> URL: <https://vomcanada.com/ng-2021-11-18.htm11/24/21>

<sup>277</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/11/26/militant-fulani-herdsmen-kill-10-christians-burn-100-homes-overnight-attack/>

Christian communities in the northern Nigerian state of Zamfara (which has sharia-based laws) received a warning in November 2021 to close churches. Otherwise there will be “fierce attacks”<sup>278</sup>. The Fulani in December 2021 continued to be the main source of violence against Christians in Nigeria. During the attack of militants on several villages, a pregnant Christian woman was wounded. Her house was burned down. When attacking another village, the militants were able to kidnap another Christian woman and her four children<sup>279</sup>. Fulani fighters who kidnapped a Christian pastor near Kaduna killed him even after they received a ransom<sup>280</sup>. Fulani militants killed at least 45 farmers, most of whom were Christians, in a series of attacks in Nasarawa state<sup>281</sup>. In late December, three Christians were ambushed by Fulani militants. “Two were killed, a 33-year-old man and a 16-year-old teenager, one woman was injured,” said a community activist<sup>282</sup>.

Attacks on Christians in Nigeria have all the hallmarks of genocide. Extremists spread their attacks over time. They attack villages in one area and kill people, and then there is a pause. Then they attack other villages and kill dozens of people. A week later they attack even more villages and kill hundreds of Christians. After killing or expelling all the Christians in the village, Fulani change the original name of the village to Arabic. Kidnappings and rapes are also added to the deadly actions.<sup>283</sup> The surviving victims and the families of the victims are also completely abandoned by the Nigerian government, which continues to be heavily criticized and heavily accused of complicity in the killings.<sup>284</sup> In 2020-2021 there have been several large-scale kidnappings<sup>285</sup>. During a webinar hosted by the Aid to the Church in Need foundation, several speakers, including one bishop and priests from Nigeria, confirmed that the violence that has engulfed the country in the past few years is not simply caused by clashes between Muslim shepherds and Christian farmers. “This is not about pastures. For me, this is a religious war,” said Bishop Wilfred Anagbe, who heads the diocese of Makurdi in Benue state, where the Fulani have repeatedly attacked Christian farmers, “they have the task of islamization of this country on the agenda. And they do this by carefully destroying all Christians and occupying territories. If it was about grazing, why kill people? And why burn them at home?”<sup>286</sup>.

<sup>278</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/11/29/christians-zamfara-state-threatened-told-close-churches-stop-worship/>

<sup>279</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/12/13/christian-communities-attacked-nigeria-mother-four-children-kidnapped/12/14/21>

<sup>280</sup> URL: <https://vom.com.au/nigeria-kidnapped-pastor-slain-despite-ransom-payment/12/16/21>

<sup>281</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/12/23/45-mostly-christian-farmers-murdered-nigeria/>

<sup>282</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/12/29/two-christians-murdered-christmas-caroling-nigeria/>

<sup>283</sup> URL: <https://inosmi.ru/politic/20210623/249969503.html>

<sup>284</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/07/21/3462-christians-killed-nigeria-200-days-3000-abducted-300-churches-attacked/>

<sup>285</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/07/05/140-students-kidnapped-nigeria/>

<sup>286</sup> URL: <https://www.churchinneed.org/church-decries-slow-genocide-of-christians-in-nigeria/>

At least 11 people have been killed in a suicide bombing in Mogadishu, **Somalia's** capital. The expansion of the influence of the terrorist organization Al-Shabaab has made Somalia a terror zone for Christians, a country where extremists roam freely and the church operates in secret. Christians make up only 0.33% of the population, and conversion means certain death or other forms of extreme violence or torture. Somali Christians hide their faith as Al-Shabab wants to eradicate all Christians in the country<sup>287</sup>. In the capital of the predominantly Muslim country of Somalia - Mogadishu - as a result of an attack by the Al-Shabaab group, 8 people were killed and 17 were injured. The militants staged an undermining of a military convoy of the UN contingent near the school. Al-Shabaab, which directly translates as “the Youth”, is a militant organization whose main goal is to create an Islamic state in Somalia. Despite the international coalition of forces fighting for the security of Somalia against Al-Shabaab, the terrorist group has become one of the largest and most active in the world and has retained control over most of the southern and south-central regions of Somalia.

On June 11, 2020, in Johannesburg (South Africa), unidentified persons took hostage about 200 visitors to a Christian church. Five people died during the capture<sup>288</sup>.

### 1.3. Physical violence in the countries of the Middle and Near East

In **Israel**, an Arab Muslim killed his mother for converting from Islam to Orthodoxy. According to the indictment, the murder of 46-year-old Rashi Muklasha by her 27-year-old son Muad Hib was premeditated: Hib arranged a meeting with her near Nazareth on August 5 with the intention of killing her and disposing of her remains. In 2006 Muklasha left her husband and broke off relations with her five children, and later converted to Orthodoxy. Upon learning of the death of her ex-husband, she resumed communication with the children, but they were outraged by her conversion to another faith.<sup>289</sup>

Christian convert Saheb Zaman Fadai received 80 lashes in **Iran** for partaking of communion with other believers in his parish<sup>290</sup>.

On July 30, 2020, in **Syria** members of the Feylakash-Sham radical group captured Kurdish Christian Radwan Mohammed for his “apostasy”<sup>291</sup>. Militants abducted 14 Christians in Afrin city<sup>292</sup>. On September 29, 2020,

<sup>287</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/09/20/al-shabaab-suicide-bomb-kills-11-somalia/>

<sup>288</sup> URL: [https://piter.tv/event/Pri\\_zahvate\\_cerkvi\\_v\\_Johannesburge\\_pogibli\\_pyat\\_chelovek/07/11/2020](https://piter.tv/event/Pri_zahvate_cerkvi_v_Johannesburge_pogibli_pyat_chelovek/07/11/2020)

<sup>289</sup> URL: <https://sedmitza.ru/text/10046307.html>

<sup>290</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/11/17/another-iranian-christian-flogged/11/17/2020>

<sup>291</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/08/15/syrian-christian-arrested-islamist-loyalist-group/08/15/2020>

<sup>292</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/08/27/14-christians-reportedly-kidnapped-syria/27/08/2020>

in Hasek, unidentified people threw a grenade in an Armenian Christian church. Two people were hospitalized as a result of the explosion.<sup>293</sup>

In **Iraq**, the Christian village of Sheranish was abandoned by the inhabitants after several attacks by the Turkish Air Force<sup>294</sup>. Following a series of Turkish air strikes that followed in September 2020, at least 25 Christian villages fled their homes in northern Iraq<sup>295</sup>. In September, several Christian villages in the province of Dahuk were attacked by the Turkish Air Force.<sup>296</sup> More and more Christians are fleeing their homes. According to a priest father Samir who lives in one of the affected villages, for a long time the area “was protected from violence”, but today the fear is “palpable”. He went on to note the impact of the Turkish attacks, stating that they “brought tourism to a halt after the recovery phase and made it difficult to cultivate fields or keep factories running.” The continuous sound of drones overhead scouting for the next target induces PTSD-like fear<sup>297</sup>. On November 28, the house of a Christian in Iraq selling alcohol was attacked by unidentified people and detonated with homemade bombs. Only eight other Christian families remained in his hometown of Al-Amara, the rest fled to nearby areas or emigrated for safety. The store owner has an official license to sell alcohol in his store. The extremists fired at his house with two improvised explosive devices thrown from a motorcycle and caused only material damage to the building. No one was killed or injured in the attack. Christian presence in region dwindles as Christians face persecution from all sides<sup>298</sup>.

In **Afghanistan**, where there are 10-12 thousand Christians and many other religious minorities, the Taliban who came to power in August 2021 began repressions against religious minorities. The Taliban beheaded a Christian in Afghanistan for converting from Islam. A video sourced from Afghanistan has been released showing the Taliban<sup>299</sup> beheading a Christian for converting from Islam to Christianity<sup>300</sup>. 33 people were killed in an explosion at a Shiite mosque in the southern Afghan city of Kandahar, and at least 45 others were injured. Tolo News, citing eyewitnesses, claims that there were at least three explosions in the mosque. The attack on the Shiite mosque Imam Bargah in Kandahar, the center of the province of the same name in southern

<sup>293</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/10/05/grenade-targets-syrian-armenian-church/05.10.2020>

<sup>294</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/09/06/iraqi-christian-village-empty-turkish-airstrikes/07.09.2020>

<sup>295</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/09/16/dozens-iraqi-christian-villages-emptied/09/16/2020>

<sup>296</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/priests-say-turkish-attacks-in-northern-iraq-displace-christians/8965709/25/2020>

<sup>297</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/11/21/iraqi-christian-villages-emptied-fear-turkish-attacks/>

<sup>298</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/12/01/attack-iraqi-christian-home-sparks-insecurity-fear/>

<sup>299</sup> A terrorist organization banned in the Russian Federation.

<sup>300</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2011/07/08/graphic-video-brutal-beheading-in-afghanistan/>

Afghanistan, occurred during Friday prayers. IS terrorist group claimed responsibility for the attack<sup>301</sup>.

High levels of Physical violence persist in **Pakistan**, where “blasphemy” laws passed in the late 1980s, under which Christians are regularly subjected to false accusations, continue to have high levels of hatred by the majority Muslim population towards the Christian minority. Particularly girls and women from Christian communities are affected, crimes against whom generally go unpunished. The Supreme Court of Pakistan continued to rule in favor of marriages with underage girls who had been forcibly converted to Islam. On February 3, 2020, the Sindh High Court in Karachi ruled that Pakistani men can marry underage girls before their first menstrual period<sup>302</sup>. On June 4, 2020, in Khyber province, a family of radical residents shot at Christian Nadeem Joseph and his mother-in-law<sup>303</sup>. On June 1, in the province of Punjab, a 13-year-old Christian named Saim Masih was attacked by an employer<sup>304</sup>. On June 22, 2020, several police officers killed a Christian Yunus Masih in Gojdra (Punjab province)<sup>305</sup>. On 23 June in Lahore, police officers attacked Christian Raju Walter while distributing food aid.<sup>306</sup> On June 22, about 50 radicals attacked residents of the Christian quarter in Karachi<sup>307</sup>. On May 23, Christian Sherry Masih and his family were attacked by a group of radicals.<sup>308</sup> On June 23, in Lahore, police officers beat a pastor and other members of the Christian community during a prayer meeting.<sup>309</sup> On July 1, 2020, an 11-year-old Christian boy named Musa was severely beaten by a Muslim businessman<sup>310</sup>. On July 7, Christian Amjad Masih, released from prison, was attacked by three radicals.<sup>311</sup> On July 12, radicals attacked a Christian family in Punjab province after the believers tried to protect their daughter from being kidnapped.<sup>312</sup> Saneha Kinza Iqbal, a 15-year-old Christian girl, was

<sup>301</sup> URL: <https://www.interfax.ru/world/798080>

<sup>302</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/05/27/high-court-pakistan-continues-rule-favor-underage-marriages/>

<sup>303</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/06/09/christian-family-pakistan-shot-purchasing-house-muslim-neighborhood/09.06.2020>

<sup>304</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/06/19/christian-family-pakistan-threat-reporting-sexual-assault/06/19/2020>

<sup>305</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/06/25/christian-family-pakistan-claims-relative-murdered-police/06/25/2020>

<sup>306</sup> URL: [http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Police-beat-Raja-Walter,-a-Christian-who-prays-and-gives-free-food-to-the-poor-\(videos\)-50445.html06/25/2020](http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Police-beat-Raja-Walter,-a-Christian-who-prays-and-gives-free-food-to-the-poor-(videos)-50445.html06/25/2020)

<sup>307</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/07/09/pakistani-christians-beaten-extremists/07/09/2020>

<sup>308</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/07/05/pakistani-christian-family-fights-register-police-report-people-harassing-worship/07/05/2020>

<sup>309</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/07/13/prayer-service-targeted-pakistani-police/07/13/2020>

<sup>310</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/07/11/11-year-old-christian-boy-beaten-muslim-businessman-pakistan/07/11/2020>

<sup>311</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/07/21/youhanabad-prisoner-brutally-assaulted-release-prison/07/21/2020>

<sup>312</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/07/22/pakistani-christian-family-attacked-protecting-daughter-kidnapping/07/22/2020>

kidnapped in Faisalabad on July 22<sup>313</sup>. The girl was kidnapped and forcibly converted to Islam<sup>314</sup>. On July 24, Christian driver Nasir Perwaiz was beaten in Punjab province.<sup>315</sup> On August 2, Christian Iqbal Masih was beaten by three radicals in the province of Punjab.<sup>316</sup> Radicals attacked a Christian barbershop. Employees were beaten, and the institution itself was looted<sup>317</sup>. Maira Shahbaz, a 14-year-old Christian, fled with her family after a court decision ordered her to be forcibly returned to her kidnapper, who forcibly converted her to Islam.<sup>318</sup> 18-year-old Christian Anika was beaten in Lahore after refusing to convert to Islam<sup>319</sup>. In July and August 2021, at least 12 cases of sexual violence against girls from religious minorities, forced conversion to Islam and forced marriages were reported in Pakistan<sup>320</sup>. In September 2021, the rapist's family threatened the family of a raped Christian girl<sup>321</sup>. Director of a Christian center was murdered in Jelam<sup>322</sup>. On October 12, in the province of Punjab radical Muhammad Abass Batt publicly beat a Christian Balkis Bibi<sup>323</sup>. On October 13, a 13-year-old Christian girl, Arzu Masih, was kidnapped in the Pakistani city of Karachi. On September 28, 16-year-old Shisa Masih was kidnapped by five men in Faisalabad to convert her to Islam. The kidnappers raped the girl repeatedly<sup>324</sup>. On October 15, there were reports of her forced conversion to Islam and marriage to a Muslim<sup>325</sup>. A 13-year-old Christian girl, Arzu Raja, was kidnapped in Karachi, Sindh. She was forced to convert to Islam and marry a kidnapper<sup>326</sup>. Only in half of October 2021, 36 forced conversions of children and teenagers to Islam were committed in Pakistan. There are 21 Christians and 15 Hindus among them.<sup>327</sup>

<sup>313</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/08/24/another-teenage-christian-girl-pakistan-abducted-forcibly-married/08/24/2020>

<sup>314</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/09/20/christian-family-claims-police-pakistan-failed-recover-abducted-daughter/20.09.2020>

<sup>315</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/08/19/christian-rickshaw-driver-pakistan-beaten-falsely-accused-terrorism/08/19/2020>

<sup>316</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/08/05/another-christian-sanitation-worker-attacked-beaten-pakistan/08/05/2020>

<sup>317</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/09/02/barbershop-pakistan-ransacked-playing-christian-music-portraying-christian-symbols/02.09.2020>

<sup>318</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/08/27/pakistani-christian-teen-flees-hiding-court-returns-custody-abductor/08/27/2020>

<sup>319</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/08/25/pakistani-christian-housemaid-beaten-abused-refusing-convert-islam/08/25/2020>

<sup>320</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/09/29/custody-14-year-old-christian-pakistan-awarded-abductor-high-court/>

<sup>321</sup> URL: <https://www.pakistanchristianpost.com/head-line-news-details/7413309/18/2020>

<sup>322</sup> URL: <https://www.pakistanchristianpost.com/head-line-news-details/743810/13/2020>

<sup>323</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/10/21/christian-woman-pakistan-beaten-public-arguing-muslim/21.10.2020>

<sup>324</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/11/27/christian-teen-pakistan-escapes-abductors-returns-family/27/11/2020>

<sup>325</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/pakistan-teens-abductors-conversion-sparks-christian-outcry/8993719.10.2020>

<sup>326</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/10/30/another-pakistani-christian-girl-becomes-victim-forced-conversation-forced-marriage/30.10.2020>

<sup>327</sup> URL: [http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Faisalabad:-Misbah,-17-year-old-Christian-girl-hiding-to-escape-Muslim-\(VIDEO\)-54363.html27.10.21](http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Faisalabad:-Misbah,-17-year-old-Christian-girl-hiding-to-escape-Muslim-(VIDEO)-54363.html27.10.21)

On November 9, in the Gujranwala district, Christian Yasmin Masih and her son Usman were shot dead by radical Hassan Shakur.<sup>328</sup> On November 11, in the city of Rawalpindi, two men shot and killed a 24-year-old Christian woman named Sonia. The cause was the girl's refusal to convert to Islam<sup>329</sup>. In Faisalabad, kidnapped 12-year-old Christian Farah Shaheen was raped for five months<sup>330</sup>. In Bahawalpur (Punjab province), a police officer kidnapped and forcibly converted the wife and daughter of Catholic Sultan Masih to Islam<sup>331</sup>. In February 2021, in a hospital in one of the largest cities in the world, Karachi (population over 23 million people), a mob of radicals beat and stripped naked Christian nurse Tabitha Nazir Gill, accusing her of blasphemy against Islam. The police investigation did not confirm the facts that a Christian woman had committed such a crime. It is reported that the Muslim imam Maulana Tahir stood up for the victim<sup>332</sup>. Pakistani police are seeking the arrest of two Christian men in the eastern city of Lahore on charges that they allegedly used offensive language against the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad. The case against the two men was registered in February following a complaint by a local Muslim resident.<sup>333</sup> It is from Lahore, the second largest city in Pakistan after Karachi, that most often news of accusations of Christians of "blasphemy" comes from. According to statistics released in February, Pakistan had the highest number of people convicted under the Blasphemy Law in 2020 in the 33 years of the existence of the law - about 200 people. This is the highest annual figure since 1987. 75% of them are Muslims (of which 70% are Shiites), 20% of those convicted belong to Ahmadis, 3.5% are Christians<sup>334</sup>.

A Christian woman, under pain of death, was forced to renounce her faith and marry a kidnapper who blackmailed her. In August 2021, nearly four months later, Myra managed to escape from the home of her kidnapper, who then accused her of apostasy.<sup>335</sup> In March 2021, in the village of Jindri, a Christian family was brutally attacked by a mob of Muslims. They threw bricks and stones at the house and broke the iron gates.<sup>336</sup> 13-year-old Christian Shakaina Masih was kidnapped by Muslim Ali Bashir and forcibly converted to Islam. Harry Masih, 14, was stabbed in Lahore after an argument with

<sup>328</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/11/11/mother-son-killed-incident-religious-hatred-pakistan/11/11/2020>

<sup>329</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/12/06/christian-woman-pakistan-killed-refusing-marriage-proposal/06.12.2020>

<sup>330</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/pakistani-christian-girl-freed-five-months-after-abduction/9059107/12/2020>

<sup>331</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/pakistani-catholic-accuses-police-of-converting-his-family/9077422.12.2020>

<sup>332</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/pakistani-muslims-condemn-attack-on-christian-nurse/9121302/01/2021>

<sup>333</sup> URL: <https://dadanews.ru/incidents/politsiya-pakistan-trebuetsya-aresta-dvuh-hristian-zabogohulstvo>

<sup>334</sup> URL: <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Blasphemy-law:-2020,-the-year-of-the-most-abuses-52245.html05.02.2021>

<sup>335</sup> URL: <https://www.sedmitza.ru/text/9970040.html>

<sup>336</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/03/12/christian-family-pakistan-attacked-unblocking-sewer-drain/>



a Muslim. Masih was taken to a local hospital where he received 70 stitches to his stomach.<sup>337</sup> A 14-year-old Christian woman was abducted from a school in Faisalabad. A few days later the girl's family received a video and several documents, alleging that Chashman had fled and converted to Islam of her own free will.<sup>338</sup> On August 19, in the city of Bahawalnagar in the province of Punjab, during the procession of Shia Muslims on the day of Ashura, an explosion was carried out by Sunni radicals. The attack killed 3 people and wounded 50 others.<sup>339</sup> An 8-year-old Christian girl was raped inside her school by a Muslim teacher<sup>340</sup>. Two Christians were gunned down by a Muslim mob after a property dispute that escalated into a religious one. On October 8, Yaqub Masih and his brother Harun Masih were gunned down by a mob of angry Muslims in the village.<sup>341</sup> In the state of Punjab, Muslims claiming to seize land opened fire on Christian farmers. As a result of the attack, 9 people were injured, three of them seriously. The attackers were released on bail by the police. The cause of the conflict was the attempts of Muslims to force Christians to sell land at a bargain price.<sup>342</sup> In November 2021, Muslim Muhammad Daoud kidnapped a 12-year-old girl named Meerab Abbas from a Christian family. A Christian woman was taken from Punjab to Balochistan, where she was forced to convert to Islam and married off to a kidnapper.<sup>343</sup>

On December 10, 2021, in Faisalabad, Muslim Tariq Pehalwan broke into a Christian wedding and started wreaking havoc and insulting people. After Pehalwan was expelled, he gathered a crowd (including an off-duty policeman) who attacked the participants in the celebration. They fired shots into the air, beat Christians and ripped off women's clothes.<sup>344</sup> It is not only Christians who suffer from the violence in Pakistan. Sikh doctor Satnam Singh was shot dead in Peshawar. The murder took place in his own shop. At least 10 Sikhs reportedly killed on religious grounds in Peshawar in recent years<sup>345</sup>. Nena, a 14-year-old girl from Hyderabad in Pakistan's Sindh province, returned to her childhood home in 2021 after two years in captivity. The kidnappers forcibly converted her from Hinduism to Islam and married her off. After the "marriage" Nena was sold into prostitution. In the Punjab

<sup>337</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/06/16/christian-youth-pakistan-stabbed-dispute-muslim/>

<sup>338</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/08/08/14-year-old-christian-girl-pakistan-abducted-forcefully-converted/>

<sup>339</sup> URL: <https://sedmitza.ru/text/10029853.html>

<sup>340</sup> URL: <https://www.christianheadlines.com/blog/school-in-pakistan-covers-up-rape-of-christian-girl-family-says.html>

<sup>341</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/10/12/two-christians-pakistan-gunned-religious-dispute/>

<sup>342</sup> URL: <https://barnabasfund.org/news/nine-pakistani-christians-injured-in-shooting-as-muslims-attempt-to-seiz/08.11.21>

<sup>343</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/11/11/12-year-old-christian-girl-pakistan-abducted-muslim-man/11/11/21>

<sup>344</sup> URL: <https://www.asianews.it/news-en/Muslims-attack-Christian-family,-harass-women,-set-house-on-fire-54722.html12/15/21>

<sup>345</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/another-sikh-shot-dead-in-pakistan/9436102.10.2021>



province of Bhong, a mob vandalized a Hindu temple and surrounding area after a Hindu boy was accused of blasphemy. About 100 families were forced to flee or were left without a livelihood. Christian MP Jamshid Thomas and New Hope Church expressed solidarity with Hindus and collected food aid for them<sup>346</sup>. For Pakistani Christians, who make up only 1.6% of the country's population, being treated as second-class citizens often means they can't get justice after incidents of sectarian violence.

#### 1.4. Physical violence in Europe

According to a two-year study conducted by the Vienna Observatory of Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians in Europe, the top five most disadvantaged countries are the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Spain and Sweden. The final report named the UK as the country in Europe with the most incidents of "hate speech" against Christians. Anti-Christian bias among British public institutions is accompanied by strong social hostility towards Christian believers in general. Catholic shrines in Germany, France and Spain have been desecrated and vandalized, the report says, and in some cases worshipers have even been killed while visiting their temples.<sup>347</sup>

Physical attacks motivated by religious hatred have increased significantly in **Germany** during the study year and a half. The police detained a 21-year-old resident of the city of Hildesheim, who was preparing an anti-Muslim terrorist attack<sup>348</sup>. In Hamburg, a nationalist wounded a Jewish student at the entrance to the synagogue<sup>349</sup>. According to the German Interior Ministry, at least 901 attacks were carried out against Muslims and Islamic structures in 2020. In 77 cases, provocations took place in the area of mosques. Most of the attacks were carried out by members of far-right groups, 48 people were injured<sup>350</sup>.

On October 29, 2020, an pseudo-Islamic extremist killed three people outside the Notre Dame church in Nice (**France**)<sup>351</sup>. A woman in France died in the commissariat of the commune of Rambouillet near Paris from stab wounds inflicted on her by an attacking man of Tunisian origin<sup>352</sup>.

In **Sweden**, an 11-year-old Christian boy was beaten by Muslim peers for wearing a cross<sup>353</sup>.

<sup>346</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/christian-help-for-hindu-victims-of-pakistan-temple-attack/9404007.09.2021>

<sup>347</sup> URL: <https://www.invictory.org/news/society/30754-dannye-issledovaniya-napadeniya-na-christian-v-evrope-uvlichilis-na-7012/16/21>

<sup>348</sup> URL: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/06/germany-arrests-suspect-threat-attack-muslims-200608103951227.html06/08/2020>

<sup>349</sup> URL: <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/hamburg-synagoge-angriff-1.505432104.10.2020>

<sup>350</sup> URL: <https://aussiedlerbote.de/2021/02/napadeniya-na-bezhenczev-v-germanii/>

<sup>351</sup> URL: <https://ria.ru/20201029/napadenie-1582051817.html29.10.2020>

<sup>352</sup> URL: <http://www.interfax-religion.ru/?act=news&div=77125>

<sup>353</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/74383-v-shvecii-musulymane-izbili-11-letnego-malychika-za-nosheniye-kresta>

On November 2, 2020, in Vienna (**Austria**), unidentified people opened fire near the synagogue. As a result of the attack, 5 people were killed, 17 were injured.<sup>354</sup>

In **the UK** in October 2021, a British MP was killed in a church by Somali Ali Harbi Ali. The murder of Conservative MP Sir David Amess has been declared a terrorist act. Preliminary investigation revealed “potential motivation linked to Islamist extremism,” police said.<sup>355</sup>

In self-proclaimed **Kosovo**, police officers beat and arrested two believers of the Serbian Orthodox Church<sup>356</sup>.

A high level of violence motivated by anti-Semitism was recorded in **Ukraine**. On July 28, 2020, a man attacked a synagogue in Mariupol. A Guardman injured<sup>357</sup>. In Uman (Cherkasy region), two Hasidic teenagers aged 17 and 15 were attacked by three radicals. One of the teenagers was stabbed<sup>358</sup>. On July 28, in Mariupol, a man attacked a synagogue, the guard suffered<sup>359</sup>.

Parishioners of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC) were another object of violence. On August 9, 2020, in the urban-type settlement of Yasinia (neighborhood of Lopushanka, Zakarpattia), an Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU)<sup>360</sup> activist beat a 68-year-old parishioner of the St. Elias Church of the UOC<sup>361</sup>. In early 2021, six followers of the OCU attacked a 63-year-old parishioner of the UOC in the village of Zadubrivka, Chernivtsi region, who was on duty at the temple. An elderly parishioner received multiple hematomas and a concussion<sup>362</sup>.

## 1.5. Physical violence in the Americas

Religious violence in **the US** has been directed against Christians and Jews. On June 27, 2020, 80-year-old Roman Catholic clergyman Thomas Haack was robbed and beaten by Black Lives Matter activists in Washington DC<sup>363</sup>. On July 11, three teenagers beat up a representative of the Orthodox Jewish community in Brooklyn (New York)<sup>364</sup>. On October 15, 2020, three unidentified men beat a Hasidic Jew in New York<sup>365</sup>. November 9

<sup>354</sup> URL: [https://www.gazeta.ru/social/news/2020/11/03/n\\_15173905.shtml](https://www.gazeta.ru/social/news/2020/11/03/n_15173905.shtml)03.11.2020

<sup>355</sup> URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/oct/17/observer-view-on-the-murder-of-sir-david-amess>

<sup>356</sup> URL: <https://mitropolija.com/2020/06/28/kosovska-policija-pretukla-dvojicu-srba-na-gazimestanu/06/28/2020>

<sup>357</sup> URL: <http://www.interfax-religion.ru/?act=news&div=7543707/29/2020>

<sup>358</sup> URL: <http://www.interfax-religion.ru/?act=news&div=7594219.10.2020>

<sup>359</sup> URL: <http://www.interfax-religion.ru/?act=news&div=7543707/29/2020>

<sup>360</sup> Organization not acknowledged by most Orthodox Churches.

<sup>361</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/73757-na-zakarpatyje-aktivist-pcu-pri-policii-izbil-prihozhanku-upc08/10/2020>

<sup>362</sup> URL: <https://riafan.ru/1404645-raskolniki-do-polusmert-i-izbili-pozhilogo-prihozhanina-hrama-upc>

<sup>363</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/72603-v-ssha-aktivisty-izbili-80-letnego-katolicheskogo-svyashennika--socseti06/30/2020>

<sup>364</sup> URL: <https://www.newsru.co.il/world/15jul2020/brooklyn465.html07/15/2020>

<sup>365</sup> URL: <https://newyork.cbslocal.com/2020/10/16/hasidic-jewish-man-attacked-brooklyn/amp/10/16/2020>

in North Carolina, an unidentified gunman opened fire at a Christian church. One killed, several injured<sup>366</sup>. On November 23, 2020, a Baptist church was attacked in San Jose, California. As a result, at least two people died, several were seriously injured.<sup>367</sup>

Earlier, 5 major Jewish organizations in the US appealed to US President J. Biden with a request to condemn attacks on Jews and intensify the legislative fight against anti-Semitism. The Anti-Defamation League reported an increase in anti-Semitic incidents in the United States in May 2021 amid a new escalation in the conflict between Israel and Gaza. According to the human rights organization, the growth of anti-Semitism is observed both on the Internet and on the streets.<sup>368</sup>

A few days later, in a document released by the White House press office, Biden himself listed several recent attacks on American Jews. These included the broken window of a Jewish-owned establishment in Manhattan, the swastika on the door of a synagogue in Salt Lake City, vandalism at Jewish museums in Florida and Alaska, and threats to restaurant patrons in Los Angeles. Anti-Semitic incidents in US up 80% in May, Jewish organizations report<sup>369</sup>.

In September 2021, Damon Joseph, 23, known as Abdullah Ali Yusuf, was sentenced to 20 years in prison in the United States. He planned a terrorist attack on the synagogue, counting on mass casualties. In December 2018 he told the agent a plan to shoot the parishioners of the synagogue and handed over the weapon he wanted to use.<sup>370</sup> In the same month, a US court sentenced American John Ernest, who fired at a California synagogue in 2019, to life in prison without the possibility of parole. At the end of April 2019, during the celebration of the Jewish holiday in the synagogue in the town of Poway on the outskirts of San Diego (California), a 19-year-old student from the University of California opened fire on people, killing a woman and injuring three people. In total, at the time of the attack, there were about 100 people in the mosque, including children.<sup>371</sup>

In **Canada**, the violence came from white radicals. On September 12, 2020, Muslim Mohammed-Aslim Zafis was killed outside a mosque in Toronto.<sup>372</sup> On September 18, in Thornhill (Ontario), an unknown person attacked two Jewish believers<sup>373</sup>. In August 2021, four members of a Muslim family were killed in a car crash in Ontario, and a child was hospitalized with injuries. The man who hit a Muslim family with a car acted on the basis of religious hatred. The affected family immigrated from Pakistan about 14 years ago<sup>374</sup>.

<sup>366</sup> URL: <https://iz.ru/1084516/2020-11-09/odin-chelovek-pogib-pri-strelbe-v-tcerkvi-v-shtate-severnaia-karolina09.11.2020>

<sup>367</sup> URL: [https://www.newsru.co.il/world/23nov2020/church\\_503.html11/23/2020](https://www.newsru.co.il/world/23nov2020/church_503.html11/23/2020)

<sup>368</sup> URL: <https://jewish.ru/ru/news/articles/196453/>

<sup>369</sup> URL: <https://jewish.ru/ru/news/articles/196510/>

<sup>370</sup> URL: <https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/12375783>

<sup>371</sup> URL: <https://ria.ru/20210930/ssha-1752585995.html>

<sup>372</sup> URL: <https://www.aljazeera.com/amp/news/2020/09/canada-muslim-group-murder-investigated-hate-motivated-200918214123249.html09/18/2020>

<sup>373</sup> URL: <https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/jews-attacked-in-3-incidents-in-ontario-over-rosh-hashanah-64335409/24/2020>

<sup>374</sup> URL: <https://www.dw.com/ru/v-kanade-voditel-umyshlenno-sbil-nasmert-semjumu-slan/a-57809425>

Sam Brody, a Jew, was attacked in Toronto while walking his dog. An unknown person attacked him with anti-Semitic insults, hit him and knocked him to the ground. The Jewish organization Bnei Brit Canada called the incident “part of an unprecedented wave of physical attacks against Canadian Jews sparked by anti-Israel sentiment.” According to Bnei Brit, there were 154 cases of harassment, 51 cases of vandalism and 61 cases of violence against members of the Jewish community in May alone.<sup>375</sup>

On August 7, 2020, a Roman Catholic priest, Ricardo Antonio Cortes, was shot dead in **El Salvador**.<sup>376</sup>

Under pressure from representatives of the Communist Party, a Christian parish in Holguin (**Cuba**) was forced to close.<sup>377</sup>

Members of the Mavozo gang in **Haiti** kidnapped a group of 17 missionaries from the American organization Christian Aid Ministries. Among the abducted are five children. A ransom of \$1 million has been set for each. Earlier this year, bandits kidnapped five priests and two nuns. Local human rights activists report abductions up 300% from last year.<sup>378</sup>

## 2. Discrimination and violation of the right to freedom of religion

### 2.1. Discrimination in Asia

In Pakistan, Christians are being persecuted using the infamous discriminatory “blasphemy” laws dating back to the 1980s. In many cases, Christians are considered second-class citizens by their Muslim compatriots, and cases of outright persecution can occur when the supposed hierarchy of religious identity is violated. In Punjab, radicals have secured a charge of blasphemy against a Christian. Additional police forces were sent to the area to prevent outbreaks of violence against Christians.<sup>379</sup> In Pakistan, a court sentenced 37-year-old Christian Asif Perwaiz to death on charges of “blasphemy”. On June 2, Christian Anwar Masih was arrested on false charges of blasphemy.<sup>380</sup> In the province of Punjab, radicals forced the Christian community to remove the cross from the church under construction<sup>381</sup>.

<sup>375</sup> URL: <https://stmegi.com/posts/90975/v-toronto-antisemit-izbil-gulyavshego-s-sobakoyevreya-v-kipe/>

<sup>376</sup> URL: [http://www.fides.org/en/news/68497-AMERICA\\_EL\\_SALVADOR\\_Rector\\_of\\_Santiago\\_de\\_Maria\\_of\\_Zacatecoluca\\_Major\\_Seminary\\_murdered08.08.2020](http://www.fides.org/en/news/68497-AMERICA_EL_SALVADOR_Rector_of_Santiago_de_Maria_of_Zacatecoluca_Major_Seminary_murdered08.08.2020)

<sup>377</sup> URL: <https://vom.com.au/cuba-communist-officials-seek-to-close-church/09/24/2020>

<sup>378</sup> URL: <https://religionunplugged.com/news/2021/10/19/source-gang-may-seek-millions-for-missionary-hostages10/20/21>

<sup>379</sup> URL: <https://news.barnabasfund.org/Angry-scenes-in-Punjab-after-Pakistani-Christian-man-arrested-for-blasphemy/08/14/2020>

<sup>380</sup> URL: <https://vom.com.au/pakistan-family-discord-and-blasphemy/07/01/2020>

<sup>381</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/07/15/christians-forced-remove-cross-church-pakistan/07/15/2020>

There is a growing number of people in the country who refuse to rent their property to Christians as “infidels”<sup>382</sup>. In September 2020, 42 charges of “blasphemy” were filed in 30 days. Most of the defendants are Christians and Shia Muslims<sup>383</sup>. A Christian family from Kasur district (Punjab province) was abused by employers because of their faith<sup>384</sup>. Incidents of online attacks on Christian resources on the rise in Pakistan in 2020<sup>385</sup>. On August 4, the Lahore High Court ordered to return 14-year-old Christian girl Maria Shahbaz to her kidnapper.<sup>386</sup> Imran Ghafoor Masih, a Pakistani Christian released after ten years in prison, and his family were forced to flee their home after being threatened by extremists.<sup>387</sup> On November 16, a study was published on the manifestations of discrimination against religious minorities in Pakistani school textbooks.<sup>388</sup> Sajjad Masih Jill, 35, from Punjab, was accused in 2011 of sending a text message insulting the Prophet Muhammad from his mobile phone. After a lengthy investigation, in 2013 he was sentenced to life imprisonment. The case caused a wide international outcry, and Gill’s family and lawyers were beaten and threatened. After an 8-year appeal process, the Lahore High Court ruled to increase the sentence and grant the prosecution’s motion for the death penalty<sup>389</sup>. Christian leaders in Pakistan are trying to defend against blasphemy charges two nurses who were detained by police after they were accused of blasphemy by Muslim colleagues at Faisalabad Civil Hospital. The women were accused of desecrating a Muslim sticker. As news of the accusation spread, a mob of angry Muslims gathered outside the hospital and demanded the two women be punished. False accusations of blasphemy are widespread in Pakistan, often motivated by personal revenge or religious hatred. The allegations are highly inflammatory and could provoke mob lynching, killings and mass protests<sup>390</sup>. A mentally ill Christian was forcibly converted to Islam by members of an pseudo-Islamic extremist party in Pakistan. After the “conversion” Bashir denied converting to Islam in front of his family<sup>391</sup>. On 25 March 2021, the newly appointed Minister of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony of Pakistan Noor-ul-Haq Qadri

<sup>382</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/08/13/filthy-christians-denied-residence-pakistani-muslim-neighborhood/08/13/2020>

<sup>383</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/09/03/pakistan-records-42-blasphemy-accusations-30-days/03.09.2020>

<sup>384</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/09/06/christian-brick-kiln-workers-claim-abused-praying-home/06.09.2020>

<sup>385</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/study-highlights-online-harassment-of-pakistani-minorities/90098, 30.10.2020>

<sup>386</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/08/06/pakistani-court-orders-14-year-old-christian-girl-returned-abductor/06.08.2020>

<sup>387</sup> URL: <https://vom.com.au/pakistan-court-acquits-imran-ghafur-masih/16.12.2020>

<sup>388</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/11/19/new-book-documents-bias-pakistans-education-system/11/19/2020>

<sup>389</sup> URL: <https://bitterwinter.org/pakistan-adventist-sentenced-to-death-for-blasphemy/23.03.2021>

<sup>390</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/04/13/christian-leaders-pakistan-meet-police-regarding-blasphemy-accusation-nurses/>

<sup>391</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/04/26/islamist-party-forcefully-converts-mentally-ill-man-pakistan/>

falsely reported that religious minorities do not enjoy any religious restrictions anywhere in Pakistan. Open Doors and other advocacy organizations have proven otherwise in 2020 reports.

In Pakistan, Christians are often persecuted by their colleagues or neighbors. Thus, at the Punjab Institute of Psychiatry in Lahore, Muslim workers pulled on a coup against the Christian nurse Sakina Mehtab<sup>392</sup>.

Shagufta Kausar and Shafqat Emmanuel, a Christian couple sentenced to death for allegedly committing blasphemy in Pakistan, arrived safely in Europe, where they were granted asylum. The couple's death sentence was overturned in June 2021 after the Lahore High Court acquitted them of all charges. The Lahore High Court acquitted them after they spent almost eight years in prison. In the course of the investigation against the Christian couple, no evidences were produced<sup>393</sup>.

In May 2021, a Christian was abused and threatened by Muslim colleagues in a hospital in Karachi after receiving a promotion a month earlier. To protect his own safety and the safety of his family, the Christian eventually decided to turn down the promotion and request a transfer to a new hospital.<sup>394</sup>

The Lahore High Court refused to return a 14-year-old Christian woman to her family after she was abducted, forcibly converted to Islam and forcibly married to a kidnapper. The girl's family petitioned the local courts in Faisalabad to gain back custody of their daughter, but the petition was denied. The family appealed the decision to the Lahore High Court, which denied the family's request for the minor's return on 23 September.

The profile parliamentary committee rejected the bill providing for punishment from 5 to 10 years for forced conversion to another religion. Religious minorities have pinned hopes on this project to reduce the number of abductions and forced conversions of Christian and Hindu women to Islam.<sup>395</sup>

In October 2021, a Lahore court considered another case of the kidnapping of a girl from a Christian family in order to convert to Islam and marry a Muslim. According to her father, the 13-year-old girl Chashman Kanwal was abducted at the gates of the school, then the abductors forged documents, raising the age to 18, and the Christian family was sent a video of her conversion to Islam<sup>396</sup>.

Two Christian sanitation workers in Pakistan have died while rescuing another Christian from toxic sewer fumes. They were not given personal protective equipment. The emergency team refused to treat the Christians,

<sup>392</sup> URL: <https://bitterwinter.org/pakistan-christians-under-attack-at-lahore-psychiatric-hospital/05/11/2021>

<sup>393</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/08/15/pakistani-christian-couple-sentenced-death-blasphemy-receives-asylum/>

<sup>394</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/06/29/christian-pakistan-forced-forfeit-promotion-due-abuse-threats/>

<sup>395</sup> URL: <https://bitterwinter.org/forced-conversion-law-rejected-in-pakistan-democracys-bitter-winter/10/20/21>

<sup>396</sup> URL: <https://bitterwinter.org/pakistan-christian-girl-of-14-magically-turns-19-and-is-converted-to-islam/02.10.2021>

as they believed that touching a Christian would render them ritually unclean. In Pakistan, Christians make up 80% to 90% of sanitation workers, including janitors and sewer workers, while in this country, Christians make up less than 2% of the country's total population.<sup>397</sup> A Christian student at a medical college in Lahore, Pakistan, was forced to drop out after experiencing severe harassment from her Muslim classmates. The girl's parents filed a complaint with the medical college administration, but the administration did little to investigate the situation. A young Christian woman and her family decided that dropping out of medical school was the safest option.<sup>398</sup>

In August 2021, human rights activists paid special attention to **Afghanistan**, in connection with the coming to power of the Taliban. In Afghanistan, the number of Christians is estimated to be between 10,000 and 12,000. Most of them are converts from Islam, making them targets of persecution by the Taliban. According to the ideology of the Taliban, the punishment for converting to Christianity is death. House church leaders in Afghanistan received threatening letters from the Taliban<sup>399</sup>. Afghanistan's Hazara Shiites suffered under pressure from Taliban<sup>400</sup> and from ISIS attacks<sup>401</sup>. After the Taliban came to power again in Afghanistan, there were several terrorist attacks against Shiites, for which the Islamic State (banned in the Russian Federation) claimed responsibility. However, this time the Taliban promised to ensure the safety of the Hazaras and declared their readiness to protect their rights. According to various estimates, Afghan Shiites make up from 10 to 20% of the population and are represented mainly by Hazaras. The main threat to the Shiites in Afghanistan remains the Islamic State group banned in the Russian Federation. On October 8 this year, ISIS militants carried out a terrorist attack on a Shiite mosque in Kunduz, and on October 15 a similar attack took place in Kandahar. Several more attacks were reported in the Shia district of Dashti-Barchi in Kabul. According to experts, one of the main goals of explosions, organized by ISIS in Afghanistan is to provoke interreligious conflict between Sunnites and Shiites.<sup>402</sup>

In **Iran**, in June 2020, three Christians were sentenced to prison terms<sup>403</sup>. On July 7, Christian Malihe Nazari was arrested in Tehran.<sup>404</sup> On June 21, seven Christian converts were convicted in Iran, four believers sentenced to

<sup>397</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/12/05/two-christian-sanitation-workers-killed-pakistan/>

<sup>398</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/12/30/christian-student-pakistan-drops-college-fearing-false-blasphemy-allegation/>

<sup>399</sup> URL: <https://www.christianheadlines.com/contributors/michael-foust/pray-for-the-christians-in-afghanistan-taliban-takeover-puts-church-in-peril.html>

<sup>400</sup> Organization banned in the Russian Federation

<sup>401</sup> Organization banned in the Russian Federation

<sup>402</sup> URL: <https://afghanistan.ru/doc/147416.html>

<sup>403</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/06/23/three-iranian-christians-receive-appeal-outcome/06/23/2020>

<sup>404</sup> URL: <https://vom.com.au/iran-arrests-of-believers-continues/07/16/2020>



prison for “anti-state propaganda”<sup>405</sup>. At least 12 Christians were arrested by Iranian security forces on June 30 and July 1<sup>406</sup>.

In early August 2020, sentences were announced for four Christians arrested in February. Believers sentenced to terms of five to two years<sup>407</sup>. Two Christian converts were arrested in the Iranian city of Sardasht. Believers were taken away in an unknown direction<sup>408</sup>. Then, after two years in prison, the Iranian Christian Mohammad (Yuhan) Reza Omid was sent into exile. The original reason for criminal prosecution is leaving Islam<sup>409</sup>. In September 2020, an Iranian court ruled to take away a Christian couple’s adopted daughter<sup>410</sup>. In November 2020, state security officials raided 12 Christian houses in the city of Fardis<sup>411</sup>. 34-year-old Christian Ibrahim Firuzi, who converted from Islam to Christianity, was conditionally released from prison on bail, but the charges against him were not dropped. He had previously spent more than six years in prison. On February 8, 2021, he was arrested again. The reason was his statements about the persecution by the Iranian special services. On February 13, Ibrahim went on a hunger strike to protest against the new accusations.<sup>412</sup> Sam Khosravi, an Iranian Christian who is currently contesting custody of his adopted daughter with his wife Maryam, was one of three Christians who lost their appeal against a one-year prison sentence on January 27.<sup>413</sup> Iranian Christian converts Homayoun Javeh and Sarah Ahmadi were sentenced to two years in prison. The man is 62 years old and has advanced Parkinson’s disease. The couple’s only fault is being a member of a local house church<sup>414</sup>. Three men in the city of Karaj were sentenced on 22 August 2021 to five years in prison for propaganda against the state after they converted to Christianity from Islam. The initial verdict, handed down in June, also imposed a fine of nearly \$1,500 for each person released on nearly \$9,000 bail. Although the death penalty “for apostasy” was officially abolished in 1994 (the last execution for this “crime” dates back to 1990), courts can still convict people for leaving Islam on the basis of fatwas (Islamic

<sup>405</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/07/01/seven-christian-converts-sentenced-iran/07/01/2020>

<sup>406</sup> URL: <https://vomcanada.com/ir-2020-07-09.htm07/09/2020>

<sup>407</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/08/05/four-iranian-christians-imprisoned/08/05/2020>

<sup>408</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/09/02/two-iranian-christian-converts-arrested/02.09.2020>

<sup>409</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/08/22/iranian-christian-finishes-24-month-prison-sentence/08/22/2020>

<sup>410</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/09/25/iran-compels-family-separation-christians/09/25/2020>

<sup>411</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/11/12/iranian-christian-homes-raided/11/12/2020>

<sup>412</sup> URL: <http://barnabasfund.ru/ru/ibragim-firuzi-osvobozhden-pod-zalog-no-obvinenija-s-nego-ne-snjaty/>

<sup>413</sup> URL: <https://barnabasfund.org/news/three-iranian-christians-lose-appeal-against-prison-sentence-for-propaga/>

<sup>414</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/04/02/medically-vulnerable-iranian-christian-summoned-prison/>



legal opinions)<sup>415</sup>. In November 2021, five Christians began serving prison terms. Three Protestants were sentenced to three-year terms, two more to one-year terms. They are convicted under Art. 500 of the Iranian Criminal Code for “propaganda that is contrary to the Islamic faith.” Initially, the terms were longer, but later they were softened, in accordance with the practice established in Iran.<sup>416</sup>

**India**, as noted in the first section of this report, in recent years it has been actively increasing pressure on religious minorities, primarily Christians and Muslims. Indian Christians and Muslims confirm government persecution<sup>417</sup>. In July 2020, Jharkhand State Police issued an ultimatum to six Christian families to renounce their faith<sup>418</sup>. Christian preacher Joseph Singh was arrested by police in Tawang (Arunchal Pradesh) for building a church<sup>419</sup>. On September 23, in India, police officers and government officials removed 15 crosses from a hill near a Catholic church.<sup>420</sup> On October 10, 83-year-old Jesuit priest Stan Suomi was arrested in Jamshedpur (Jharkhand state).<sup>421</sup>. Anti-minority sentiment is fueled by the press. So in the Indian edition of “Nai Duniya” (“New World”), published in the states of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, anti-Christian information is regularly published<sup>422</sup>. On November 4, in the city of Jabua (Madhya Pradesh), a rally of nationalists was held, demanding to deprive Christians of financial support from the state<sup>423</sup>. As noted above, the nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, ruling since 2014, is actively involved in pressure on minorities.<sup>424</sup>. To stop the conversion of Hindus to Christianity and Islam, several states have recently passed anti-proselytizing laws. The laws forbid the mission of any religions other than Hinduism. In 2021, these laws were actively enforced.<sup>425</sup> In the state of Odisha, a young man named Raja Kartami was accused of persuading his wife to convert to Christianity.<sup>426</sup>. Nine Christians arrested on charges

<sup>415</sup> URL: <https://sedmitza.ru/text/10034568.html>

<sup>416</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/11/16/victims-irans-article-500-summoned-serve-prison-sentences/11/16/21>

<sup>417</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/05/22/local-christians-react-uscirf-recommending-india-country-particular-concern/05/22/2020>

<sup>418</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/07/25/six-christian-families-india-receive-ultimatum-renounce-faith/25.07.2020>

<sup>419</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/10/07/pastor-northeast-india-arrested-constructing-church/07.10.2020>

<sup>420</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/police-remove-crosses-in-indias-karnataka-state/8966609/26/2020>

<sup>421</sup> URL: <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/world/news/2020-10/v-india-arestovan-svyashennik-iesuit.html/10/13/2020>

<sup>422</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/10/31/christian-leaders-india-confront-anti-christian-media-trend/31.10.2020>

<sup>423</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/hindu-groups-want-to-deny-benefits-to-indian-tribal-christians/9017105.11.2020>

<sup>424</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/bjp-leads-reconversion-of-christian-families-in-india/9055404.12.2020>

<sup>425</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/christians-arrested-on-conversion-charge-denied-bail-in-india/9121402/01/2021>

<sup>426</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/02/24/young-indian-christian-falsely-accused-laws-violating-anti-conversion-law/25.02.2021>

of violating the proselytizing law in Madhya Pradesh attempted to bail through the Supreme Court, after they were denied bail by a trial court on January 27, 2021. Christians were accused of illegally attracting people to Christianity. The Church's spokesperson denied the allegations.<sup>427</sup> In February 2021, a local court in Jharkand State sentenced three families of Christian converts to caning, fines and eviction.<sup>428</sup> In the state of Madhya Pradesh, unsubstantiated accusations of proselytizing were made against a Catholic nun who heads a school at the Sacred Heart Monastery in Chhatarpur<sup>429</sup>. In March 2021, Christian Jagu Padiamy and his wife were expelled from the village because they did not want to reject the Christian faith.<sup>430</sup>

On April 4, 2021, Pastor Manu Damor and his wife Asha Damor were holding an Easter morning service in the village of Rangwasa, located in the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh, when they were attacked by a mob of 50 radical Hindu nationalists. The crowd surrounded the house where the service was held and tried to break down the door. The police then arrested the pastor and his wife.<sup>431</sup> More than 2,500 influential citizens of India have signed an open letter demanding the release of an elderly Jesuit priest imprisoned. Despite this the National Investigation Agency (NIA) court refused to bail 84-year-old father Stan Swamy, ignoring his poor health, age and other hardships he faces in prison. The pastor has been languishing in jail in Mumbai, the capital of the western Indian state of Maharashtra, since October 9, 2020.<sup>432</sup> On July 5, 2021, the priest died in prison on the eve of the third court hearing on his release on bail. He has been in custody since October 2020.<sup>433</sup> Christian Jagu Padiami and his wife were expelled from the village because they did not want to give up the Christian faith. The couple were forced to leave the village. The couple were promised that they would be killed if they returned without giving up Christ.<sup>434</sup>

India's predominantly Muslim state of Jammu and Kashmir is home to thousands of Rohingya Muslim refugees fleeing repression in Myanmar. However, the Indian authorities declared the Muslim refugees a threat and promised to deport them. The first 175 people were placed in a migrant detention center<sup>435</sup>.

<sup>427</sup> URL: <http://barnabasfund.ru/ru/v-indii-devjat-hristian-obvinennye-po-antikonversionnomu-zakonu-oratilis-v-verhovnyj-sud/>

<sup>428</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/indian-tribal-families-caned-for-embracing-christianity/9127203.02.2021>

<sup>429</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/indian-nun-charged-with-trying-to-convert-hindu-teacher/9154024.02.2021>

<sup>430</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/78056-v-indii-khristian-izgnali-iz-derevni-zanezhelanije-otkazatysya-ot-khrista>

<sup>431</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/04/19/easter-attack-india-pastor-wife-jailed-false-forced-conversion-charges/>

<sup>432</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/thousands-sign-petition-seeking-freedom-for-indian-jesuit/91973>

<sup>433</sup> URL: <https://catholicherald.co.uk/priest-jailed-on-terror-charges-dies-awaiting-third-bail-hearing-in-india/>

<sup>434</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/78056-v-indii-khristian-izgnali-iz-derevni-zanezhelanije-otkazatysya-ot-khrista>

<sup>435</sup> URL: <https://religionunplugged.com/news/2021/3/10/india-begins-promised-detention-deportation-plan-of-rohingya-refugees03/11/2021>

In an Indian village, a family of Christian proselytes was brutally beaten and banished by their own relatives for refusing to perform Hindu rituals. Despite the fact that the family lives in extremely confined conditions, they continue to be persecuted - relatives filed a complaint with the police about the theft of grain allegedly committed by Christians<sup>436</sup>.

It was also reported that two Catholic nuns from the Congregation of the Sacred Heart with two novices were on their way by train from Delhi to Rukela (Odisha), when at one of the stations a crowd of Hindu radicals surrounded them and, with accusations of proselytism, dropped them off the train and handed them over to the police. Nuns were banned from using mobile phones<sup>437</sup>.

An elderly couple faced social boycott after converting to Christianity. The inhabitants of their village isolated the family and demand to return to Hinduism<sup>438</sup>.

In the state of Uttar Pradesh, Indian nationalists broke into a Sunday prayer meeting of Christians, began to insult believers, seized Bibles and song books. Police arrested the pastor and six Christians after arriving for “forced conversions”<sup>439</sup>. As allegations of proselytism and severe legal restrictions are on the rise, pastors of Christian congregations in Madhya Pradesh have begun to record the names of their regular parishioners to protect them and themselves from false accusations by radicals.<sup>440</sup>

Priest Bartholomew Minj from Uttar Pradesh intends to defend his rights in the Supreme Court after he was accused of aiding proselytism. The reason was the intercession of Minge for the two mentioned Catholic nuns, who were removed from the flight in October 2021 and brought to the police by force. Upon learning of this, the priest immediately went to the police station to help the nuns. After that, the police opened a case against him and he was interrogated by the investigator.<sup>441</sup>

On November 7, in the state of Karnataka, Hindu radicals attacked a Christian community during a joint prayer. The believers hid the pastor with a human shield. After the police arrived, the pastor was charged with disturbing the peace and ordered to report to the station. When 16 more pastors came along with the pastor, they were all charged with the same charges.<sup>442</sup>

<sup>436</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/03/17/christian-family-expelled-village-india/03/19/2021>

<sup>437</sup> URL: <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Hindu-extremists-surround-and-force-two-nuns-and-two-novices-off-a-train-52682.html03/25/2021>

<sup>438</sup> URL: <https://vom.com.au/india-leader-claims-keeping-company-with-christians-will-destroy-you/08.11.21>

<sup>439</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/11/09/seven-christians-jailed-false-forced-conversion-charges-northern-india/09.11.21>

<sup>440</sup> URL: <https://barnabasfund.org/news/pastors-in-india-forced-to-document-worshippers-to-avoid-false-claims-of/11/11/21>

<sup>441</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/indian-police-implicate-priest-in-conversion-case/9493311/11/21>

<sup>442</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/11/24/sixteen-pastors-india-falsely-accused-disturbing-peace/11/23/2021>

In the state of Madhya Pradesh, a branch of the Hindu World Council demanded the director of a Catholic school, priest Augustine Chittuparambilla, to install within 15 days a statue of the goddess of knowledge Saraswati in the school campus. Catholics were forced to turn to the police for protection<sup>443</sup>.

It has become a trend that all over India, radical Hindu figures are using false allegations of forced conversion to oppress Christians and their organizations. In Madhya Pradesh, three times in December, Hindus filed a complaint with the police accusing Catholic-owned organizations<sup>444</sup>. Another act of persecution took place in the western Indian state of Gujarat, where police and officials accused a Catholic orphanage founded by Mother Teresa of allegedly violating anti-proselyte laws. The shelter has denied the accusations.<sup>445</sup> A similar situation happened earlier with an orphanage in the state of Madhya Pradesh. Church leaders in India believe the case filed earlier by the police against the management of an orphanage in Gujarat is part of a planned strategy to blight the image of the orphanage and its founder Mother Teresa. On December 13, Vadodara City Police launched an investigation into an orphanage run by missionary nuns.<sup>446</sup> On December 26, 2021, three Christians from the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh were arrested and imprisoned on false charges of forced conversion. According to local sources, four radical Hindu nationalists interrupted a Christmas gathering in the village of Bisoli, located in the Jabua district. Before the Christmas holidays, several pastors in the Jabua area reported that they had received a government circular demanding them to stop their activities.<sup>447</sup>

In December 2021, India blocked the charity Missionaries of Charity, founded by Mother Teresa, from receiving foreign funds to work in India. The charitable organization now runs hundreds of orphanages across India to help the “poorest of the poor”. In recent years, the legacy of Mother Teresa and her work in India has come under attack from radical Hindu nationalists.<sup>448</sup>

Candidate of Historical Sciences, Senior Researcher at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences E.S. Yurlova published a study on discrimination against women in India in 2021<sup>449</sup>. The researcher notes the suppressing of the rights of Muslim women in this country: “A law was passed that transferred the decision of the fate of divorced Muslim women to the jurisdiction of Muslim private law. After its adoption Muslim women

<sup>443</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/hindu-group-in-india-insists-on-idol-worship-at-catholic-school/9471126.10.21>

<sup>444</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/police-probe-catholic-run-orphanage-in-central-india/9534412/14/21>

<sup>445</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/missionaries-of-charity-nuns-accused-of-conversion-in-india/9537012/15/21>

<sup>446</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/12/16/church-leaders-india-believe-attack-missionaries-charity-part-well-orchestrated-strategy/12/16/21>

<sup>447</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/12/31/three-christians-jailed-central-india-attending-christmas-gathering/>

<sup>448</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/12/28/charity-india-started-mother-teresa-blocked-receiving-foreign-funds/>

<sup>449</sup> Yurlova E.S. India. Problems of Women's Inequality // *Historical Psychology and Sociology of History*. 2021. V. 14. No. 1.

cannot, as before, apply to a civil court. Hence their discrimination compared to women of other faiths.”

With the coming to power in the United States of a new president the authorities of this country stopped paying attention to the persecution of religious minorities in India. On February 8, 2021, President Biden’s telephone conversation with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi made no mention of India’s persecution of religious minorities in that country. Earlier, during a one-on-one conversation with Modi, President Donald Trump condemned such a situation with the rights of religious minorities.<sup>450</sup> International organizations also do not require the Indian government to stop discrimination against Christians.

Keshav Acharya, a Christian preacher, was arrested in **Nepal** Kaski district in May 2020 for praying for the health of a member of the community.<sup>451</sup> In July of that year, a Christian woman was attacked for organizing prayer meetings.<sup>452</sup> Two nuns of Korean origin were arrested 200 km from Kathmandu for missionary work and proselytism. After several weeks in prison, the Catholic community was able to release them on bail. Both elderly nuns worked in Nepal for years, doing social work, their activities have always been open and legal.<sup>453</sup> A Christian pastor in Nepal has been convicted of violating the country’s tough law against conversion. The pastor was sentenced to two years in prison and fined 20,000 rupees (about \$165).<sup>454</sup>

In Vietnam, in August 2020, the government tried to take land away from a Catholic monastery.<sup>455</sup> On September 18, 2020, Pastor A. Dao was released. He spent four years in prison, during which he was tortured<sup>456</sup>. On November 25, the Vietnamese authorities refused to approve the holding of an Evangelical Church convention due to the organizers’ refusal to submit lists of speakers for approval by the committee.<sup>457</sup> In the Dallak province of Vietnam’s Central Highlands, about two dozen ethnic minority Christians were detained, most or all of whom belonged to the Montagnard ethnic group. About seventy percent of Montagnards are Christians, which is ten times the national average.<sup>458</sup>

<sup>450</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/02/19/bidens-call-prime-minister-modi-not-mention-indias-persecution-religious-minorities/>

<sup>451</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/05/21/authorities-nepal-continue-imprison-pastor-prayed-covid-19/05/21/2020>

<sup>452</sup> URL: <https://vom.com.au/nepal-woman-stoned-by-neighbor/06.08.2020>

<sup>453</sup> URL: <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Two-Korean-Sisters-in-prison-on-conversion-charges-54373.html27.10.21>

<sup>454</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/11/30/pastor-nepal-sentenced-two-years-prison-violating-anti-conversion-law/>

<sup>455</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/08/15/monastery-fights-government-sent-land-grabbers/08/15/2020>

<sup>456</sup> URL: <https://vomcanada.com/vn-2020-09-24.htm09/24/2020>

<sup>457</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/vietnam-blocks-protestant-churchs-congress/9046911/26/2020>

<sup>458</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/08/05/us-officials-condemn-vietnamese-raid-christian-churches/>

On October 18, 2020, in Bakamun, **Sri Lanka**, a pastor was banned from holding prayer meetings, threatening criminal prosecution<sup>459</sup>.

In West Sumatra (**Indonesia**), Christian families were left without funds due to the denial of government assistance<sup>460</sup>. In the province of East Kalimantan, police arrested a Catholic priest who was participating in a protest. After 10 hours of interrogation, he was released on bail.<sup>461</sup> In the same province, the police arrested a Catholic priest, he faces up to 7 years in prison<sup>462</sup>.

In Indonesia, a Christian has been arrested for blasphemy. On the Twitter page of 39-year-old Joseph Suryadi, a cartoon of the Prophet Muhammad was published. After receiving more than 7,000 complaints, police arrested Suryadi, who said the picture was posted not by him but by someone unknown after the Christian lost his smartphone. If found guilty, he faces up to 5 years in prison.<sup>463</sup> On one of the predominantly Muslim islands of Indonesia Christian radio has included passages from the Bible in its broadcast program. Shortly thereafter, Muslims began to protest and demanded that the station's management stop broadcasting Bible passages, threatening to bring the case to a close. As a result, the parties reached an agreement that Islamic programs would also be broadcast on the radio.<sup>464</sup>

State of Kelantan in **Malaysia** adopted amendments to the legislation based on Islamic law. According to them, the following will be criminally punishable: conversion from Islam, distortion of the faith, disrespect for Ramadan, destruction of places of worship, disrespect for parents, getting tattoos and plastic surgery. According to experts, such a step indicates the strengthening of Sharia not only within one state, but throughout the country.<sup>465</sup>

Representatives of the State Forest Department of **Bangladesh** in March 2021 stole building materials from two Protestant churches under reconstruction. The formal basis for the theft was that Christians did not have the right to erect buildings in the specified territory.<sup>466</sup> In Bangladesh, in the village of Lahan Bazaar, Douglas Rodriguez and members of his family began to receive threats from local Muslims who want to seize land from Christians. Rodriguez was forced to take the children out of the house for safety<sup>467</sup>.

<sup>459</sup> URL: <https://vomcanada.com/lk-2020-11-19.htm>19/11/2020

<sup>460</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/11/24/icc-feeds-100-indonesian-christian-families-pandemic/11/24/2020>

<sup>461</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/indonesian-police-charge-priest-with-public-order-offenses/9161703.03.2021>

<sup>462</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/indonesian-police-charge-priest-with-public-order-offenses/9161703.03.2021>

<sup>463</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/indonesian-christian-in-blasphemy-storm-for-twitter-insult/9538212/15/21>

<sup>464</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/12/14/indonesian-christian-radio-pressured-play-muslim-content/12/15/21>

<sup>465</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/11/07/malaysian-states-latest-enforcement-sharia-laws-makes-conversion-criminal/08.11.21>

<sup>466</sup> URL: <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Two-Protestant-churches-targeted,-attacked-and-ransacked-52497.html>03.03.2021

<sup>467</sup> URL: <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Muslim-threatens-Christian-family-in-Chattogram-in-order-to-take-their-land-54458.html>09.11.21

The pastor of a church in Savannakhet, **Laos**, was arrested in March 2020 on charges of holding church services without proper permission. On April 6, 2021, he was formally convicted and sentenced to a year in prison. However, he was released almost immediately on the grounds that he had already been behind bars for a year, awaiting a formal court decision. There are approximately 150,000 Christians in Laos. They often suffer local harassment and violence, as well as persecution by the central government.<sup>468</sup>

Religious minorities in **Myanmar** continued to face persecution. Four months have passed since the Burmese military carried out a coup on February 1, 2021. Religious minorities in Myanmar, especially Christians, are being persecuted by the military, which attacks churches and religious leaders<sup>469</sup>. The Rohingya in Myanmar face a double threat. In Myanmar, in the state of Kaya, the military arrested seven employees of the Catholic charity Caritas, who were distributing food and medicine to refugees, which is prohibited by the authorities<sup>470</sup>.

In the Issyk-Kul region of **Kyrgyzstan**, a nine-year-old boy was beaten for two weeks because of his nationality and religious affiliation. Patriarch Kirill wrote the boy a letter of support and invited him to Moscow<sup>471</sup>.

## 2.2. Discrimination in the Middle East and Africa

On November 11, 2020, 18-year-old Christian Yousef Hani was arrested in **Egypt**. He was accused of insulting Islam<sup>472</sup>. On July 15, 2020, a young 17-year-old Coptic Egyptian citizen was detained on charges of blasphemy for comments made on Facebook. A year later, he was allowed to leave prison. This Copt was imprisoned along with four other Copts who faced similar charges of blasphemy.<sup>473</sup> Copts are massively forced to convert to Islam in Egypt. The trend of a mass exodus of Copts from the faith of their ancestors has been observed over the past four decades. Between 80 and 200 Orthodox Copts convert to Islam every day. On average, 50,000 Copts convert to Islam annually in Egypt<sup>474</sup>.

On February 10, 2021, in **Somaliland**, police arrested and detained Mohamed and Hamdi with a baby, as well as a Christian woman from Ethiopia. In April, six more Christian converts were accused of apostasy and spreading

<sup>468</sup> URL: <http://barnabasfund.ru/ru/v-laose-pastor-obvinjavshijsja-v-sozdanii-besporjadka-osvobozhden-iz-tjurmy/>

<sup>469</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/06/16/new-myanmar-report-explores-history-future-eight-religious-minority-groups/>

<sup>470</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/seven-caritas-workers-arrested-in-conflict-torn-myanmar/9463110/20/21>

<sup>471</sup> URL: <https://svpressa.ru/society/article/303858/>

<sup>472</sup> URL: <https://vomcanada.com/eg-2020-11-26.htm11/26/2020>

<sup>473</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/07/28/coptic-minor-released-blasphemy-sentence/>

<sup>474</sup> URL: <https://islamnews.ru/news-koptskaya-pravoslavnyaya-tserkov-ozabochna-perekhodom-svoikh-posledovately-v-islam>



Christianity, as well as incitement to disturb the peace. At a hearing in the regional court of Hargeisa, the capital of Somaliland, all charges against them were dropped. Mohamed, Hamdi and others were immediately released<sup>475</sup>.

In **Somalia**, in October 2020, a couple was arrested and tried for preaching Christianity and leaving Islam<sup>476</sup>.

In Asmara, **Eritrea**, police arrested 30 Christians at a wedding ceremony<sup>477</sup>. More than 500 Christians remain in prison in this North African country<sup>478</sup>. 21 Christian women, all new mothers, were released in March 2021 after four years in an Eritrean island prison<sup>479</sup>. Government considers all religions illegitimate, except for the four main ones - Islam, the Eritrean Eastern Christian Church, the Evangelical (Lutheran) Church of Eritrea and the Roman Catholic Church. Numerous other groups, including Protestants of various denominations, were persecuted, activists were sent to prison and tortured. In April 2021, police raided a prayer meeting in the Eritrean capital, Asmara, and arrested 23 women, all of whom were taken to jail. Another 12 Christians were arrested at a home meeting in the port city of Assab, close to the border with Djibouti, and taken to a nearby prison.<sup>480</sup> In October 2021, fifteen Christians were arrested for their faith and sent to a maximum security prison in Mai Serva. This happened immediately after the arrest of two elderly pastors<sup>481</sup>.

The heads of Christian churches in **Nigeria** said that the government of Muhammadu Buhari seeks to Islamize this West African nation - in particular, actively introduces Islam into the upper echelon of the country's judicial system<sup>482</sup>. Nigerian police arrested 57 activists of the Shia Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN) in the capital, Abuja. The number of Shiites in Nigeria reaches 5 million. Most of the Muslims of this West African country are Sunnis, there are more than 70 million of them.<sup>483</sup> In Nigeria, an Epoch Times journalist was arrested by a Kaduna state court for a series of reports on attacks on Christians in the Middle Belt of the country for "spreading false information." In his articles he pointed to the inaction of the authorities of Kaduna and the police, who actually ignore the genocide of the Christian population<sup>484</sup>.

On October 27, 2020, in Algeria, the Tizi Ouzou provincial authorities lifted restrictions imposed in connection with the coronavirus from 183 mosques. Christian parishes remain closed<sup>485</sup>. A 43-year-old Christian was

<sup>475</sup> URL: <http://barnabasfund.ru/ru/molitvennyj-listok-sentjabr-2021/#2>

<sup>476</sup> URL: <https://news.barnabasfund.org/Christian-couple-to-face-trial-as--apostates-and-evangelists--in-Muslim-majority-Somaliland/10/13/2020>

<sup>477</sup> URL: <https://vomcanada.com/er-20208.2020>

<sup>478</sup> [persecution.org/2021/02/08/70-christians-released-prison-eritrea/](https://www.persecution.org/2021/02/08/70-christians-released-prison-eritrea/)

<sup>479</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/03/04/21-christians-released-prison-eritrea/>

<sup>480</sup> URL: <https://vomcanada.com/er-2021-04-08.htm>

<sup>481</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/10/04/irish-government-calls-eritrea-arbitrary-imprisonment-christians/>

<sup>482</sup> URL: <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/247261/christian-leaders-in-nigeria-allege-islamization-attempt-after-recent-judicial-appointments>

<sup>483</sup> URL: <https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/12529115>

<sup>484</sup> URL: <https://barnabasfund.org/news/journalist-arrested-after-reporting-on-attacks-against-christians-in-nig/11/23/21>

<sup>485</sup> URL: <https://vom.com.au/algeria-churches-closed-by-pandemic-remain-unopened/11/18/2020>



sentenced to 5 years in prison under Art. 144 of the Algerian criminal code for “insulting the prophet” for reposting a cartoon depicting the founder of Islam on social networks<sup>486</sup>. Pastor Rashid Seigir and parishioner Nouh Hamimi from Oran received a written notice that the court sentenced them in absentia to imprisonment and a fine of 500,000 Algerian dinars (\$3,745), they were convicted of “distributing subversive publications and other propaganda that undermines faith of Muslims”<sup>487</sup>. Converted to Christianity from Islam Fuzil Balu was arrested on April 17, 2021 in Algeria for illegal fundraising for religious purposes. During his arrest, Bibles and other religious literature were confiscated from him.<sup>488</sup> Algerian Christian convert Suliman Bouhafis was arrested by the secret police in Tunisia and repatriated back to Algiers. Boafs was previously arrested in Algiers in 2016 for converting to Christianity. He was accused of converting, proselytizing and slandering Islam. His sentence was reduced from five to three years in prison, but he was later released in July 2020 after a presidential pardon. After spending 20 months in prison, Bouffes moved to Tunisia and applied to the UNHCR<sup>489</sup>.

The two Christians were fined approximately \$1,500 and given a one-year suspended sentence. A total of 17 churches were sealed, four more were threatened but not officially closed.<sup>490</sup> In July 2021, an Algerian pastor was sentenced to six months in prison and a fine for “undermining the faith of a Muslim” as well as printing Christian literature and distributing the Bible. The pastor denied all charges and appealed the verdict. The six-month sentence was suspended, but the fine remained in effect.<sup>491</sup>

The ongoing curtailment of the secular project of the state, dating back to Atatürk in **Turkey**, leads to the liquidation of communities that previously had no problems in their activities. Pastor Michael Felner, a German citizen who had worked in Turkey for over 20 years, was detained by the authorities in early February and deported<sup>492</sup>. Religious minorities are struggling with restrictions and discrimination in Turkey. According to human rights activists, Turkey is unwilling or unable to protect the rights of religious communities and freedom of religion<sup>493</sup>. Discrimination in this country was most clearly manifested in aggressive acts against places of worship of minorities, which will be discussed in a separate section of the report.

<sup>486</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/02/02/algerian-christian-sentenced-five-years/03.02.2021>

<sup>487</sup> URL: <http://www.blagovest-info.ru/index.php?ss=2&s=3&id=9350303/11/2021>

<sup>488</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/10/27/algerian-christian-convert-faces-imprisonment-illegal-donations/27.10.21>

<sup>489</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/09/04/algerian-christian-convert-repatriated-tunisia/>

<sup>490</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/09/29/algerian-christian-sentences-upheld-proselytization/>

<sup>491</sup> URL: <https://vomcanada.com/dz-2021-12-16.htm12/17/21>

<sup>492</sup> URL: <https://barnabasfund.org/us/news/pastor-in-turkey-defends-himself-against-deportation-as-threat-to-nation/>

<sup>493</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/11/14/turkeys-religious-minorities-restricted-authorities/>

### 2.3. Discrimination in Europe and America

In **Canada**, a man was arrested after protests against his daughter's gender change. The Canadian was arrested for "contempt of court". He called the case "state-sponsored child abuse."<sup>494</sup>

A three-judge panel of the **United States** Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit ruled against a high school football coach fired from his job for praying on the field after games<sup>495</sup>.

In **England**, 61-year-old Londoner and nurse practitioner Mary Onuoha filed a lawsuit with the Labor Tribunal<sup>496</sup> due to forced dismissal from the hospital after the administration of the medical institution systematically pressured her for refusing to remove or hide her pectoral cross during work. The woman was eventually removed from clinical duties and demoted to a receptionist and then transferred from one administrative position to another until she was forced to quit in August 2020.<sup>497</sup> Catholic students are increasingly being persecuted at British universities. For example, the appointment of the priest David Palmer as a chaplain at the University of Nottingham was blocked solely because he posted tweets against abortion and euthanasia. Kathleen Stock, a lecturer in Anglican philosophy at the University of Sussex, was attacked by members of her own union because of her hostile attitude towards gender ideology, which she did not hide. For some time she had to give lectures remotely - over the Internet, because the university management feared for her safety. Some students threatened her with death and put up posters calling for her to be fired.<sup>498</sup>

The Russian Foreign Ministry has published a report highlighting violations of religious freedom in the UK. The report "On the situation in the UK with the glorification of Nazism, the spread of neo-Nazism and other practices that contribute to the escalation of modern forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance" contains a mention of the violation of religious freedom in this country<sup>499</sup>.

The "Swedish Democrats" intend to ban the operation of all private schools with focus on Islam in **Sweden**. This became known after the party congress was held in Karlstad on November 27 and 28, 2021<sup>500</sup>.

The State Council of **Greece**, the country's highest administrative court, has ruled to ban kosher and halal slaughter. European Jewish Association (EJA) chairman Rabbi Menachem Margolin expressed outrage at the decision, saying Jews' freedom of worship was under direct attack across Europe from

<sup>494</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/78275-kanadca-arestovali-iz-za-protestov-protiv-procedur-po-smene-pola-jego-docheri03/19/2021>

<sup>495</sup> URL: <https://cml.news/2021/03/23/463881>

<sup>496</sup> In January 2022, it became known that the Tribunal had sided with the nurse.

<sup>497</sup> URL: <https://www.christianpost.com/news/nurse-sues-london-hospital-over-order-to-remove-cross-necklace.html>

<sup>498</sup> URL: <https://sedmitza.ru/text/10053791.html>

<sup>499</sup> URL: [https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/foreign\\_policy/humanitarian\\_cooperation/-/asset\\_publisher/bB3NYd16mBFC/content/id/4915826#8](https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/foreign_policy/humanitarian_cooperation/-/asset_publisher/bB3NYd16mBFC/content/id/4915826#8)

<sup>500</sup> URL: <https://regnum.ru/news/polit/3435521.html>

institutions that promised to protect Jewish communities. The rabbi recalled that first kosher slaughter was banned in Belgium, then in Poland and Cyprus, and now it is the turn of Greece<sup>501</sup>.

In **Montenegro** fired a teacher who called the children to worship<sup>502</sup>. The government of Montenegro ordered the priest of the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) Stefan Milovanovic to leave the country due to the participation of the clergy in religious processions<sup>503</sup>. Montenegrin police summoned archpriest-stavroforos Sinisa Janković and priest Milosav Jovanović for interrogation<sup>504</sup>. The police department of the city of Bar summoned the clergyman of the SOC archpriest Jovan Plamenets for questioning<sup>505</sup>. On June 21, 2020, Montenegrin police officers made a number of arrests of SOC ministers<sup>506</sup>. On the night of June 15, the Montenegrin police detained two SOC priests<sup>507</sup>. SOC cleric deacon Konstantin Doich and his son were not allowed to cross the border with Montenegro for a week<sup>508</sup>.

Most often, information about violations of the rights of believers came from Ukraine, where supporters of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU) continue violence against the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC). The Pridniprovskiy District Court of Cherkasy appointed two months of house arrest to a writer who criticized the OCU and Tomos about autocephaly<sup>509</sup>. Archimandrite Luka (Vinarchuk) stated that believers of the UOC are deprived of spiritual guidance in the Ukrainian armed forces<sup>510</sup>. The UOC noted double standards in coordinating the holding of prayers<sup>511</sup>. The head of the Kovel raion council put pressure on the UOC community in the village of Dorotishche<sup>512</sup>. On August 10, in the village of Dilove (Zakarpattia oblast), supporters of the OCU made an attempt to transfer the temple of the UOC to their jurisdiction<sup>513</sup>. In Ukraine, the police persecute people even for

<sup>501</sup> URL: <https://www.interfax.ru/world/800096>

<sup>502</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/74988-v-chernogorii-uchitelnicu-uvolili-za-prizyv-uchenikov-k-molitve07.10.2020>

<sup>503</sup> URL: <https://www.eparhija.me/index.php/jul-2020-svesteniku-stefanu-milovanovicu-rjesenje-da-napusti-drzavu07/08/2020>

<sup>504</sup> URL: <https://mitropolija.com/2020/07/13/nastavak-progona-svestenstva-umjesto-cestitke-povodom-slave-grada-bjelopoljskim-svestenicima-uruceni-pozivi-zasaslanje/07/13/2020>

<sup>505</sup> URL: <https://mitropolija.com/2020/07/31/izjava-protojereja-jovana-plamenca-u-cb-bar-nakon-poziva-na-informativni-razgovor/07/31/2020>

<sup>506</sup> URL: <https://ria.ru/20200622/1573276052.html06/22/2020>

<sup>507</sup> URL: <https://mitropolija.com/2020/06/15/nastavljen-progon-slobode-liseni-svestenici-mirceta-sljivancanin-i-zeljko-calic/06/15/2020>

<sup>508</sup> URL: <https://mitropolija.com/2020/07/02/porodica-djakona-konstantina-dojica-najzadna-okupu/07/02/2020>

<sup>509</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/73311-detskogo-pisatelya-posadili-pod-domashnij-arest-za-kritiku-tomosa07/21/2020>

<sup>510</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/72884-v-armii-prodolzhajut-diskriminirovaty-prava-verujushih-upc--arkhimandrit-luka07/08/2020>

<sup>511</sup> URL: <https://news.church.ua/2020/12/15/pcu-dozvoleno-te-shho-ne-dozvoleno-upc-v-sofiji-kijivskij-proveli-moleben-popri-obmezhennya-z-pandemijeyu/12/15/2020>

<sup>512</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/72232-dorotishhe-obshhina-molitsya-v-khrame-no-glava-rajsoveta-prodolzhajet-davlenije06/16/2020>

<sup>513</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/73793-v-sele-delovoje-sotni-lyudej-vstali-na-zashhitu-khrama-upc08/11/2020>

disagreeing with the OCU, expressed in social networks. In March 2021, a criminal case was initiated against a resident of the Ternopil oblast, who posted negative posts about the OCU on his Facebook page<sup>514</sup>. In the Rivne oblast, the authorities illegally persecuted archpriest of the UOC Viktor Zemlyanov. The priest was accused of giving comments to Russian journalist Arkady Mamontov for the films “Persecution” and “Operation Mazeppa”<sup>515</sup>. On August 10, 2021, supporters of the OCU cut off the locks and entered the territory of the UOC temple in the village of Zabolotyya, Rivne oblast of Ukraine, which was sealed after the assault by schismatics three months ago<sup>516</sup>. On July 21, 2021, the Lutsk city district court opened a criminal case on the fact of telephone threats to the priest of the Volyn diocese archpriest Volodymyr Meles and members of his family. After the capture of the church in honor of the Kazan Icon of the Mother of God in the village of Sadov in February 2019, the family of the UOC clergyman, Archpriest Volodymyr Meles, is regularly attacked by supporters of the OCU<sup>517</sup>. In the village of Verbovets, Vinnytsia oblast, local “patriots” tried to transfer the church to the OCU<sup>518</sup>. The parishioners of the UOC in the village of Shevchenkove, Bar raion, Vinnytsia oblast of Ukraine, with the blessing of metropolitan Varsonofy of Vinnitsa and Bar, performed prayerful standing at the walls of their church, captured by OCU raiders<sup>519</sup>.

### 3. Extremism under religious slogans and countering its manifestations

In **Pakistan**, church leaders across the country decided in December 2021 to increase security during Sunday services and the Christmas holidays. Concern is growing over the threat of attacks by religious extremists following the Taliban’s takeover of Afghanistan, these leaders say. While the Government of Pakistan claims that Christians enjoy complete religious freedom, there are regular reports of attacks on churches and Christian communities.<sup>520</sup>

In **Qatar** study revealed repeated appearance of anti-Christian rhetoric in textbooks<sup>521</sup>.

<sup>514</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/77928-policija-otkryla-delo-protiv-zhitelya-ternopoljskoj-oblasti-iz-za-postov-o-pcu>

<sup>515</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/mysli-vsluh/78834-dva-pechalnyh-fakta-ob-otnoshenii-vlasti-k-upc>

<sup>516</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/81828-storonniki-pcu-srezali-zamki-na-ograde-opechatannogo-khrama-v-zabolotyje>

<sup>517</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/81407-na-volyni-vozbudili-ugolovnoje-delo-po-faktu-ugroz-semyje-khriksa-s-sadov>

<sup>518</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/mysli-vsluh/81348-budem-rezaty-kak-svinej-pcu-snova-demonstrirujet-khristianskuju-lyubov>

<sup>519</sup> URL: <https://mospat.ru/ru/news/87615/>

<sup>520</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/12/08/christian-leaders-pakistan-tighten-security-around-churches-preparation-christmas/>

<sup>521</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/09/14/qatari-education-curriculum-promotes-religious-persecution/09/14/2020>

The Chaldean Patriarch in **Iraq** urged Muslims to cleanse school textbooks of insults against Christians<sup>522</sup>.

In **Myanmar**, on September 6, 2021, Buddhist monk Ashin Weeratu (known as the “Buddhist Bin Laden”), convicted of radical nationalist and anti-Muslim statements, was released.<sup>523</sup>

American General Stephen Townsend said that the influence of al-Qaeda and the Islamic State is growing in the **African Sahel region**. At the same time, groups within the IS are constantly demonstrating their desire to eliminate Christianity in their zones of influence. Experts believe that the lack of a coordinated international response to the growth of terrorist activity in Africa will have the most dramatic consequences.<sup>524</sup>

In a refugee camp from Myanmar in **Bangladesh**, the Muslim majority of the Rohingya population disrupted the funeral of a Christian who died of an illness. UN representatives in the camp failed to solve the problem<sup>525</sup>.

In India, the position of nationalistic Hinduism is growing in the state of Uttar Pradesh. Muslims of the city of Deoband, where the madrasa is located, are seriously concerned about the strengthening of armed extremist groups<sup>526</sup>.

A school in the north of **England** has suspended a religious studies teacher for showing students a cartoon of the Prophet Mohammed from the French magazine Charlie Hebdo during classes on his subject, following an outcry from the local Muslim community.<sup>527</sup>

The Muslim-Jewish Council of Europe condemned the anti-Semitic words of the Norwegian imam Nur Ahmad Nur and expressed the hope that he would be held accountable. Earlier, the media reported that the Norwegian police launched an investigation into the statements of Imam Nur Ahmad, who wrote on Facebook that “Jews are dangerous”<sup>528</sup>.

In Germany, a young Syrian was detained on suspicion of preparing a terrorist attack in a synagogue. Investigators believe that the detainee planned to carry out a terrorist attack during a synagogue service on Yom Kippur, which was supposed to take place on Wednesday evening, but was abruptly canceled<sup>529</sup>.

In September 2020, a man was detained in Uman in **Ukraine**, who called for the “extermination of the Jews”<sup>530</sup>. There have already been five cases of vandalism against Jewish menorahs set for Hanukkah in the country -

<sup>522</sup> URL: <https://sedmitza.ru/text/9988869.html>

<sup>523</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/myanmar-releases-ultranationalist-buddhist-monk/9402807.09.2021>

<sup>524</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/06/22/wildfire-terrorism-sweeping-across-africa/>

<sup>525</sup> URL: <https://barnabasfund.org/news/protest-by-rohingya-muslims-prevents-burial-of-christian-at-refugee-camp/07.09.2021>

<sup>526</sup> URL: <https://religionunplugged.com/news/2021/9/1/muslims-in-in-dia-face-crackdown-after-talibans-afghanistan-takeover01.09.2021>

<sup>527</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/78465-v-anglii-uchitelya-otstranili-ot-zanyatij-zapokaz-karikatury-na-muhammeda>

<sup>528</sup> URL: <https://ria.ru/20210817/imam-1746088954.html>

<sup>529</sup> URL: <http://blagovest-info.ru/index.php?ss=2&s=3&id=96568>

<sup>530</sup> URL: <http://www.interfax-religion.ru/?act=news&div=7576809/21/2020>

in Kyiv, Dnipro, Rivne, Uzhhorod and Mykolaiv. In 2021, the Jewish feast of Hanukkah began on November 28 and lasted until the evening of December 6<sup>531</sup>. A hanukkah set in the western Ukrainian city of Rivne has been vandalized. Most of the ritual lamp was destroyed, as well as the switchboard that supplied them with electricity.<sup>532</sup>

Prohibited materials in social networks were distributed by two residents of the Turkestan region of **Kazakhstan**<sup>533</sup>.

In the wake of the 2019 Easter attacks in **Sri Lanka**, intolerance against Muslims has intensified, which is being intensified by Sinhalese Buddhist nationalists, using the attacks as an excuse.<sup>534</sup>

Children from a school in Solo on **the Indonesian island of Java** desecrated twelve graves at the Semoro Kembar cemetery. Christian graves were mutilated and damaged.<sup>535</sup> A church in Batang Uru East Village, Sumarorong district, Mamasa, in West Sulawesi province, Indonesia, was burned down by an unidentified person. Before setting fire to the building, the perpetrator desecrated the church premises and broke the windows of the church<sup>536</sup>. In West Kalimantan in Balai Harapan, a mob of 200 Muslims attacked an Ahmadi mosque, looting and setting fire to it. Previously, Ahmads received threats from radicals who were supported by local authorities.<sup>537</sup>

The **European Union** Agency for Fundamental Human Rights on November 9 published a report titled "Anti-Semitism: Overview of Anti-Semitic Incidents Recorded in the European Union in 2010-2020". The review notes that anti-Semitic incidents and hate crimes violate fundamental rights, especially the right to human dignity, the right to equal treatment and freedom of thought, conscience and religion. It can be seen from the figures and graphs that there are countries in which the number of reported anti-Semitic incidents has increased since 2010 (e.g. Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Poland), decreased (France, the Netherlands) or remained approximately the same. level (Belgium, Finland)<sup>538</sup>.

On October 4, 2021, a meeting of the Council for Interfaith Relations was held at the **Crimean** Federal University, dedicated to countering the ideology of terrorism and religious extremism<sup>539</sup>.

<sup>531</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/84597-vandaly-prodolzhajut-atakovaty-iudejskije-meno-ry-po-vsej-strane>

<sup>532</sup> URL: <https://www.7kanal.co.il/>

<sup>533</sup> URL: [https://www.inform.kz/ru/zapreschennye-materialy-v-socsetyah-rasprostranyali-dvoe-turkestancev\\_a3846618](https://www.inform.kz/ru/zapreschennye-materialy-v-socsetyah-rasprostranyali-dvoe-turkestancev_a3846618)

<sup>534</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/easter-attacks-increased-hostility-to-muslims-in-sri-lanka/9462910/20/21>

<sup>535</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/06/24/schoolchildren-vandalize-christian-graves-central-java/>

<sup>536</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/06/30/church-burned-west-sulawesi-indonesia/>

<sup>537</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/indonesian-police-arrest-10-over-ahmadi-mosque-attack/9403107.09.2021>

<sup>538</sup> URL: <https://jewishnews.com.ua/society/opublikovan-otchyot-ob-antisemitskix-inciden-tax-v-es-za-2010-2020-goda>

<sup>539</sup> URL: <https://cfuv.ru/news/studenty-i-prepodavately-kfu-protiv-ideologii-terrorizma-i-ehkstremitizma>

## 4. Vandalism and destruction and seizure of religious objects and monuments

On August 17, 2020, in **Pakistan**, armed men occupied a Christian cemetery in the village of Bugari (Punjab province). Many graves and Christian symbols were desecrated<sup>540</sup>. On July 7 in Pakistan, Christian Amjad Masih, released after a prison term, was attacked by three radicals.<sup>541</sup> Members of the radical Muslim organization Khatm-e-Nabuwat, which opposes any relaxation of the blasphemy law in Pakistan, destroyed the dome and minaret of the Ahmadi mosque in the village of Garmola Wirkan in Gujranwala, and desecrated a sacred inscription. The Ahmadi Muslim community is on the brink of extinction in Pakistan despite being a branch of Islam. Its representatives are exposed to open death threats<sup>542</sup>. In Pakistan in April 2021, extremists attacked an ancient Hindu temple<sup>543</sup>. In June 2021, armed extremists attacked a village church in Pakistan. The attackers also partially damaged the main gate of the church, several windows and some pieces of furniture.<sup>544</sup> An angry mob destroyed a Hindu temple in the Pakistani province of Punjab. The reason for this was the release of an eight-year-old Hindu child accused of “blasphemy” by the radicals. The authorities of the city of Rahimyar Khan were forced to call in the military to protect the Hindus from the radicals who attacked them. Dozens of men broke into the temple and smashed the doors, smashed the windows and destroyed statues of Hindu deities. Earlier, a local imam accused an eight-year-old Hindu boy of “blasphemy”, which he considered urinating outside the walls of a madrasa library. The child was taken into custody. However, the court later ordered his release.<sup>545</sup> A group of radicals shot at a Christian church and neighboring houses of parishioners with machine guns, while at least four Christians were injured. The attack took place in the Shamsabad section of the Sherakot district in Lahore<sup>546</sup>. There is an increase in crimes against Ahmadi believers in Pakistan. There are 4 million Ahmadis living in the country. The predominantly Muslim population of Pakistan is 220 million people. In 1974, an amendment to the Constitution was introduced declaring Ahmadis as non-Muslims, and in 1984 a decree came into force, according to which Ahmadis do not have the right to call themselves Muslims. The number of tombstone desecrations in Pakistan has skyrocketed

<sup>540</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/08/20/christian-graveyard-pakistan-desecrated-occupied-armed-men/20.08.2020>

<sup>541</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/07/21/youhanabad-prisoner-brutally-assaulted-release-prison/07/21/2020>

<sup>542</sup> URL: <https://bitterwinter.org/pakistan-khatam-e-nabuwat-demolishes-ahmadi-mosque-with-police-help/23.02.2021>

<sup>543</sup> URL: <https://bitterwinter.org/pakistan-100-year-old-hindu-temple-attacked-in-rawalpindi/04/06/2021>

<sup>544</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/06/22/armed-assailants-attack-village-church-pakistan/>

<sup>545</sup> URL: <https://www.sedmitza.ru/text/10026637.html>

<sup>546</sup> URL: <https://sedmitza.ru/text/10038277.html>



due to the use of anti-Ahmadis laws by extremist political parties. In 2020 alone, 164 tombstones of Ahmadis were desecrated. These statistics include cases where the bodies of Ahmadis were exhumed after burial and disposed of in an unknown way.<sup>547</sup>

Radical Hindus are destroying Christian temples in **India**. On June 12, unidentified people set fire to a Christian church in Tamil Nadu<sup>548</sup> and arson of a Christian church in Wailur (Tamil Nadu)<sup>549</sup>. A mob of about 150 Hindu extremists attacked and destroyed a church building under construction in the village of Bodoguda, Odisha<sup>550</sup>. On November 28, in Morapai (West Bengal), an attack was made on the Catholic parish of the Sacred Heart<sup>551</sup>. On May 17, 2021, the government of Uttar Pradesh demolished the Gharib Nawaz al-Marouf Mosque, built over a century ago. Bulldozers under police guard destroyed the building, and then the debris was dumped into a nearby river.<sup>552</sup> A small house church in the Indian state of Chhattisgarh was attacked and destroyed by a mob of radical Hindu nationalists.<sup>553</sup> A house church in South India has been attacked by a mob of radical Hindu nationalists. Worshipers were pelted with rocks and chairs as radicals attempted to break through police called to the scene to protect the church<sup>554</sup>. In India, a statue of Christ the Redeemer is destroyed as a result of an attack by vandals during the celebration of Christmas, December 25, 2021, in the Indian state of Haryana. A church in Ambala in the Indian state of Haryana was attacked.<sup>555</sup>

The authorities of **Nepal** at the beginning of 2021 demolished the building of a Christian church in the city of Nepalganj, seizing a plot of land under the church<sup>556</sup>.

In the **Philippines**, on the eve of the beginning of Lenten services in the state of Basilan (with a predominance of the Muslim population), vandals desecrated several Catholic chapels - icons, statues and crosses were damaged<sup>557</sup>.

In **Sudan**, the temple of the Sudanese Church of Christ in the village of Tambula, Al Jazeera state, southeast of Khartoum, was set on fire<sup>558</sup>.

<sup>547</sup> URL: <https://www.uscirf.gov/publication/destruction-cemeteries-factsheet>

<sup>548</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/06/15/church-india-set-fire-suspected-radical-hindu-nationalist/06/15/2020>

<sup>549</sup> URL: <https://vomcanada.com/in-2020-06-25.htm06/25/2020>

<sup>550</sup> URL: <https://barnabasfund.org/news/hindu-extremists-destroy-church-under-construction/>

<sup>551</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/12/16/christian-leaders-india-concerned-lack-arrests-following-church-vandalism/16/12/2020>

<sup>552</sup> URL: <https://islamnews.ru/news-vlasti-snesli-istoricheskuyu-mechet-vopreki-postanovleniyu-suda>

<sup>553</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/07/20/pastor-arrested-indias-chhattisgarh-state-following-false-forced-conversion-accusation/>

<sup>554</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/11/19/district-administration-india-issues-illegal-ban-christian-gatherings/>

<sup>555</sup> URL: <https://www.sedmitza.ru/text/10075955.html>

<sup>556</sup> URL: <http://barnabasfund.ru/ru/vlasti-nepala-snesli-cerkov-a-sosednij-hram-induistov-ne-tronuli/>

<sup>557</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/02/22/vandalism-catholic-churches-basilan-province-lenten-season/24.02.2021>

<sup>558</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/77807-v-nigerii-i-sudane-islamisty-sozhgli-i-razrushili-katolicheskije-khramy24.02.2021>



In January 2021, five churches and three Christian homes were burned down in a shocking terrorist attack in western Kenya<sup>559</sup>.

In the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, unidentified individuals desecrated several churches. Among the temples attacked are the Cathedral of Saint-Jean-Baptiste-de-Bonzola in Mbujimayi, the parishes of Saint-Aman, Saint-Bernadette in Nkolongo, Saint-Vincent de Paul in Nkouady, Christ the King in Kanzance and others<sup>560</sup>.

The attempts of Jewish radicals in **Israel** to oust the presence of Christianity and Islam from this country do not stop. In February 2021 members of an Israeli extremist organization damaged the gates of the Romanian Orthodox Church in Jerusalem, trying to knock out the lock and smash the security camera<sup>561</sup>. In the same month, in Jerusalem, a group of Israeli settlers, led by former Knesset member Moshe Feigin, staged a provocation by defiantly marching under the protection of Israeli soldiers through the territory of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, which is significant for Muslims around the world, located on the site of the Temple of Jerusalem burned in 70 AD<sup>562</sup>. Vandals broke and stole an iron cross embedded in an open basalt altar opposite the Church of the Multiplication of Loaves and Fishes in Tabgha, which was used for Catholic masses.<sup>563</sup> December 30 at the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in honor of St. righteous Tabitha in Tel Aviv-Yafo, an act of vandalism was committed by an undefined person: several graves of a Christian Orthodox cemetery located on the territory of a Russian church were desecrated. In the daytime, an unknown young man, who covered his face with a hood and mask, entered the courtyard from the direction of the Israeli school located in the neighborhood, and knocked down and then broke several marble crosses that stood on tombstones. The act of atrocity was captured on a surveillance camera. The Russian Spiritual Mission in Jerusalem appealed to the police with a demand to find and punish the intruder<sup>564</sup>.

In **Ukraine**, on June 3, 2020, representatives of the OCU and members of the “Right Sector” tried to seize the temporary temple of the UOC in the village of Zemlyanne (Sumy oblast),<sup>565</sup>. On June 7, in the urban-type settlement of Yasinia (Zakarpattia oblast), supporters of the OCU blocked access to the chapel for the parishioners and the priest of the UOC<sup>566</sup>. On the night of August 15, in Zolochiv (Lviv oblast), OCU supporters committed

<sup>559</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/06/09/kenyas-resilient-church-surviving-flames-hatred/>

<sup>560</sup> URL: <https://www.sedmitza.ru/text/10026342.html>

<sup>561</sup> URL: <https://newsbeezzer.com/romaniaeng/the-romanian-orthodox-church-in-jerusalem-was-allegedly-destroyed-by-a-suspected-extremist-the-reaction-of-bor-and-patriarch-theophilus-iii/02/11/2021>

<sup>562</sup> URL: <https://en.nn.najah.edu/news/palestine/2021/02/14/4849/20.02.2021>

<sup>563</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/82228-vandalny-oskvernili-katolicheskij-khram-umnozhenija-khlebov-i-ryb-na-svyatoj-zemle>

<sup>564</sup> URL: <https://rusdm.ru/news/2398>

<sup>565</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/71897-v-sele-zemlyanoje-kliiriki-pcu-i-pravyj-sektor-popytalis-zahvatity-khram-upc06/03/2020>

<sup>566</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/71995-na-zakarpatyje-rejdery-pcu-perekryli-obshhine-upc-dostup-k-chasovne06/08/2020>

an act of vandalism against a children's store owned by a parishioner of the UOC<sup>567</sup>. On August 14, in the village of Mnishin (Rivne oblast), supporters of the OCU did not let believers of the UOC into the local church<sup>568</sup>. On July 26, supporters of the OCU, with the help of the police, seized the UOC church in Novozhivotiv (Vinnytsia oblast)<sup>569</sup>. In Zolochiv (Lviv oblast), OCU supporters and nationalists demanded the UOC community to leave the city<sup>570</sup>. Supporters of the OCU carried out the seizure of the temple of the UOC in the village of Bilovezhi Pershi (Chernihiv region)<sup>571</sup>. On November 8, supporters of the OCU seized St. Michael's Church of the UOC in the village of Bilychi (Volyn oblast)<sup>572</sup>. On August 6, in Zolochiv, about 20 radicals destroyed the fence of the house of the UOC clergyman, priest Maxim Yenko<sup>573</sup>. In Kyiv vandals threw stones at the icon of Blessed Xenia of Petersburg<sup>574</sup>. In Zolochiv (Lviv oblast), vandals put insulting inscriptions on the house of a UOC cleric<sup>575</sup>. On the night of October 14, unidentified people desecrated the temples of the UOC in Pysarivka and Khotyn (Sumy oblast)<sup>576</sup>. On November 27, vandals damaged an icon and a memorial plaque in the Zaporizhzhia oblast<sup>577</sup>. In early 2021 attackers robbed and desecrated the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral of the UOC in Melitopol. Robbers entered the church through the bell tower and broke the doors. Thieves broke into the altar through the Royal Doors. The collection boxes with money from believers were stolen from the cathedral<sup>578</sup>. In February 2021, supporters of the OCU threw stones at the temple of the Ukrainian Church in Chernihiv oblast, the attackers smashed the icon over the gate, smashed the glass in the temple with stones and destroyed street lighting<sup>579</sup>. In Ukraine, supporters of the OCU seized the Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in

<sup>567</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/73851-v-zolocheve-atakovali-detskij-magazin-prinadlezhashhij-prihozhnaninu-upc08/15/2020>

<sup>568</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/73844-v-mnishine-aktivisty-ne-pustili-verujushhij-upc-v-svoj-khram08/14/2020>

<sup>569</sup> URL: <https://ukraina.ru/news/20200727/1028364694.html07/27/2020>

<sup>570</sup> URL: <https://korr.com.ua/news/item/30590-v-zolocheve-sotni-lyudej-v-prisutstvii-vlasti-okruzhili-dom-svyashchennika-upts-s-trebovaniem-prekratit-bogoslužheniya-i-molityv.html07/15/2020>

<sup>571</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/74745-adepty-pcu-zahvatili-vosstanovlennij-silami-upc-khram-v-belovezhah09/26/2020>

<sup>572</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/75735-aktivisty-pcu-zahvatili-opechatannyj-khram-upc-v-belichah11/11/2020>

<sup>573</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/73698-v-zolocheve-bojeviki-v-maskah-razgromili-ogradu-doma-svyashchennika-upc06.08.2020>

<sup>574</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/73278-vandaly-zabrosali-kamnyami-ikonu-blazhennoj-ksenii-peterburgskoj-na-khrame-upc20.07.2020>

<sup>575</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/73045-dom-klirika-upc-v-zolocheve-raspisali-oskorblenijami-i-nacistskoj-simvolikoju07/13/2020>

<sup>576</sup> URL: <https://news.church.ua/2020/10/15/v-sumskoj-eparxii-vandaly-oskvernili-dva-xrama/?lang=ru15.10.2020>

<sup>577</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/76117-v-zaporozhyje-vandaly-povredili-ikonu-i-memorialnyuju-dosku11/27/2020>

<sup>578</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/77554-v-melitopole-ograbili-kafedralnyj-sobor-upc>

<sup>579</sup> URL: <https://news.church.ua/2021/02/15/u-seli-parafijivka-na-chernigvshhini-zversheno-akt-vandalizmu-nad-xramom-nizhinskoji-jeparxiji/>

the village of Priputni, Ichnia raion, Chernihiv region<sup>580</sup>. In Ukraine raiders from the OCU seized the temple of the canonical Church. Supporters of the OCU cut the locks on the Assumption Church of the UOC in the village of Navoz, Volyn oblast, and entered the church. The seizure of the Assumption Church occurred after the head of the Volyn Regional State Administration Yuriy Pohuliaiko illegally re-registered the UOC community in the OCU on October 5, 2021<sup>581</sup>. In the Vinnytsia region of Ukraine, supporters of the OCU tried to storm the church of the canonical Church in the village of Novozhivotiv that they had previously sealed<sup>582</sup>.

**Azerbaijan** gained control over part of Nagorno-Karabakh as a result of the 44-day war in the fall of 2020 uses tombstones from Armenian cemeteries as building material, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Artsakh David Babayan said. According to him, Azerbaijan continues to destroy and destroy Armenian Christian heritage sites, including cemeteries and churches, in an effort to destroy evidence of Armenian culture and identity. Cemeteries in Hadrut have been destroyed, as seen on satellite imagery. Current reports indicate that these tombstones are used as building material in the regions of Nagorno-Karabakh and especially for the construction of new roads.<sup>583</sup>. Honorary architect of Russia, professor at the Moscow Architectural Institute (MARChI) Nikita Shangin, visited Nagorno-Karabakh at the end of October 2021, having personally seen that Armenian monuments and cemeteries in the territories that have come under Azerbaijani control are being destroyed. Since it is quite easy to prove the fact of destruction with the help of modern technologies (using the satellites), the Azerbaijanis have adopted the policy of forming a connection between Azerbaijan and Caucasian Albania. As it is done in the case of the monastic complexes of Dadivank and Gandzasar, which Azerbaijan calls Albanian. Earlier it became known that the Azerbaijanis destroyed the Armenian church of Zoravor Surb Astvatsatsin in Mehakavan (Jabrail). As reported by the National Commission of Armenia for UNESCO, the Armenian church was completely destroyed after how it came under the control of the Azerbaijanis. The same church was vandalized during the fighting. In particular, on November 16, 2020, Azerbaijani servicemen defiled and partially destroyed it - they demolished the cross installed on it. In early March, it became known that the Green Chapel ("Kanach Zham", St. Hovhannes Mkrtich) in Shushi was partially destroyed and the monument to Hovhannes (Ivan) Tevosyan was demolished. In addition during the war the temple of Ghazanchetsots (St. All-Savior) in Shushi was fired twice. Later, under the pretext of restoration, the bells were removed from the temple<sup>584</sup>.

<sup>580</sup> URL: <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5794870.html>

<sup>581</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/83232-v-sele-navoz-na-volyni-storonniki-pcu-zahvatili-khram-upc>

<sup>582</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/83234-v-novozhivotove-verujushhih-upc-uverili-chto-aktivisty-pcu-ne-vojdut-v-khram>

<sup>583</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/05/22/azerbaijan-uses-armenian-gravestones-build-roads/>

<sup>584</sup> URL: <https://ru.armeniasputnik.am/20211024/professor-shangin-prizyvaet-armyan-proti-vostoyat-chudesam-vandalizma-v-karabakhe-34580058.html>

The Armenian Church announced the desecration of the Cathedral of the Holy Christ the All-Savior in the city of Shushi, Nagorno-Karabakh. "It was painful for us to learn that on the night of November 9-10, after the agreement on a ceasefire and hostilities in Artsakh, signed between the leaders of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia, the Azerbaijanis, who invaded the city of Shushi in Artsakh, desecrated the Cathedral of Surb Amenaprkich Ghazanchetsots (St. Christ the All-Savior), making their marks on the outer and inner walls of the church," reads the statement of the Department of Interchurch Relations of the Mother See of Etchmiadzin, which was published on November 14, 2020. It also notes that what happened is "open vandalism and a manifestation of intolerance." "We strongly condemn what happened," church representatives stressed.<sup>585</sup>

At the end of 2019, the majority of parliament supporting the President of Montenegro, Milo Djukanovic, adopted the scandalous "Law on freedom of religion and beliefs and the legal status of religious associations", which provided for the seizure of more than 650 religious objects from the Serbian Orthodox Church, after which attacks on these churches and church houses acquired massive character. On June 27, 2020, in Montenegro, in Podgorica, nationalists attacked the house of believers of the SOC<sup>586</sup>. The Legal Council of the Metropolitanate of Montenegro and the Littoral of the SOC declared the illegality of the ban of the Montenegrin authorities on mass gatherings<sup>587</sup>. Demolished pilgrimage house on the territory of the monastery of St. Basil near the city of Ulcinj<sup>588</sup>. On the night of September 2, in the city of Bijelo-Pole, unidentified persons desecrated the Church of the SOC<sup>589</sup>. On April 15, 2021, in the city of Cetinje in Montenegro, a group of nationalists attacked the Theological Seminary of St. Peter of Cetinje of the Serbian Orthodox Church<sup>590</sup>.

The Serbian enclave of **Kosovo and Metohija**, which is actually controlled by the Albanian authorities of the self-proclaimed Kosovo, has dozens of Serbian churches on its territory, which were constantly attacked by the Albanians. On the night of September 15, 2020, unidentified persons desecrated and robbed the Church of the Intercession of the Most Holy Theotokos in the village of Babin-Most<sup>591</sup>. Two more Serbian Orthodox churches in Kosovo and Metohija were attacked in early 2021. In the village

<sup>585</sup> URL: <https://lenta.ru/news/2020/11/14/oskvernili/>

<sup>586</sup> URL: <https://mitropolija.com/2020/06/28/napad-na-porodicu-rakocevic-u-podgorici-uz-poklike-smrt-srbima/06/28/2020>

<sup>587</sup> URL: <https://mitropolija.com/2020/06/17/pravni-savjet-mcp-ministarstvo-zdravlja-prekoracilo-svoja-zakonska-ovlasenja/06/17/2020>

<sup>588</sup> URL: <https://mitropolija.com/2020/06/10/princ-filip-prestanite-sa-progonom-spc-u-crnoj-gori-i-represalijama-nad-svestenstvom-i-monastvom/06/10/2020>

<sup>589</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/74289-v-chernogorii-oskvernili-pravoslavnyj-khram-cerkovy-obvinyajet-uhodyashuju-vlasty03.09.2020>

<sup>590</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/79026-v-chernogorii-nacionalisty-atakovali-seminariju-serbskoj-cerkvi>

<sup>591</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/74544-v-kosovo-ograbili-i-oskvernili-khram-serbskoj-pravoslavnoj-cerkvi17.09.2020>

of Drajkovce, unknown people entered the church of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste and stole money, and the entrance doors were broken at the church of St. Demetrius in Donja Bitinji<sup>592</sup>. The Church of the Beheading of st. John the Baptist near the village of Samodreja in Kosovo has been turned into a garbage dump and a public toilet. Dozens of other relics of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Kosovo and Metohija were also devastated and desecrated.<sup>593</sup> On May 9, 2021, vandals threw stones at the Church of St. Paraskevi in the village of Vitina, and on May 6, in the village of Klokot, unknown persons tried to remove the church flag from the bell tower. In the village of Partesh earlier this year, the Church of the Holy Trinity was robbed. In the protected area of the Church of the Holy Mother of God in Lipljan, on May 10, a window on a 14th-century church was broken with stones.<sup>594</sup> Unidentified people stole the flag of the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) from the gates of the Gracanica Orthodox Monastery in Kosovo. Pictures of masked people defiling the church banner with Albanian flags appeared on social networks.<sup>595</sup> Residents of the multi-ethnic village of Kisnica, near a Serbian monastery and enclave of Gracanica near Pristina, discovered on Sunday that eight Serbian tombstones in the local cemetery were broken and toppled, fragments scattered<sup>596</sup>.

In the **United States**, in the analyzed year and a half, acts of vandalism against Christian shrines were often recorded. Throughout the period, Catholic churches and statues throughout the United States were subject to arson and acts of desecration. On June 20, 2020, a crowd of protesters toppled a statue of a Catholic saint in Los Angeles.<sup>597</sup> On June 22, a protester desecrated the graves of Catholic monks<sup>598</sup>. In Portland, Black Lives Matter activists burned dozens of Bibles because they allegedly contain “racism”<sup>599</sup>. Black Lives Matter activists decapitated Jesus Christ statue at St. Patrick’s Church in El Paso, Texas<sup>600</sup>. On July 21, vandals desecrated a statue of the Virgin Mary in Dorchester for the second time in a month.<sup>601</sup> On August 20, vandals decapitated a statue of the Virgin Mary in California.<sup>602</sup>, which was just one example of a series of attacks on statues of the Mother of God<sup>603</sup>.

<sup>592</sup> URL: <http://blagovest-info.ru/index.php?ss=2&s=3&id=93582>

<sup>593</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/79053-v-kosovo-albancy-prevratili-pravoslavnyj-khram-v-svalku-musora-i-tualet>

<sup>594</sup> URL: <https://regnum.ru/news/3266268.html>

<sup>595</sup> URL: <https://ria.ru/20210701/flag-1739374173.html>

<sup>596</sup> URL: <http://blagovest-info.ru/index.php?ss=2&s=3&id=98274>

<sup>597</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/72386-v-los-andzhelese-tolpa-svergla-pamyatnik-katolicheskomu-svyatomu06/22/2020>

<sup>598</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/72475-v-ssha-razrisovali-svastikami-mogily-katolicheskikh-monahov06/25/2020>

<sup>599</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/73637-v-ssha-aktivisty-black-lives-matter-sozhgli-desyatki-biblij03.08.2020>

<sup>600</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/74703-v-ssha-obezglavili-statuju-khrista-v-khrame-jepiskop-kotorogo-podderzhivajet-blm09/25/2020>

<sup>601</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/73355-v-ssha-vo-vtoroj-raz-oskvernili-odnu-i-tu-zhe-statuju-bogorodicy07/22/2020>

<sup>602</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/73987-v-ssha-vandaly-obezglavili-statuju-devy-marii20.08.2020>

<sup>603</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/73169->

In San Antonio (Texas), an unknown desecrated a crucifix in an attack on a Catholic seminary<sup>604</sup>. April 20, 2021 in Minneapolis, the Catholic Church of the Heart of Jesus burned down, being set on fire by black activists. The church was 10 minutes from the place where George Floyd died<sup>605</sup>. Vandals broke into a Catholic parish in Massachusetts and decapitated a statue of Christ. A Catholic church in Waltham, about 10 miles west of Boston, was attacked.<sup>606</sup>. In the Catholic Church of St. Thomas More in Narragansett (Rhode Island, Washington District), unidentified persons beat off the hand of the statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This act of vandalism comes just a week after another statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was vandalized in Waltham, Massachusetts, just an hour from Narragansett, where the assailants knocked off both arms of the statue.<sup>607</sup>.

On July 15, 2020, two vandals desecrated a statue of Jesus Christ in Alberta, **Canada**.<sup>608</sup>.

In **Australia** unidentified persons decapitated the statue of St. Francis at the Catholic church<sup>609</sup>.

In early 2021, feminists broke into the doors of a temple in the **Mexican** city of Oaxaca, smashed a statue of the Apostle Thaddeus and other interior elements. Feminists broke glass cases, windows, benches, a confessional<sup>610</sup>.

In Bogota, **Colombia**, in March 2021, a group of radical feminists set fire to the entrance to the Catholic Church of St. Francis. Another Catholic church was desecrated in the city of Ibagué<sup>611</sup>.

On November 9, 2020, in the city of Bochum, **Germany**, unidentified people destroyed a Jewish exhibition in memory of the murdered Jews.<sup>612</sup>.

In October 2020, the convent of the RCC in the province of Trapani, **Italy**, was attacked by a migrant from North Africa<sup>613</sup>.

On October 18, 2020, in the British capital **London**, a man, shouting insults, threw down a cross from a Baptist church<sup>614</sup>. A Scottish Catholic

<sup>604</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/74863-v-ssha-atakovali-katolicheskiju-seminariju-i-nadrugalisij-nad-raspyatijem02.10.2020>

<sup>605</sup> URL: <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/minneapolis-church-goes-up-in-flames-as-anti-chauvin-protests-roil-outside-nearby-courthouse>

<sup>606</sup> URL: <http://blagovest-info.ru/index.php?ss=2&s=3&id=94464>

<sup>607</sup> URL: <https://sedmitza.ru/text/10002199.html>

<sup>608</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/73200-v-kanade-vandaly-oskvernili-statuju-khrista07/17/2020>

<sup>609</sup> URL: <https://www.vaticannews.va/ru/church/news/2020-08/avstralia-akt-vandalizma-v-katolicheskome-prihode.html08/10/2020>

<sup>610</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/78072-v-meksike-vooruzhennyje-palkami-feministki-vlomilis-v-khram-i-ustroili-pogrom>

<sup>611</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/78230-v-stolice-kolumbii-storonnicy-abortov-podozhgli-vkhod-v-cerkovy03/17/2021>

<sup>612</sup> URL: <https://www.dw.com/en/german-olympics-group-condemns-vandalism-of-jewish-memorial/a-5558349011/13/2020>

<sup>613</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/74964-v-italii-migrant-s-krikom-allah-akbar-napal-na-katolicheskij-monastyry06.10.2020>

<sup>614</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/75264-v-londone-arestovan-vandal-sbrosivshij-krest-s-baptistskoj-cerkvi19.10.2020>

priest fought off a bottle-armed thug with a chair after he was attacked during morning prayers at Edinburgh Cathedral on July 26, 2021<sup>615</sup>.

In 2021, vandals continue to attack Jewish cemeteries. At least 10 matzevot were overthrown in the north of **Ireland**<sup>616</sup>.

On the night of October 11, in the Nicosia region (**Northern Cyprus**), an act of vandalism was committed against the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Icons and crosses defiled<sup>617</sup>.

In July 2020, a man broke into an Armenian Orthodox church in **Turkey** and recited the Islamic call to prayer.<sup>618</sup> Christian cemetery desecrated in Ankara<sup>619</sup>. Sumela Christian monastery reopened in Trabzon attacked by vandals<sup>620</sup>. Vandals looted and damaged a 19th-century Orthodox parish near the city of Samsun<sup>621</sup>.

In order to probe public opinion on the eve of the decision on St. Sophia, provocative appeals were initiated in the Islamic environment. In Turkey, a well-known politician proposed to paint over the face of an angel-seraphim on the dome of Hagia Sophia<sup>622</sup>. On July 8, a collection of citizens' signatures was launched in Turkey in support of the idea of turning Hagia Sophia into a mosque.<sup>623</sup> At the same time, the Minister of Justice of Turkey called for the speedy transformation of the Cathedral into a mosque.<sup>624</sup> However, such a radical idea was not supported by the traditional and respected Islamic communities in the world. Egypt's highest Islamic body, Dar al-Ifta, condemned Turkey's intention to turn Hagia Sophia into a mosque<sup>625</sup>.

In July 2020, it became obvious that the Turkish authorities did not intend to respond to the protests of the public of other countries and international organizations. On July 2, 2020, the Turkish Supreme Court allowed the conversion of Hagia Sophia into a mosque<sup>626</sup>. This decision itself provoked radicals in Turkey to aggression against Christian churches.

<sup>615</sup> URL: <https://sedmitza.ru/text/10024303.html>

<sup>616</sup> URL: <https://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/2021-09/2021%20Factsheet%20-%20Deconstruction%20of%20Cemeteries.pdf>

<sup>617</sup> URL: <https://mitropolija.com/2020/10/13/vandali-premazivali-ikone-u-kiparskoj-crkvi-naopakim-krstovima-i-zvezdama-petokrakama/10/13/2020>

<sup>618</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/07/05/turkish-man-breaks-church-recite-adhan/07/05/2020>

<sup>619</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/08/14/armenian-christian-cemetery-desecrated/08/14/2020>

<sup>620</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/08/12/sumela-monastery-vandalized-reopening/08/12/2020>

<sup>621</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/10/06/treasure-hunters-destroy-historic-church/06.10.2020>

<sup>622</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/72202-v-turcii-politik-predlozhit-zakrasity-lik-serafimana-kupole-svyatoj-sofii05/16/2020>

<sup>623</sup> URL: <https://www.sabah.com.tr/yasam/2020/07/08/tugva-ayasofya-imza-kampanyasi-2020-tugva-ayasofya-dijital-hali-dokumasi-nasil-ve-nereden-yapilir07/08/2020>

<sup>624</sup> URL: <http://www.interfax-religion.ru/?act=news&div=7513306/16/2020>

<sup>625</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/72135-musulymane-jegipta-osudili-turciji-za-popytki-sdelaty-iz-svyatoj-sofii-mechety06/13/2020>

<sup>626</sup> URL: <http://www.interfax-religion.ru/?act=news&div=7523207/02/2020>



On July 10, 2020, the Turkish State Council reversed the 1934 decision to turn Hagia Sophia into a museum and ruled that the building could be used as a mosque. On July 24, 2020, for the first time in 86 years, a Friday prayer was held in Hagia Sophia, in which the head of Turkey, Erdogan himself, took part<sup>627</sup>. This decision has become a “litmus test” of radicalism among Islamic communities. While traditional and highly educated Muslims condemned the decision, ignorant radicals held rallies of support. On August 3, 2020, the Grand Mufti of Egypt, Shauki Alam, declared the inadmissibility of turning the Hagia Sophia into a mosque<sup>628</sup>. At the same time, Taliban activists<sup>629</sup> and Hamas supporters unfurled their flags at Hagia Sophia<sup>630</sup>. Even in Turkey, there were intellectuals who declared the perniciousness of the decision. The chairman of the board of the Turkish Art History Association, Sherif Yashar, said about the threat to the safety of Christian shrines in the Hagia Sophia<sup>631</sup>. Indeed, the unique frescoes not only became inaccessible for viewing, but were also threatened with destruction as a result of the refusal to support the microclimate and the installation of powerful speakers for broadcasting religious services. Soon, the President of Turkey gave an order to turn the temple of the Orthodox Chora monastery into a mosque<sup>632</sup>. At the same time, vandals looted and damaged a 19th-century Orthodox parish near the city of Samsun (Turkey)<sup>633</sup>. A little earlier it became known that in Turkey the authorities use the Armenian Church as a warehouse<sup>634</sup>. Christian cemetery desecrated in Ankara, Turkey<sup>635</sup>. On September 10, 2020, it became known that a belonged to the Patriarchate of Constantinople hospital on the island of Halki will be turned into an Islamic center in Turkey<sup>636</sup>. At the same time, in the city of Akbuk, unknown people illegally erected a wall at the entrance to the Orthodox chapel named after St. George<sup>637</sup>. Behind this wave of actions aimed at destroying the Christian past, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan expressed satisfaction with the transformation of Christian shrines into mosques<sup>638</sup>. Soon he announced that he would participate in the first namaz in the Orthodox Chora monastery.<sup>639</sup>

<sup>627</sup> URL: <https://www.vesti.ru/article/243291707/24/2020>

<sup>628</sup> URL: <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/899842307/18/2020>

<sup>629</sup> An organization banned in the Russian Federation.

<sup>630</sup> URL: <http://www.interfax-religion.ru/?act=news&div=7546803.08.2020>

<sup>631</sup> URL: <https://argumenti.ru/talks/2020/08/68039504.08.2020>

<sup>632</sup> URL: <http://www.interfax-religion.ru/?act=news&div=7556608/21/2020>

<sup>633</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/10/06/treasure-hunters-destroy-historic-church/06.10.2020>

<sup>634</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/07/19/armenian-church-turned-storage-facility/07/19/2020>

<sup>635</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/08/14/armenian-christian-cemetery-desecrated/08/14/2020>

<sup>636</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/74425-na-ostrove-khalki-bolynicu-zakrytoj-shkoly-fanara-prevratyat-v-islamskij-centr09/10/2020>

<sup>637</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/74537-v-turcii-nezakonno-zastroili-vkhod-v-istoricheskiju-pravoslavnuju-chasovnyu09/16/2020>

<sup>638</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/74985-erdogan-zajavil-chto-ajja-sofija-vernulasy-k-svojej-pervonachalnoj-identichnosti07.10.2020>

<sup>639</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/75172-erdogan-primet-uchastije-v-pervom-namaze-v-khrame-khora15.10.2020>



Another blatant act of disrespect for the shrines of Christianity was that on September 2, by order of the Turkish authorities in Bursa (the fourth largest city in Turkey after Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir), the Orthodox Church of St. George was demolished.<sup>640</sup> On November 14, UNESCO again expressed concern over the change in the status of Hagia Sophia<sup>641</sup>. The Turkish authorities in 2021 took a number of new actions against St. Sofia. In May 2021, the Turkish authorities decided to hang on the Hagia Sophia, turned into a mosque, an inscription with the words “There is no God but Allah.” Between the two minarets built during the Ottoman Empire, a Muslim banner was placed, made in the form of an LED inscription, with the words “There is no God but Allah”<sup>642</sup>. On May 13, 2021, thousands of Muslims took part in a joint prayer led by the Minister of Religious Affairs of Turkey, Ali Erbas, in the Hagia Sophia converted into a mosque. This is the first year that Eid al-Fitr was celebrated in the Hagia Sophia after the decision to turn the temple that served as a museum into a mosque. Ali Erbash leaned on a sword during prayer, which, according to Turkish ideas, is a symbol of conquest<sup>643</sup>. Pilgrims reported that Christian mosaics in the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul were unavailable for inspection, archpriest Nikolai Balashov, Deputy Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations (DECR) of the Moscow Patriarchate, said in July 2021<sup>644</sup>. St. Sophia began to be used for public events, in addition to religious ceremonies. Thus, the program for closing the summer courses of the Quran, launched on July 5, 2021 in Turkey under the leadership of the head of the Department of Religious Affairs, Ali Erbash, was held in August in the Hagia Sophia<sup>645</sup>. On December 24, on the eve of the Nativity of Christ, in the Turkish province of Edirne, the chairman of the Department of Religious Affairs of Turkey, Ali Erbash, opened the church of St. Sophia of Enez (XII century) turned into a mosque.<sup>646</sup>

On December 12, 2020, in the province of Utrecht, **the Netherlands**, unidentified persons attacked a mosque. On the same night, two synagogues in the same area were vandalized.<sup>647</sup>

On December 2, 2020, unidentified assailants desecrated a mosque in the commune of Bretigny-sur-Orge near Paris, France.<sup>648</sup>

On July 28, in the village of Dobrich (**Bosnia and Herzegovina**), nationalists left a threatening inscription near the Serbian church<sup>649</sup>.

<sup>640</sup> URL: <https://mitropolija.com/2020/09/04/srusena-crkva-svete-sofije-u-bursi/04.09.2020>

<sup>641</sup> URL: <https://news.barnabasfund.org/UNESCO-restates-concerns-over-Turkey-s-decision-to-change-Hagia-Sophia-into-mosque/11/30/2020>

<sup>642</sup> URL: <http://blagovest-info.ru/index.php?ss=2&s=3&id=94438>

<sup>643</sup> URL: <https://diyanet.gov.tr/ru->

<sup>644</sup> URL: <https://ria.ru/20210712/mozaiki-1740886658.html>

<sup>645</sup> URL: <https://diyanet.gov.tr/tr-TR/Kurumsal/Detay/32662>

<sup>646</sup> URL: <https://greekcitytimes.com/2021/12/26/turkey-turns-another-church-into-a-mosque-on-christmas-eve/>

<sup>647</sup> URL: <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/eu-affairs/mosque-in-netherlands-target-of-islamophobic-attack/amp13.12.2020>

<sup>648</sup> URL: <https://ria.ru/20201202/mechet-1587425227.html02.12.2020>

<sup>649</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/73532-v-bosnii-neizvestnyje-napisali-nacistskije-ugrozy-u-serbskogo-khrama07/29/2020>

In Manila, **Nicaragua**, an unidentified person threw an incendiary mixture at a Catholic cathedral<sup>650</sup>.

In Greece, there are regular attacks on Orthodox churches. Attacks and acts of vandalism are carried out by representatives of left-wing groups, who often smash statues and throw paint on churches, as well as illegal migrants. In the vicinity of Heraklion (Crete), St. prophet Elijah church was set on fire<sup>651</sup>. In Greece, in April 2021, two illegal migrants desecrated an Orthodox church-chapel and captured it on video<sup>652</sup>.

The **Myanmar** military attacked a church in Kaya state in June 2021. Artillery fire hit the church of St. Joseph in the city of Demoso, breaking windows and making holes in the walls of the church<sup>653</sup>. On September 14, after heavy fighting between the Burmese army (Tatmadaw) and local defense groups in the predominantly Christian Chin state of Myanmar, the Tatmadaw fired on a Baptist church in the village of Tantlang<sup>654</sup>. In the predominantly Christian state of Chin in Myanmar, during fighting between the army and local militias, supporters of the junta tried to burn down a Baptist church along with the houses of the population, but were unable to do so because of the onset of rain. After the failure the military destroyed the church to the ground<sup>655</sup>. After officials destroyed an Adventist Christian church under construction in the Bandarban district of **Bangladesh**, Catholics and Protestants went on the streets and began a demonstration in the form of a human chain demanding compensation for the damage and an end to the persecution of Christians.<sup>656</sup> Buddhist radicals attacked and destroyed a church in Bangladesh<sup>657</sup>.

<sup>650</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/73644-v-nikaragua-katolicheskij-sobor-podozhgli-koktejlem-molotova03.08.2020>

<sup>651</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/73821-pod-iraklionom-vandaly-podozhgli-khram-dve-ikony-bogorodicy-uceleli08/13/2020>

<sup>652</sup> URL: <https://greekcitytimes.com/2021/04/12/migrants-desecrating-church/>

<sup>653</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/06/02/another-church-attacked-burmese-military-eastern-myanmar/>

<sup>654</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/09/16/burmese-army-attacks-baptist-church-chin-state/>

<sup>655</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/10/19/myanmar-junta-destroys-chin-church-failing-set-ablaze/10/20/21>

<sup>656</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/christians-protest-after-church-demolition-in-bangladesh/9171103/11/2021>

<sup>657</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/08/02/church-bangladesh-demolished-twice-buddhist-radicals/>

## II. Activities of international and national structures in the field of religious freedom

### 1. International organizations and religious freedom

On March 4 and 5, 2021 in Geneva, at the 46th session of the UN Human Rights Council, a presentation and discussion of the report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, who has been Ahmed Shahid since 2016, took place online. The report was devoted to Islamophobia. The representative of the Russian Foreign Ministry, Dmitry Vorobyov, who participated in the meeting online, as well as other participants (except for the leadership of the Council), repeatedly tried to protest the approval of the report, since the decision to approve the report was announced by the chairman of the meeting after how she refused to listen to the opinion of the Russian side, as can be seen in the published video recording of the meeting<sup>658</sup>. The report is titled “Counteracting Islamophobia (hatred of Muslims) to eliminate discrimination and intolerance towards religion or beliefs.” The authors of the report sharply criticize the policies of a number of states that “restrict the rights of Muslims to freedom of belief and belief, restrict other fundamental rights of Muslims and do not ensure the security of Muslim communities and organizations.” In China, the authors see violations of the rights of Muslim Uighurs, and in the US, the government’s citizenship application program discriminates against Muslims in favor of immigrants from “Arab, Middle Eastern, and South Asian countries,” with officials using loyal Muslim immigrants as whistleblowers for disloyal applicants. Report’s author «call for more intergovernmental efforts to combat Islamophobia through partnerships across various UN organizations.»<sup>659</sup>.

**Human rights watch** in October 2021 called on the UN and the leadership of Bangladesh to protect Rohingya Muslims among Burmese refugees. This happened after a few days earlier the head of the Rohingya NGO Mohib Ulla was shot dead in one of the camps. Earlier, he repeatedly stated about incoming threats from radical Islamists, but the responsible persons did not attach any importance to them.<sup>660</sup>.

UN will appoint a Special Rapporteur to monitor human rights violations in Afghanistan. The Human Rights Council in Geneva adopted a resolution appointing a special rapporteur and a panel of experts to monitor human rights under Taliban rule. The Human Rights Council adopted a document signed in Geneva by 50 countries, according to which by March 2022 a special

<sup>658</sup> URL: <http://webtv.un.org/live-now/watch/id-sr-on-religion-contd-22nd-meeting-46th-regular-session-human-rights-council/6237407310001/?term=>

<sup>659</sup> URL: <https://sedmitza.ru/text/9978543.html>

<sup>660</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/rohingya-refugees-fear-for-lives-after-leaders-murder-in-bangladesh-camp/9443706.10.2021>

rapporteur will be appointed to monitor the observance of human rights in Afghanistan<sup>661</sup>.

Only by joining forces the international community can achieve stability in Afghanistan. UN Secretary-General António Guterres stated this when addressing the participants of the meeting on Afghanistan, which was held in Tehran in October 2021 at the initiative of the Iranian side. In addition to Iran itself, it was attended by representatives of China, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan<sup>662</sup>.

The fulfillment of international obligations by Ukraine became the subject of consideration of the 132nd session of the **UN Human Rights Committee**. On November 11, 2021, he published his decision, in which he expressed concern about reports of violations of the rights of believers of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. The UN Human Rights Committee has indicated that Ukraine, as a participating State, should, *inter alia*, “guarantee the effective exercise of freedom of religion or belief, including by ensuring that places of worship are protected from violence, intimidation and acts of vandalism” and “ensure careful and promptly investigate and punish all cases of violence.”<sup>663</sup>

In a UN resolution adopted in December 2021, Israel is recognized as an “occupying power” that has no right to impose its laws on the Holy City of Jerusalem, and the Temple Mount is only referred to by its Muslim name “Haram ash-Sharif”. The controversial resolution, which provoked particular outrage in Israel, was passed lightly by 129 votes to 11, while Israel, the United States, Canada and Australia opposed it<sup>664</sup>.

**European Union** appointed a special envoy for freedom of religion or belief. In early May 2021, the European Commission appointed Christos Stylianides as Special Envoy for the Protection of Freedom of Religion or Belief outside the European Union<sup>665</sup>.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet called on the Malian authorities to rectify the situation with the rights of religious minorities. She said that from January to June of this year, 617 human rights abuses and violence by armed groups, including 165 murders, were registered in the country. We are talking about “repeated attacks over the past six months” by the Jama’a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin group, which was created in the spring of 2017 and has close ties to al-Qaeda (banned in the Russian Federation), as well as about the actions grouping “Islamic State in the Greater Sahara”, which is a structure of the “Islamic State” (IS, banned in the Russian Federation).<sup>666</sup>

**United Nations Human Rights Council**(UNHRC) adopted a resolution calling for a decisive end to the serious human rights violations and violence

<sup>661</sup> URL: <https://rusplt.ru/abroad/oon-utverdila-spetsdokladchika-po-61601.html>

<sup>662</sup> URL: <https://www.un.org/ru/157026>

<sup>663</sup> URL: <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5861349.html>

<sup>664</sup> URL: <https://sedmitza.ru/text/10067257.html>

<sup>665</sup> URL: [https://ec.europa.eu/cyprus/news/20210505\\_1\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/cyprus/news/20210505_1_en)

<sup>666</sup> URL: <https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/11779129>

perpetrated by the Burmese military against the Rohingya minority. On the morning of July 12, the resolution was passed unanimously and called for peace and help for the Rohingya and other heavily persecuted minority groups. The Burmese military's systematic attacks on civilians, the use of torture and horrendous violence against children have been listed as particularly important human rights violations in the ongoing conflict with the Rohingya community. In February 2021, Myanmar's military, the Tatmadaw, successfully carried out a power grab in the country. Burmese military crimes are not limited to Rohingya Muslims<sup>667</sup>.

The President of the United States appointed Rashad Hussein as the first Muslim US Ambassador for International Religious Freedom. Hussain will take over a State Department seat that became vacant when former Kansas Gov. and U.S. Senator Sam Brownback stepped down after the Trump administration resigned.<sup>668</sup>

The Observatory of Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians in **Europe** (OIDAC) in its report compiled a list of European countries where Christians are most intolerant. In the report, OIDAC named five countries in which Christians most often face religious discrimination. The top five includes France, Germany, Spain, Sweden and the UK. The authors of the study analyzed the attitude towards Christians in the so-called "five worst" for the period 2019-2020. In their opinion, the trend is growing, and the European community should respond to this<sup>669</sup>.

**European Union** expressed concern over the rise in religious intolerance around the world on the occasion of the International Day of Remembrance for the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief, celebrated on 22 August<sup>670</sup>.

**Alliance to Defend International Freedom** spoke out along with other human rights activists against the exclusion by the US State Department of Nigeria from the list of countries violating religious freedom. Unlike in 2020, in 2021 Nigeria was not included in the lists of the Commission on International Religious Freedom of the State Department of the worst violators of religious freedom, and even in the list of countries of special supervision<sup>671</sup>.

At the initiative of **Jordanian** Prince Hassan bin Talal, more than 40 Christian and Muslim figures, experts and thinkers have signed a call for the protection of places of worship. The statement noted that it is unacceptable to use religion and religious symbols and shrines to justify violence, extremism and bloodshed.<sup>672</sup>

<sup>667</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/07/14/unhrc-urges-end-myanmars-rohingya-crisis/>

<sup>668</sup> URL: <https://islam.ru/news/2021-08-02/60750>

<sup>669</sup> URL: <https://www.sedmitza.ru/text/10071402.html>

<sup>670</sup> URL: <http://religiopolis.org/>

<sup>671</sup> URL: <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/249687/legal-group-joins-outcry-over-removal-of-nigeria-from-religious-freedom-watch-list11/24/21>

<sup>672</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/christian-muslim-leaders-launch-appeal-to-protect-places-of-worship/9484608.11.21>

**Christian Interfaith Advisory Committee (CIAC)** published a joint statement in support of Finnish Christians who uphold traditional Christian family values.

The statement expresses concern over the situation around Republican MP Päivi Räsänen, who has publicly declared her allegiance to traditional Christian principles and is under threat of prosecution and imprisonment as a result.

Päivi Räsänen quoted the words of the Apostle Paul from the Epistle to the Romans about people who “dishonour their own bodies”, and “For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.” (Rom. 1:24-27).

In this quotation, the authorities saw “a violation of the principle of equality and dignity of homosexuals.”

In addition, Päivi Räsänen is accused of “publicly expounding a Christian conservative view of marriage” and in 2004 published a 24-page booklet calling homosexuality a “sexual anomaly”<sup>673</sup>.

The **International Christian Concern** published a 2021 report naming Nigeria, Myanmar and India as the countries with the highest degree of persecution of Christians, with the Taliban and Boko Haram highlighted among the movements organizing the persecution.<sup>674</sup>

## 2. State policy towards believers and freedom of religion

In the United States, attempts by the authorities to humiliate the communities of certain religions are constantly recorded. A group of Californian families fought for a long time in the Court of Appeals for a fair representation of all religious traditions in school textbooks in California. In their opinion, Hinduism is covered too biased, after the refusal of the court, the initiative group filed a complaint with the Supreme Court<sup>675</sup>. Georgia MP Taylor Green has been a vocal critic of Jews in recent years. Her words and position were condemned by a number of American rabbis who called for her expulsion from Congress.<sup>676</sup> In the US, a long-term lawsuit continues between the Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago and its former employee Sandor Demkovich. In 2014, while working as a church musician, he was fired due to entering into a same-sex marriage. Demkovich filed a lawsuit against the diocese for causing harm to health (due to the stresses he experienced), in August 2020, the Court of Appeal satisfied Demkovich’s claim, seeing signs

<sup>673</sup> URL: <https://mospat.ru/ru/news/88387/>

<sup>674</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/initiatives/poy/>

<sup>675</sup> URL: <https://bitterwinter.org/us-supreme-court-asked-to-review-california-textbooks-disparaging-hinduism/24.02.2021>

<sup>676</sup> URL: <https://religionunplugged.com/news/2021/2/2/greene-rattles-jewish-communities05.02.2021>

of violation of labor laws in his case<sup>677</sup>. Muslim Imam Yousef Maisonet of Alabama accused five members of the state Department of Corrections, including a Protestant prison chaplain, of violating religious freedom standards. Previously, he had repeatedly tried to gain access to Muslim death row for himself in order to admonish them before execution.<sup>678</sup>

Decisive measures to combat extremists are being taken in **Bangladesh**. A court in that country in February 2021 ordered the execution by hanging of eight Muslim radicals who brutally stabbed a publisher in Dhaka in 2015 for distributing secularist literature.<sup>679</sup>

Despite the decision of the Supreme Court of Malaysia and the protests of international organizations, 1086 Burmese seeking protection from religious and national persecution were deported by warships back to Myanmar. Among them were Christians from Kachin, who were persecuted<sup>680</sup>. The Malaysian High Court, after a 13-year legal battle, allowed non-Muslims to use words in Arabic such as “God”, “House of God”, “Prayer”<sup>681</sup>.

**Sudanese** justice minister Nasrudin Abdulbari says apostasy law will be repealed<sup>682</sup>. Monitoring organizations praised the efforts of the Sudanese authorities to protect Christians<sup>683</sup>.

**Iraqi** Prime Minister Mustafa al-Qadimi urged Christians to return to the country<sup>684</sup>. Moqtada al-Sadr, leader of the Shia party in the Iraqi parliament, announced the start of a campaign to return property to Christians and Mandaeans that had been seized from them since 2003.<sup>685</sup> Iraq has adopted a five-year plan for the protection and promotion of human rights. New National Human Rights Action Plan launched with the support of the Office of the President and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq<sup>686</sup>. The Iraqi parliament passed the Yazidi Survivors Law to make amends to the Yazidi community in particular, as well as to other minority groups such as Christians affected by IS<sup>687</sup>. The Yazidi Affected Law provides for a monthly payment, the provision of land or a house, academic support, and access to psychosocial and medical services.<sup>688</sup>

<sup>677</sup> URL: <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/archdiocese-of-chicago-to-court-let-parishes-choose-their-staff-4906002/11/2021>

<sup>678</sup> URL: <https://bitterwinter.org/alabama-sued-for-excluding-imams-from-execution-chambers/02/11/2021>

<sup>679</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/eight-to-hang-for-murder-of-bangladeshi-publisher/9137802/11/2021>

<sup>680</sup> URL: <https://religionunplugged.com/news/2021/2/23/malaysia-deports-more-than-1000-myanmar-nationals-despite-high-court-order24.02.2021>

<sup>681</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/malaysian-christians-can-use-word-allah-after-court-ruling/9172503/11/2021>

<sup>682</sup> URL: <https://vomcanada.com/su-2020-07-16.htm07/16/2020>

<sup>683</sup> URL: <https://vom.com.au/sudan-christians-see-the-light-after-years-of-oppression-2/07/01/2020>

<sup>684</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/08/13/iraqi-pm-calls-return-christians/08/13/2020>

<sup>685</sup> URL: <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/world/news/2021-02/iraq-christians-expropriated-property-returned.html08.02.2021>

<sup>686</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/08/13/iraq-launches-5-year-human-rights-plan/>

<sup>687</sup> The organization is banned in the Russian Federation

<sup>688</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/11/10/iraqs-yazidi-survivor-law-requires-serve-victims/>

False accusations of violating the “blasphemy” law are practiced in **Pakistan** in order to settle personal scores. The accusations are highly inflammatory and could provoke mob lynching, vigilante killings and mass protests. However, the country’s authorities sometimes made timid attempts to ease the pressure of the law on religious minorities. On October 5, the Lahore High Court acquitted Christian Sawan Masih, who spent six years on death row after being falsely accused of “blasphemy”<sup>689</sup>. The Lahore High Court has released on bail Nadeem Masih, a youth who was arrested in 2018 after an angry mob turned him in to authorities after posting an “offensive” image of the Kaaba on Facebook. This is the first time that those convicted under the blasphemy law have been released from custody on bail.<sup>690</sup> Hafiz Muhammad Tahira Mehmood Ashrafi has become Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan’s assistant for interreligious affairs. In addition, a central clearing house has been set up to deal with cases of abuse of ‘blasphemy’ laws and any propaganda that is detrimental to interreligious relations in Pakistan.<sup>691</sup> A Pakistani Christian who spent more than four years in prison after being accused of “blasphemy” has been released on bail by the Lahore High Court.<sup>692</sup> Pakistani High Court acquitted Christian couple sentenced to death for ‘blasphemy’<sup>693</sup>. Government officials in Pakistan have opposed a bill that would criminalize forced conversions of Christians to Islam. For years, human rights activists and leaders of Pakistan’s minority religious communities have been asking the government to pass a law that would criminalize kidnapping, forced conversion and forced marriage.<sup>694</sup>

July 15, 2020 in **Egypt** abducted Christian Rania Abd El Misseh was returned to her family thanks to the actions of the police<sup>695</sup>. On October 19, the issuance of licenses to Christian churches resumed. 100 objects received official permission<sup>696</sup>. According to the Coptic bishop, the position of Christians in Egypt has improved somewhat under the current president, although many still consider this minority “second-rate citizens”, discriminate in many areas and are not allowed into power structures.<sup>697</sup> Bishop Julius, head of the Department of Social Affairs of the Coptic Church, and Nabil Makram

<sup>689</sup> URL: <https://news.barnabasfund.org/Pakistani-Christian-acquitted-of-blasphemy-after-six-years-on-death-row/06.10.2020>

<sup>690</sup> URL: <https://bitterwinter.org/pakistani-christian-accused-of-blasphemy-now-on-bail/04.03.2021>

<sup>691</sup> URL: <http://barnabasfund.ru/ru/po-slovam-novogo-pomoshhnika-imrana-khana-religioznye-menshinstva-v-pakistane-ne-javlajutsja-grazhdanami-vtorogo-sorta/>

<sup>692</sup> URL: <https://barnabasfund.org/news/young-pakistani-christian-charged-with-blasphemy-granted-bail-but-will-s/>

<sup>693</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/06/03/high-court-pakistan-acquits-christian-couple-death-row-blasphemy/>

<sup>694</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/09/18/clerics-pakistan-oppose-law-aimed-criminalizing-forced-conversions/>

<sup>695</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/07/21/kidnapped-christian-woman-returned/07/21/2020>

<sup>696</sup> URL: <https://news.barnabasfund.org/Egypt-grants-100-licences-as-registration-of-churches-resumes-after-Covid-break/22.10.2020>

<sup>697</sup> URL: <https://sedmitza.ru/text/10014722.html>



Abdel Shahid, Minister of Immigration and Foreign Affairs of Egypt, signed a memorandum of understanding, which reflects the intention to develop cooperation to improve the living conditions of the population of poor and remote villages<sup>698</sup>.

On November 18, 2021, a Russian religious scholar pointed out in an interview that international organizations, at the initiative of the United States, are ignoring problems with violations of freedom of religion in **Saudi Arabia**: “The US don’t make big pronouncements about actual prohibition on existing of every confession, except from own branch of Islam on the territory of the Saudi Arabia, because this kingdom is an influential ally of the United States”<sup>699</sup>.

On November 8, 2020, in India, the High Court of Bilaspur ordered the district government of Kondagaon (Chhattisgarh state) to ensure the safe return of Christians from three villages in the state to their homes<sup>700</sup>. Kerala authorities agree to restore the right of Catholic Church-run schools to employ teachers<sup>701</sup>. The state of Madhya Pradesh passed a law restricting religious freedom. Under the provisions of this law, “forced” religious conversion can result in a prison term of one to five years and a minimum fine of about \$350. If the convert was a minor, the prison term and fine could be doubled<sup>702</sup>. The state of Gujarat, controlled by the ruling BJP party, also intends to pass a law against proselytism, which carries penalties of up to 10 years in prison.<sup>703</sup> The Indian state of Gujarat passed an anti-missionary law that carries a prison sentence of 3 to 10 years and a maximum fine of \$6,800. Gujarat became the third state in India to formally pass a law banning missionary work<sup>704</sup>. The government of the Indian state of Karnataka, led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), on December 21, 2021, proposed a controversial law against conversion. In states that currently have similar anti-conversion laws, including Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, they are widely abused. Radical Hindu nationalists falsely accuse Christians of forcibly converting people to Christianity to justify persecution and attacks. Violence against Christians is often ignored by local police due to false

<sup>698</sup> URL: [http://fides.org/en/news/71145-AFRICA\\_EGYPT\\_Protocol\\_between\\_the\\_Coptic\\_Church\\_and\\_the\\_Egyptian\\_government\\_to\\_improve\\_living\\_conditions\\_in\\_rural\\_areas11/16/21](http://fides.org/en/news/71145-AFRICA_EGYPT_Protocol_between_the_Coptic_Church_and_the_Egyptian_government_to_improve_living_conditions_in_rural_areas11/16/21)

<sup>699</sup> URL: <https://riafan.ru/1556505-religioved-dvorkin-obyasnil-pochemu-gosdep-obvinil-rossiyu-v-pritesnenii-veruyushikh>

<sup>700</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/11/14/court-central-india-orders-authorities-protect-displaced-christians/11/14/2020>

<sup>701</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/christians-end-hunger-strike-after-indian-state-agrees-to-demands/9017205.11.2020>

<sup>702</sup> URL: <https://cruxnow.com/church-in-asia/2021/03/anti-conversion-law-in-in-india-a-ready-made-tool-to-target-christians-priest-says/>

<sup>703</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/03/29/another-state-india-considers-expanding-anti-conversion-law/03/30/2021>

<sup>704</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/indian-state-brings-in-anti-conversion-law/9198104/06/2021>

accusations of abuse.<sup>705</sup> According to local sources, the local government of Jabua district, located in the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh, has imposed a ban on Christian religious gatherings. A circular was circulated to the district authorities banning Christian gatherings at the direction of the VHP and other radical Hindu nationalist groups. As a result of the circular, more than 50 house churches in the Jabua area were not allowed to meet for worship on Sunday November 14, 2021<sup>706</sup>.

The return of the Taliban to power in Afghanistan has provided another excuse for Hindu supremacists to unleash a new wave of Islamophobia against the Muslim minority in India. Muslim politicians, writers, journalists, social media influencers and ordinary citizens have been the targets of a hate campaign launched by the country's right wing, including members of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). In the northeastern state of Assam, 15 Muslims, including Islamic scholars, a politician and a local journalist, were arrested for allegedly "supporting" the Taliban in social media posts and charged under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, or UAPA, a draconian anti-government act, the Terrorism Act, which puts dozens of Muslims and other critics of the government behind bars. Muslims, who call against hatred and openly declare about atrocities against communities, accuse of sympathizing the Taliban, even if they condemn them<sup>707</sup>.

**Indonesian** government bans Minangkabau Bible app<sup>708</sup>. Yakut Holil Koumas, Indonesia's newly appointed Minister of Religious Affairs, described as a moderate Muslim, met with the country's Christian leaders. During the conversation, he invited them to cooperate for the benefit of building a harmonious multi-religious society, expressed his readiness to pay special attention to protecting the rights of religious minorities<sup>709</sup>. Indonesian authorities have issued a decree according to which the country's schools will no longer be able to prohibit or force students and school staff to wear Islamic clothing or religious symbols.<sup>710</sup>

**Nigerian** federal court sentenced a man who kidnapped, raped and forcibly converted 14-year-old Christian girl Esa Oruru in 2015<sup>711</sup>.

On May 28, 2020, the Bundestag unanimously supported the initiative to admit rabbis to the **German** Armed Forces<sup>712</sup>. The city of Cologne has allowed

<sup>705</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/12/22/bjp-led-government-indias-karnataka-state-proposes-enactment-anti-conversion-law/>

<sup>706</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/11/19/district-administration-india-issues-illegal-ban-christian-gatherings/>

<sup>707</sup> Asia TV (asiatv.kg).

<sup>708</sup> URL: <https://news.barnabasfund.org/Indonesia-s-ban-on-Bible-app-contradicts-religious-tolerance-philosophy-of-Pancasila/09/16/2020>

<sup>709</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/01/31/religion-minister-invites-indonesian-churches-build-religious-harmony/02/01/2021>

<sup>710</sup> URL: <http://www.blagovest-info.ru/index.php?ss=2&s=3&id=92943>

<sup>711</sup> URL: <https://guardian.ng/news/five-years-after-ese-orurus-abductor-to-spend-26-years-in-jail/05/22/2020>

<sup>712</sup> URL: <https://www.dw.com/en/german-military-to-include-rabbis-for-first-time-since-hitler-expelled-them/a-5360905405/29/2020>

local Muslim communities to broadcast Friday prayer calls to Muslims through loudspeakers installed in mosques.<sup>713</sup> For the first time in 100 years, the German army has recruited a rabbi. Until recently, the army spiritual service was not available to the Jewish soldiers of the Bundeswehr, of which there are about 300 people.<sup>714</sup>

The **Italian** government and the Union of Islamic Communities and Organizations of the country signed a memorandum allowing imams to visit prisoners<sup>715</sup>. Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs will increase aid to Christians in countries where they are a persecuted minority<sup>716</sup>.

A Muslim woman of Somali origin from **Norway** filed a lawsuit with the ECtHR in connection with the baptism of her child without her consent. Social welfare authorities removed her child from the family “due to inadequate conditions” and gave it up to a Baptist couple, who decided to adopt and baptize him. In 2019, a Muslim woman won the right to see her child at the ECtHR. She accuses the Norwegian authorities of violating article 9 of the human rights convention and violating religious freedom by isolating the child from the Islamic environment.<sup>717</sup>

**Eritrea** continued to bail Christians arrested for their faith in 2020. The number of people released this year has reached 69.<sup>718</sup>

New draft law on freedom of religion in **Uzbekistan** maintains ban on religious activity not authorized by the state<sup>719</sup>.

Elected in August 2021, the Seventh-day Adventist president of **Zambia** has vowed to uphold religious freedoms. Members and leaders of the Adventist Church around the world congratulated Hichilema on his new position. During his campaign, Hichilema pledged to support the religious freedoms of all faiths in the country, adding that he would not force people to join his church, as his political opponents claimed.<sup>720</sup>

In **Iran** four Christians were sentenced in the city of Karaj to five years in prison and fined 40 million tomans (\$1,600). All four are of Muslim origin and were indicted under a new law introduced into the Penal Code by former President Hassan Rouhani in February of this year that deals with “sects.” According to the law, “any education or propaganda that is contrary to Sharia will be severely prosecuted.” Previously, Christian converts facing trial in

<sup>713</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/83186-v-kelyne-vlasti-razreshili-prizyvy-musulyman-k-namazu-cherez-gromkogovoriteli>

<sup>714</sup> URL: <http://blagovest-info.ru/index.php?ss=2&s=3&id=95164>

<sup>715</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/72026-pravitelystvo-italii-vpervyje-razreshilo-imamam-dostup-v-tyurymy09.06.2020>

<sup>716</sup> URL: <https://regnum.ru/news/3208273.html>

<sup>717</sup> URL: <https://bitterwinter.org/norway-muslim-woman-asks-echr-to-rule-on-her-sons-forced-adoption-by-christians/05.02.2021>

<sup>718</sup> URL: <https://news.barnabasfund.org/Eritrean-government-releases-on-bail-69-Christians-imprisoned-for-their-faith/09/22/2020>

<sup>719</sup> URL: <https://news.barnabasfund.org/Uzbekistan-s-draft-new-Religion-Law-fails-to-deliver-significant-reforms/09/10/2020>

<sup>720</sup> URL: [https://gcshep.org/ru/novosti/cerkov-i-obshchestvo/noviy\\_izbranniy\\_prezident\\_zambii\\_\\_adventist\\_sedjмого\\_dnya.html](https://gcshep.org/ru/novosti/cerkov-i-obshchestvo/noviy_izbranniy_prezident_zambii__adventist_sedjмого_dnya.html)

Iran were accused of “acting against state security”<sup>721</sup>. Iran reduced the prison terms of convicted Christians. Three Christian converts from Islam were convicted of religious propaganda contrary to Islam. After filing an appeal, the court changed the sentence from the maximum to a milder one (3 years in prison instead of 5 years)<sup>722</sup>. Iran’s Supreme Court ruled that belonging to a house church does not make Christians “enemies of the state” - the decision was made on appeal by 9 Christian converts serving a 5-year sentence for home worship. In its decision dated November 3, 2021, the Iranian Supreme Court held that the converts should not have been charged due to the lack of *corpus delicti*, since their prayers in house churches and preaching activities (the so-called “propaganda of Christianity”) cannot be qualified as undermining national security<sup>723</sup>.

The **Algerian** court plans to consider the appeals of three Christians convicted of blasphemy and proselytism within a month. One of them was convicted for reposting an offensive cartoon on a social network. Two others, a pastor and his assistant, were convicted in March 2021 of proselytism due to a conflict with local authorities in Oran over a Christian bookstore<sup>724</sup>.

The Supreme Court of Quebec (**Canada**) has upheld a provincial law banning Jews and other religious minorities working in public places from wearing religious symbols such as kippahs, crucifixes and hijabs in their workplaces. Quebec’s Supreme Court rules that Bill 21, also known as the “secularism” law, does not repeal Canada’s human rights charters<sup>725</sup>.

**Spain’s** Conference of Catholic Bishops notes “troubling disagreements” with the country’s coalition government led by the Socialists, which aims to restrict freedom of conscience and curtail religious instruction in schools. Luis Javier Argüello García, second Bishop of Valladolid, pointed out that the government’s legislative initiatives and plans “cause alarming dissent”. Protests were triggered by an education law that removes the elective subject of the Law of Lord from the average scores for education and cuts public funding for private (mostly Catholic) schools, as well as a law to legalize euthanasia<sup>726</sup>.

The Grand Chamber of the Supreme Court of Ukraine rejected the claim of the religious community of the UOC in the village of Sutkivtsi, Khmelnytskyi oblast, and recognized its re-registration with the OCU as legal. Earlier, several judicial instances took the side of the community of the canonical Church that suffered from the raider attack. However, the decision was canceled in the cassation instance. This is the first case since the beginning of the seizure of churches in Ukraine, when the lawsuit went through all the courts. And for

<sup>721</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/06/30/iran-sentences-christian-converts-new-sectarianism-law/>

<sup>722</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/09/05/iranian-christian-converts-receive-reduced-sentences/07.09.2021>

<sup>723</sup> URL: <https://sedmitza.ru/text/10067248.html>

<sup>724</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/03/17/algerian-christians-face-trial-soon/03/17/2021>

<sup>725</sup> URL: <https://stmegi.com/posts/88257/sud-kvebeka-podderzhal-zakon-o-zapretermolok-i-khidzhabov-sotrudnikam-v-obshchestvennykh-mestakh/>

<sup>726</sup> URL: <http://www.blagovest-info.ru/index.php?ss=2&s=3&id=94379>

the first time the court sided with the invaders<sup>727</sup>. In the Vinnytsia oblast of Ukraine, the “black registrar” of the Vinnytsia Regional State Administration Ihor Saletskiy, against whom criminal cases were previously initiated for illegal re-registration of the communities of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the OCU, tried to take away the churches in Bakhtin, Snitkiv and Verbovets from believers. On December 3, 2021, believers from different churches decided to hold a prayer gathering at the walls of the Vinnytsia Regional State Administration against the lawlessness of Saletskiy<sup>728</sup>. The Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the village of Snitkiv, Vinnytsia oblast, was illegally re-registered with the OCU. The illegal re-registration of the temple is a direct road for the OCU raiders to seize the shrine by force.<sup>729</sup>

On December 17, 2021, Bishop Paul Hinder, head of the Apostolic Vicariate of South Arabia, consecrated the Catholic Church of St. John the Baptist in Ruwais, 250 kilometers from Abu Dhabi (UAE), in the western part of the country. The Catholic community in the city area includes about 2,500 people, mostly Filipinos and Indians.<sup>730</sup>

The **Turkish** authorities are pursuing an ambivalent policy towards non-Muslim minorities - in particular, community schools are denied funding, despite the equality of the country's citizens proclaimed by the constitution. The Planning and Budget Commission of the Ministry of Education of Turkey by a majority rejected the parliamentary request of the Armenian parliamentarian Garo Paylan. The deputy asked to allocate part of the ministerial budget for 2022 to support educational institutions that are in the care of local Christian, Jewish and other religious communities. MP Paylan has proposed allocating 40 million Turkish liras (\$4 million) to the country's religious minority schools, which have about 4,000 students.<sup>731</sup>

The House of Commons of **the United Kingdom** adopted in the first reading a bill on the recognition of the Armenian genocide<sup>732</sup>. The Jewish community in Britain is concerned about plans to build skyscrapers around the 1701 Bevis Marks synagogue on Ebury Street in central London. Earlier, the city authorities rejected several projects for the construction of skyscrapers, but one more project remained relevant. The synagogue is the only one in Europe where worship services have not been interrupted for 300 years.<sup>733</sup>

<sup>727</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/78800-sud-priznal-zakonnym-pereregistraciju-obshhiny-v-sutkovcah-v-polyzu-pcu>

<sup>728</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/mysli-vsluh/84527-v-vinnickoj-oblasti-vlasty-blokirujet-molitvennyje-stojanija-upc>

<sup>729</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/84671-v-vinnickoj-oblasti-nezakonno-pereregistrirovali-v-pcu-jeshhe-odin-khram-upc>

<sup>730</sup> URL: [http://fides.org/en/news/71320-ASIA\\_ARAB\\_EMIRATES\\_A\\_new\\_Catholic\\_church\\_in\\_Ruwais12/16/21](http://fides.org/en/news/71320-ASIA_ARAB_EMIRATES_A_new_Catholic_church_in_Ruwais12/16/21)

<sup>731</sup> URL: [http://www.fides.org/en/news/71090-ASIA\\_TURKEY\\_Different\\_signals\\_from\\_the\\_Turkish\\_authorities\\_towards\\_schools\\_and\\_foundations\\_of\\_non\\_Muslim\\_minorities](http://www.fides.org/en/news/71090-ASIA_TURKEY_Different_signals_from_the_Turkish_authorities_towards_schools_and_foundations_of_non_Muslim_minorities)

<sup>732</sup> URL: <https://barnabasfund.org/news/armenian-genocide-recognition-bill-passes-first-reading-in-uk-house-of-c/11/11/21>

<sup>733</sup> URL: <https://religionunplugged.com/news/2021/11/22/high-rises-threaten-to-cast-long-shadow-over-uks-oldest-synagogue11/23/21>

### III. Religiophobia and Secular Ideology

#### 1. Protection of traditional moral values

Prosecutors in Poland file charges against IKEA manager who fired Christian for criticizing LGBT people<sup>734</sup>. Polish President Andrzej Duda spoke out against LGBT ideology, calling it destructive<sup>735</sup>.

**Hungary** restricts rights of LGBT people to adopt children<sup>736</sup>. The authorities of Poland and Hungary refused subsidies from the European Union because of the gender ideology promoted by the pan-European government<sup>737</sup>.

**Sweden** refuses to remove Bible lessons from school curriculum<sup>738</sup>.

Former **UK** Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt speaks out against oppression of Christians in Montenegro<sup>739</sup>. British MPs Tim Farron and Steve Baker called on the government to confront the oppression of the SOC in Montenegro<sup>740</sup>.

Metropolitan of Sliven of the **Bulgarian** Orthodox Church Ioanniky (Nedelchev) appealed to the mayor of the city of Burgas Dimitar Nikolov with a call to refuse to hold a gay parade<sup>741</sup>.

With the blessing of Archbishop Michael of New York and New Jersey (**USA**), the believers held their first prayer gathering at the Family Planning Association clinic in Manhattan. They represent the organization Orthodox Christians for Life, which was established in January 2021.<sup>742</sup> After a high-profile litigation in recent years, when the head of a bakery from Denver was forced to defend in court his rights to deny services to same-sex couples for religious reasons (the Supreme Court eventually sided with the baker), an absentee dispute between lawyers and experts continues in the United States about the legality of applying acts for the protection of religious freedom in relation to homosexual couples<sup>743</sup>.

<sup>734</sup> URL: <https://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wiadomosci/7,114883,25980363,pracownik-ikea-zwolniony-po-slowach-o-lgbt-prokuratura-stawia.html05/27/2020>

<sup>735</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/72172-prezident-polysni-khochet-zapretity-odnopolym-param-braki-i-usynovlenije-detej06/15/2020>

<sup>736</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/76499-v-vengrii-zapretili-odnopolym-param-usynovlyaty-detej12/15/2020>

<sup>737</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/75902-polysha-i-vengrija-zablokirovali-byudzhet-jes-iz-za-politiki-prodvizhenija-lgbt11/18/2020>

<sup>738</sup> URL: <https://swedinfo.ru/novosti-stockholma/3177-shvedskie-shkol-niki-prodolzhat-izuchat-bibliyu-i-natsional-nyj-gimn08/30/2020>

<sup>739</sup> URL: <https://mitropolija.com/2020/07/01/dzeremi-hant-slobodu-vjeroispovesti-moramoznazno-braniti/07/01/2020>

<sup>740</sup> URL: <https://mitropolija.com/2020/07/01/britanski-poslanici-stali-u-odbranu-svetinja-u-crnoj-gori-pretnja-hriscanstvu-bliza-je-nego-ikada/07/01/2020>

<sup>741</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/79405-davajte-ne-vyzyvaty-gnev-bozhij--ijerarkh-bpc-ob-anonse-gej-parada-v-sofi>

<sup>742</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/77349-v-nyju-jorke-pravoslavnyje-verujushhie-provodyat-molitvennyje-stojanija-u-abortarijev02/01/2021>

<sup>743</sup> URL: <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/masterpiece-cakeshop-attorney-no-religious-freedom-for-wedding-vendors-isnt-harmful20.02.2021>

On March 25, 2021, the Holy Synod of the **Serbian** Orthodox Church opposed the same-sex marriage bill<sup>744</sup>.

The **Vatican** Secretariat of State sent a note to the Italian government in June 2021 on the contents of the so-called Zana bill against homotransphobia, which is currently under consideration by the Senate. The note emphasizes that the “Dzan Bill” threatens the right of Catholics and Catholic organizations to “complete freedom of assembly and expression of opinion through the spoken and written word and any other means of dissemination.” The State Secretariat expresses its hope that the wording of the law will be revised<sup>745</sup>.

The All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations (AUCCRO) called on the government of **Ukraine** to withdraw, and the Verkhovna Rada to reject bill No. 5488 “On Amendments to the Code of Ukraine on Administrative Offenses and the Criminal Code of Ukraine regarding the fight against manifestations of discrimination.” In their appeal to the authorities, religious figures expressed concern about another attempt to promote gender ideology in Ukrainian legislation.<sup>746</sup>

Prayer actions against the “blessing” of homosexuals were held in **Germany** in front of a Catholic church<sup>747</sup>.

Representatives of the RCC and traditional Protestant communities in **Scotland** sent a joint appeal to the authorities against plans for a new law on hate crimes, which would punish “crimes of hatred against race, religion, sexual orientation and transgender identity”<sup>748</sup>.

## 2. Liberal ideology versus traditional family values

The UN Human Rights Committee has issued an appeal to LGBT groups, asking for information about “protagonists” who criticize “gender ideology” and for examples of “public statements or statements by political and/or religious leaders that challenge the rights of LGBT people” –communities”. Particular attention in the appeal is given to religious groups that support life and family. The UN Human Rights Committee asks for “any examples of how the concept of gender has been used in religious stories or narratives about traditions, traditional values and family protection” in opposition to new laws that support LGBT rights<sup>749</sup>.

<sup>744</sup> URL: <https://pravoslavie.ru/138996.html>

<sup>745</sup> URL: <https://www.vaticannews.va/ru/vatican-city/news/2021-06/gossektariat-vatikana-napravil-notu-italianskomu-pravitelstvu.html>

<sup>746</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/80454-vsicro-prizval-otklonity-zakonoprojekt-oneterpimosti-k-lgbt>

<sup>747</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/79971-v-berline-molodyje-katoliki-piketirovali-khramy-blagoslovlyajushhije-gejev>

<sup>748</sup> URL: <http://blagovest-info.ru/index.php?ss=2&s=3&id=93207>

<sup>749</sup> URL: [https://c-fam.org/friday\\_fax/un-human-rights-office-prepares-global-lgbt-hate-groups-blacklist/](https://c-fam.org/friday_fax/un-human-rights-office-prepares-global-lgbt-hate-groups-blacklist/)



**European Parliament** adopted a resolution in defense of the rights of the LGBT community, which demanded that same-sex marriages and registered partnerships be equally recognized in all EU countries<sup>750</sup>.

Priests in hundreds of Catholic churches have blessed same-sex marriages in Germany. This is reported by the broadcaster Südwestrundfunk. Church ministers who support same-sex unions organized the Love Wins movement. Members of the movement have compiled a virtual map showing all the churches where a same-sex couple can receive a blessing. The movement was created in response to the Vatican's recent statement about the sinfulness of homosexual unions.<sup>751</sup> Archbishop Heiner Koch in Germany has appointed a priest as a contact person for gays, the Berlin Archdiocese has said<sup>752</sup>. In Offenbach, at the annual Christmas exhibition-fair of paintings, the exposition "Pornographic series" by Frankfurt designer Christina Metzner opened. It presents Orthodox icons, on which pornographic pictures are "drown on"<sup>753</sup>.

The Methodist Church became the largest religious denomination in the **UK** to allow same-sex marriage at its conference. The Methodist Church today is the fourth largest Christian church in the UK, with about 164 thousand parishioners in more than 4 thousand temples<sup>754</sup>.

The Lutheran Church in **Norway** held a name-change ceremony for a 49-year-old transgender man in what officials say was the first such event in the church community in this Scandinavian country.<sup>755</sup>

In the state of Victoria (**Australia**), the authorities have tabled a bill banning any attempt to influence a person's choice of sexual orientation or gender. It was opposed by the Catholic episcopate and clergy, as well as the Islamic Council of Victoria.<sup>756</sup>

At the University of Turin (**Italy**), according to the order of the administration, students are prohibited from displaying religious symbols on the screen during exams (occurring in online format), such as crucifixes on walls or figurines on tables. The decision provoked violent protests among students.<sup>757</sup>

The Council of Europe urged **Poland** to promote the rights of sexual minorities<sup>758</sup>. Joe Biden says 8 and 10 year olds should be able to change

<sup>750</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/82716-jevroparlament-potreboval-priznaty-odnopolyje-braki-vo-vseh-stranah-jevrosojuza>

<sup>751</sup> URL: <https://lenta.ru/news/2021/05/11/priestsapprove/>

<sup>752</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/german-archbishop-to-name-minister-for-gays/93659>

<sup>753</sup> URL: <https://www.ridus.ru/news/368340>

<sup>754</sup> URL: <https://sedmitza.ru/text/10013857.html>

<sup>755</sup> URL: <https://baznica.info/2021/07/norvezhskaya-cerkov-provela-ceremoniyu-smeny-imeni-dlya-transgendera/>

<sup>756</sup> URL: <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/australian-conversion-therapy-ban-has-dangerous-flaws-say-religious-leaders08.02.2021>

<sup>757</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/77734-v-universitete-italii-zapretili-religioznuju-simvoliku-na-ekzamenah20.02.2021>

<sup>758</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/76253-komissar-soveta-jevropy-potrebovala-ot-vlastej-polyshi-uvazhenija-k-pravam-lgbt03/12/2020>



gender<sup>759</sup>. A video about collecting donations to help persecuted Christians was not broadcast on French Radio France Inter because of the word “Christians” in it.<sup>760</sup>

On December 11, the **Austrian** Constitutional Court decided to legalize euthanasia in the country<sup>761</sup>. On December 18, the **Swiss** parliament approved a bill making marriage legal for same-sex couples.<sup>762</sup>

The US will create a Day light banking platform designed specifically for members of the LGBT community<sup>763</sup>. US proposes to ban Christian schools from criticizing LGBT people<sup>764</sup>. On November 3, Sarah McBride, a representative of the Democratic Party, was elected to the US Senate for the first time in history.<sup>765</sup> The state of Colorado may force a Christian web designer to create a same-sex wedding website under a new federal court ruling. The Colorado Anti-Discrimination Act (CADA) bans discrimination based on sexual orientation in public places<sup>766</sup>. Children’s meals with LGBT propaganda appear in US stores<sup>767</sup>. In connection with the new initiatives of the Biden administration to legislate gender ideology, the largest amount of news on this topic was recorded in the United States. An analysis of the information leads to the conclusion that tensions are growing between the liberal, but in power, minority and the majority of Americans who defend traditional values. Court of Appeals rules against US state of Mississippi law banning abortion after 15 weeks of pregnancy<sup>768</sup>. A court in Colorado tried to force a Christian graphic designer to promote liberal doctrines. Her company creates custom websites. However, the State of Colorado has decided that Laurie does not have the right to choose which messages to use her talents to convey. The state banned her, for example, from posting a notice on her website stating that she cannot create websites that express messages that contradict her Christian beliefs.<sup>769</sup> The Holston Orphanage of the United Methodist Church

<sup>759</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/76244-bajden-zajavil-chto-8-letnij-rebenok-imejet-pravo-byty-transgenderom03.12.2020>

<sup>760</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/76341-francuzskoje-radio-otkazalosy-stavity-rolik-iz-slova-khristiane09.12.2020>

<sup>761</sup> URL: <https://www.vaticannews.va/ru/world/news/2020-12/avstrijskie-episcopy-nazvali-razryvom-reshenie-suda.html16.12.2020>

<sup>762</sup> URL: <https://www.tdg.ch/le-parlement-suisse-approuve-le-mariage-pour-tous-59633183926812/18/2020>

<sup>763</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/76054-v-ssha-sozdajut-pervyj-bank-so-specialnymi-vozmozhnostyami-dlya-lgbt11/25/2020>

<sup>764</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/75933-krupnaja-lgbt-gruppa-prizvala-bajdena-zakryty-khristianskije-shkoly-i-kolledzhi11/20/2020>

<sup>765</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/75619-v-senat-ssha-vpervyje-izbrali-transgendera04.11.2020>

<sup>766</sup> URL: <https://www.christianheadlines.com/contributors/michael-foust/colorado-can-force-christian-web-designer-to-create-same-sex-wedding-site-court-rules.html>

<sup>767</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/80195-v-magazinah-ssha-pojavilis-detskije-zavtraki-s-propagandoj-lgbt>

<sup>768</sup> URL: <https://www.christianpost.com/news/appeals-court-rules-against-mississippi-law-banning-abortion-after-15-weeks.html?clickType=link-related-articles>

<sup>769</sup> URL: <https://www.christianheadlines.com/columnists/breakpoint/colorado-blattantly-violating-the-first-amendment.html>

in Greeneville, Tennessee, USA, which receives state subsidies, has filed a lawsuit against the federal government over a rule requiring the orphanage to place children in the families of same-sex married couples or unmarried cohabitants.<sup>770</sup>

**European Commission** published internal recommendations for officials, suggesting them to abandon words that could offend people of different faiths, cultures, genders, sexual orientations. One of those words was “Christmas”. According to Politico, the EC was criticized because of this document and on November 30 it was withdrawn.<sup>771</sup>

In the **Netherlands**, they refused to specify the gender in the documents<sup>772</sup>.

Foreign Minister of **Kosovo** Meliza Haradinaj-Stublla expressed support for the LGBT community<sup>773</sup>.

The pagan idol of “Pachamama” or “Mother Earth” was carried and set up for veneration as monstrence in a Mexican Catholic church<sup>774</sup>.

Pope Francis has appointed Jeffrey Sachs a member of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, the Vatican press office said. Professor Jeffrey Sachs is an influential figure in the UN. He is known as a theorist of the so-called sustainable development strategy, a follower of the population limitation doctrine. Sachs has been described as a ‘vociferous abortionist’<sup>775</sup>.

On December 14, 2021, the Court of Justice of the **European Union** ruled that same-sex parents and their children must be recognized as a family in all EU member states, Euronews.com reports. The Court of Justice of the European Union has stated that if one country recognizes a gay couple in a parental relationship with a child, then each EU Member State must do the same “to guarantee the child’s right to free movement »<sup>776</sup>.

**In Ukraine** the building of the Kyiv City State Administration was lit up with LGBT colors. The event was timed to coincide with the International Human Rights Day, which was celebrated on December 10th. The goal of the action, initiated by Amnesty International and KyivPride, is to draw the attention of the public and authorities to the “importance of a proper response to crimes motivated by homophobia and transphobia”<sup>777</sup>.

Sarco’s 3D-printed suicide capsule has been approved for use in **Switzerland**. In 2020, 1,300 Swiss have already exercised the right to assisted suicide. Active euthanasia is formally banned in Switzerland. However, free assistance in suicide is allowed - provided that the final act leading to death is

<sup>770</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/84600-v-ssha-administracija-detdoma-protestujet-protiv-peredachi-detej-lgbt-param>

<sup>771</sup> URL: <https://ria.ru/20211202/rozhdestvo-1761874962.html>

<sup>772</sup> URL: <https://ria.ru/20200813/1575729138.html08/13/2020>

<sup>773</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/75286-mid-kosovo-podderzhivajet-lgbt-cennosti-i-anonsirujet-gej-parad20.10.2020>

<sup>774</sup> URL: <https://sedmitza.ru/text/10014729.html>

<sup>775</sup> URL: <https://sedmitza.ru/text/10053986.html>

<sup>776</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/84873-jevropskij-sud-obyzal-strany-jes-priznavaty-gej-pary-i-ih-detej-semyje>

<sup>777</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/84791-meriju-kijeva-podsvetili-cvetami-lgbt-flaga>

carried out personally by the suicide. Sarco capsule helps to commit suicide through painless asphyxiation<sup>778</sup>.

In Offenbach (**Germany**) at the annual Christmas exhibition-fair of paintings, the exposition “Pornographic series” by Frankfurt designer Christina Metzner opened. It presents Orthodox icons, on which pornographic pictures are “drown on”<sup>779</sup>.

The Association of Portuguese Catholic Doctors thanked President Marcelo Rebelo de Souza for yet another veto of the euthanasia bill, hastily passed by the outgoing **Portuguese** Parliament on second reading, and stressed that the doctors were sworn to serve as “protectors of life in every situation” and not “mediators in death.” AMCP Catholic doctors issued an official statement the next day on the value of human life and expressions of gratitude to the President<sup>780</sup>.

Christians in **Britain** have published a “List of bad companies” slandering or hushing up Christmas<sup>781</sup>.

A group of Christians picketed the building of an abortion clinic in Bloomfield, Michigan (**USA**). Last year there were 30,000 abortions in the state, the highest in a quarter of a century. A survey of Christians of various denominations showed that about 61% are against abortion, the rest consider it acceptable or are not sure<sup>782</sup>.

In a multi-religious **Ghana**, leaders of major churches have banded together to denounce homosexuality as a “perversion” and to approve legislation that, if passed, would introduce some of Africa’s toughest anti-LGBT measures. In Africa’s most populous country, the Christian Association of **Nigeria** has threatened to sanction any church that tolerates same-sex relationships.<sup>783</sup>

<sup>778</sup> URL: <http://blagovest-info.ru/index.php?ss=2&s=3&id=97929>

<sup>779</sup> URL: <https://www.ridus.ru/news/368340>

<sup>780</sup> URL: <https://sedmitza.ru/text/10067228.html>

<sup>781</sup> URL: <https://sedmitza.ru/text/10063817.html>

<sup>782</sup> URL: <https://religionunplugged.com/news/2021/11/12/michigan-anti-abortion-demonstrators-to-doctor-one-day-you-will-be-judged11/16/21>

<sup>783</sup> URL: <https://religionnews.com/2021/10/20/across-africa-major-churches-strongly-oppose-lgbtq-rights/>

## IV. Protection of religious freedom and charitable assistance to communities

### 1. Civil society initiatives in the field of religious freedom

**UK** urged to investigate reports of genocide of Christians in Nigeria by Fulani and Boko Haram militants<sup>784</sup>. On August 20, 2020, a Christian protest against the genocide of believers in Nigeria took place outside the High Commission in London<sup>785</sup>. More than 9,000 people have signed a petition to British Prime Minister Boris Johnson to grant asylum to 14-year-old Christian girl Maira Shahbaz, who was kidnapped, raped and forcibly converted to Islam in Pakistan.<sup>786</sup>

Former **Nigerian** Aviation Minister Fami Fani-Kayode accused the government of President Mohammed Buhari of covering up the genocide of Christians<sup>787</sup>. The Roman Catholic Diocese of Yola in Nigeria built a mosque for Muslims<sup>788</sup>. The Bishops of Nigeria in their statement demanded that the mention of Christianity be included in the country's Constitution along with Islam. "All references to Sharia and any other discriminatory or divisive law shall be removed from the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria," the memorandum states.<sup>789</sup>

The **Hungarian** government claims 200 million Christians are being persecuted around the world<sup>790</sup>.

**Pakistani** National Commission for Justice and Peace Coordinator Kashif Aslam called for greater representation of minorities, including religious ones, in local government<sup>791</sup>. Pakistani human rights activist Sajid Christopher Paul called for the need to ensure the safety of judges in the regions of the country in order to reduce the number of convictions in cases of "blasphemy"<sup>792</sup>. On November 13, a seminar was held in Karachi on the problem of kidnapping of girls belonging to religious minorities and their forced conversion to

<sup>784</sup> URL: <https://www.christianpost.com/news/hundreds-of-churches-destroyed-uk-lawmakers-examine-nigeria-genocide-claims-in-new-report.html>06/20/2020

<sup>785</sup> URL: <https://news.barnabasfund.org/Nigerian-Christians-say--our-lives-matter--in-protest-against-Fulani-militant-killings-outside-London-High-Commission/08/25/2020>

<sup>786</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/11/23/uk-prime-minister-urged-grant-asylum-pakistani-christian-teen/11/23/2020>

<sup>787</sup> URL: <https://dailypost.ng/2020/06/08/more-christians-killed-in-north-under-buharis-govt-fani-kayode-alleges/06/08/2020>

<sup>788</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/79131-v-ssha-storonniki-blm-sozhgli-cerkovy>

<sup>789</sup> URL: [http://www.fides.org/en/news/70299-AFRICA\\_NIGERIA\\_The\\_Bishops\\_The\\_Constitution\\_should\\_be\\_reformed\\_so\\_that\\_there\\_is\\_a\\_single\\_law\\_that\\_is\\_the\\_same\\_for\\_all](http://www.fides.org/en/news/70299-AFRICA_NIGERIA_The_Bishops_The_Constitution_should_be_reformed_so_that_there_is_a_single_law_that_is_the_same_for_all)

<sup>790</sup> URL: <https://hungarytoday.hu/official-hrw-neglects-persecuted-christians/06/29/2020>

<sup>791</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/11/22/activists-call-greater-minority-representation-pakistans-government/11/22/2020>

<sup>792</sup> URL: <https://vom.com.au/pakistan-judges-failing-to-acquit-christians-due-to-fear-of-extremists/11/26/2020>

another religion.<sup>793</sup> On June 18, 2020 in Karachi, supporters of the National Christian Party of Pakistan demanded the release of 24 Christians accused of “blasphemy”<sup>794</sup>. The Center for Social Justice called on the authorities to pass a bill against forced marriages and abductions of girls from religious minorities<sup>795</sup>. On November 13, 2020, a seminar was held in Karachi on the problem of abduction of girls belonging to religious minorities and their forced conversion to another religion<sup>796</sup>.

In the Kurdish regional governorate (**Iraq**) a special commission to investigate cases of expropriation of Christian lands was created<sup>797</sup>.

On June 16, 2020, a rally was organized in **India** demanding that those responsible for the murder of a 14-year-old Christian boy be brought to justice.<sup>798</sup> Ten Catholic bishops of the southern Indian state of Karnataka met with Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai to comment on a proposed law to ban conversions to another religion in the state. The delegation, which met with the Prime Minister on 22 September, was led by Peter Machado, Archbishop of Bangalore, who presented a Memorandum on various issues affecting the life of Christians in Karnataka.<sup>799</sup> In a joint statement, the Catholic Church and the National Council of Churches of India, which unites Catholics and Protestants, issued a statement calling for the plight of Dalits (untouchables) to be remembered and protected from discrimination.<sup>800</sup> Archbishop of Madhya Pradesh in India called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi to take action against rising anti-Christian violence in India<sup>801</sup>.

The Conference on International Religious Freedom and Peace, convened at the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin in **Armenia** on September 9-10, 2021, paid special attention to the promotion of religious freedom. As a result of the forum, a statement was adopted, which noted: “We emphasize the critical importance of protecting holy places, places of worship and religious heritage for the effective exercise of religious freedom, as well as for the promotion and preservation of peaceful relations between peoples and communities. Protecting places of worship and ensuring free access to them is essential to ensuring freedom of religion.” The forum participants called

<sup>793</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/11/16/christian-leaders-pakistan-organize-seminar-issue-abductions-forced-marriages/11/16/2020>

<sup>794</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/06/21/christian-group-calls-release-24-christian-prisoners-accused-blasphemy/06/21/2020>

<sup>795</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/11/30/rights-group-suggests-dormant-law-combat-forced-marriages-forced-conversions-pakistan/11/30/2020>

<sup>796</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/11/16/christian-leaders-pakistan-organize-seminar-issue-abductions-forced-marriages/11/16/2020>

<sup>797</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/10/08/krg-investigates-expropriation-christian-land/08.10.2020>

<sup>798</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/06/17/peaceful-rally-demanding-justice-following-christian-murder/06/17/2020>

<sup>799</sup> URL: [http://www.fides.org/en/news/70852-ASIA\\_INDIA\\_The\\_Bishops\\_oppose\\_the\\_anti\\_conversion\\_law\\_in\\_Karnataka](http://www.fides.org/en/news/70852-ASIA_INDIA_The_Bishops_oppose_the_anti_conversion_law_in_Karnataka)

<sup>800</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/indian-christians-stand-with-vulnerable-dalits/9496911/16/21>

<sup>801</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/10/29/church-leader-calls-modi-confronting-anti-christian-violence-india/>

on the “Government of Azerbaijan to provide immediate and unhindered international access to the areas of Artsakh / Nagorno-Karabakh, which recently came under the control of Azerbaijan,<sup>802</sup>”

Demonstration against persecution of Christians in Pakistan takes place in **Bangladesh**<sup>803</sup>. On November 7, Christians and other minorities marched peacefully in Dhaka against extremist attacks on communities. About 500 people took part in the procession.<sup>804</sup>

In the **United States**, an Orthodox Public Relations Committee was created, aimed at protecting the rights of believers<sup>805</sup>. The second annual “March for the Martyrs” was held in the United States, its leaders announced at the rally about the “global crisis of persecution of Christians”, prompting them to overcome schisms and unite in the spirit of “blood ecumenism”. Gia Chacon, founder and president of the For the Martyrs movement that organized the march, says she hopes to draw attention to the “global crisis of Christian persecution.” Up to 1,000 Christians from across the US gathered at the National Mall for a rally followed by a prayer procession to the White House and a “Night of the Martyrs” evening event held at the JW Marriott Hotel. She came up with the idea to hold a March for the Martyrs in Washington after the Open Doors USA report on a 30 percent increase in persecution of Christians in 2020.<sup>806</sup>

On the first Sunday of November, the World Day of Prayer for Persecuted Christians was held. A number of Christian organizations around the world have come together to pray for persecuted Christians, which is held annually on the first Sunday in November. Among them are Open Doors, Voice of Martyrs, International Christian Concern and others<sup>807</sup>.

The Public Union “Miriane” appeared in Ukraine – a large-scale project designed to unite active believers of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, who are not indifferent to the future of the country and the Church<sup>808</sup>. More than 20,000 believers from different dioceses of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church held a prayer standing near the Verkhovna Rada and the Office of the President of Ukraine on June 15, 2021. The purpose of the action is to testify their belonging to the canonical Church and protect it from anti-constitutional laws and discrimination<sup>809</sup>.

In **France**, Christian leaders have joined Muslim protests against a draft law to regulate religious activity. The draft provides for the

<sup>802</sup> URL: <https://www.aravot-ru.am/2021/09/13/365652/>

<sup>803</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/bangladeshi-christians-demand-repeal-of-pakistans-blasphemy-law/8963709/24/2020>

<sup>804</sup> URL: <https://news.barnabasfund.org/Bangladeshi-Christians-and-others-in-peaceful-protest-against-Islamist-attacks/11/10/2020>

<sup>805</sup> URL: <https://ria.ru/20201204/pravoslavie-1587675150.html04.12.2020>

<sup>806</sup> URL: <https://www.sedmitza.ru/text/10045486.html>

<sup>807</sup> URL: <https://resources.opendoorsusa.org/resource-idop/09.11.21>

<sup>808</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/80487-prihozhane-upc-obedinilisy-v-organizaciju-dlya-zashchity-svoej-very-i-cennostej>

<sup>809</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/80632-verujushhije-upc-peredali-svoi-trebovanija-v-iv-i-ofis-prezidenta-polnyj-tekst>

following discriminatory provisions: a ban on wearing religious symbols in public<sup>810</sup>.

The Government of **Pakistan** posthumously awarded a philanthropic nun who died in 2020 one of the country's highest awards for public service - she has cared for street children, orphans and the disabled for 52 years<sup>811</sup>. Pakistan Social Justice Center urges authorities to pass bill against forced marriage and kidnapping of girls from religious minorities<sup>812</sup>.

Violence in **Israel** was a topic of discussion in many media outlets in May. It was reported that the primates and representatives of the Christian churches in Jerusalem, in a joint statement, expressed their concern over the surge in violence in the "City of Peace". We are talking about Israeli police clashes with the Palestinian population at the Al-Aqsa mosque on May 10, 2021 and subsequent retaliatory acts of aggression by the Palestinians<sup>813</sup>.

In the capital of **Cameroon**, Bamende, thousands of Catholics took to the streets to protest against the constant searches of hospitals by soldiers of the regular army in search of separatists. There is a conflict in the country caused by the oppression of the English-speaking population<sup>814</sup>.

Two Catholic bishops in the **Philippines** urged clergy and congregation not to stay away from political issues, as they believe people have to face pressure and persecution. Filipino Catholics are strongly opposed to the head of state Duterte in connection with the killings of people as part of the fight against drug trafficking and the eradication of dissent<sup>815</sup>.

Dozens of different ethnic groups have filed a joint memorandum with the **Malaysian** police, expressing bewilderment at the unwillingness to prosecute Muslim figure Syakir Nasohi, against whom at least 5,000 complaints were filed with the police for insulting non-Muslims during an online video sermon for more than two months back<sup>816</sup>.

Human rights activists in **Indonesia** have condemned authorities in the Indonesian province of South Sulawesi for abandoning an earlier decision to allow signs wishing Christians greetings to be hung in public places after protests by Islamic groups. This step was conceived in order to contribute to the strengthening of religious harmony in the region. However, the Islamic movement "United Muslim Forum" protested, saying that the decision caused alarm among local Muslims. Human rights activists accused

<sup>810</sup> URL: <https://bitterwinter.org/muslims-christians-critic-of-the-french-law-on-separatism/04/06/2021>

<sup>811</sup> URL: [http://www.fides.org/en/news/69941-ASIA\\_PAKISTAN\\_The\\_government\\_rewards\\_Catholic\\_nun\\_mother\\_of\\_the\\_Forgotten](http://www.fides.org/en/news/69941-ASIA_PAKISTAN_The_government_rewards_Catholic_nun_mother_of_the_Forgotten)

<sup>812</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/11/30/rights-group-suggests-dormant-law-combat-forced-marriages-forced-conversions-pakistan/11/30/2020>

<sup>813</sup> URL: <https://cruxnow.com/church-in-the-middle-east/2021/05/christian-leaders-in-jerusalem-express-concern-over-growing-violence/05/11/2021>

<sup>814</sup> URL: <https://cruxnow.com/church-in-africa/2021/11/catholics-protest-in-cameroon-after-military-searches-hospital-for-separatists/11/24/21>

<sup>815</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/philippine-bishops-say-no-to-political-neutrality/9536612/14/21>

<sup>816</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/12/17/malaysian-groups-upset-polices-inaction-muslim-cleric/12/17/21>

the provincial authorities of weakness and indulging radicalism among Muslims<sup>817</sup>.

On October 20, 2020, a round table “Persecuted Christians in the context of protecting human rights.” was held at the **Moscow Orthodox Theological Academy**. The materials of the forum were published in the journal *Praxis*.<sup>818</sup> Archpriest Alexander Zadornov in his report “Intellectuals and Christianity in Europe: Enemies and Imaginary Allies” spoke about the changes in attitude towards Christianity in the scientific elite of Europe. Hieromonk Varnava (Losev), Senior Lecturer of the MTA, in his report “Rights of the Minority vs rights of the majority in the context of discrimination against Christians” noted the growing pressure on the rights of Christians. Semenova N.S., Associate Professor of the Department of Church and Practical Disciplines of the MTA, outlined her vision of the problem of realizing the right to freedom of conscience during a pandemic. Kiseleva E.V., Associate Professor of the Department of International Law of the Law Institute of the Peoples’ Friendship University of Russia, studied the practice of the ECtHR in matters of conscientious objection of women to abortion. Solntsev A.M., deputy. Head of The Department of International Law of the Peoples’ Friendship University of Russia Law Institute assessed Turkey’s actions to open a mosque in the Hagia Sophia Museum as a violation of international law. Pimenov S., graduate student studied the legal status of Christians in the Middle East. This is the second such forum at the Moscow Theological Academy, the first was held in 2018.

May 18, 2021 at the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate as part of the work of the “Tradition. Dialog. External Relations” of the XXIX International Educational Readings, a round table “**Christian shrines in Islamic regions and interreligious dialogue**” was held. Opening the meeting, DECR Deputy Chairman Archbishop Leonid drew the attention of the audience to the plight of Christianity in a number of Muslim regions that were affected by local wars and conflicts. Then the chairman of the Russian Association for Religious Freedom S.A. Melnikov spoke. In his report, he spoke in detail about the significant assistance provided to the population of Syria by the joint efforts of Russian religious communities and public organizations, with the participation of the Russian military. Senior Researcher of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences A.V. Sarabiev briefed those present on the current state of Christian shrines and monuments in Syria. The problem of the position of Christianity in Turkey was also touched upon by the Deputy Head of the Department of International Law of the Peoples’ Friendship University of Russia A.M. Solntsev, who presented an analysis of the fact that the Turkish authorities closed the museum in the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul from the point of view of Turkey’s obligations under international law. DECR Secretary for

<sup>817</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/christmas-greeting-sparks-religious-row-in-indonesia/9541812/17/21>

<sup>818</sup> URL: <https://csxatos.com/praxis-no-3-5>



Interreligious Relations priest Dimitry Safonov spoke about the background to the return of the status of a functioning mosque to Hagia Sophia in the context of religious freedom in Turkey, taking into account other precedents for the conversion of Christian churches - historical monuments into active places of worship for Muslims, gave an analysis of the situation related to Christian monuments in Turkey<sup>819</sup>.

The Russian Orthodox Church and the Government of Hungary are planning to unite their efforts to protect Christians. On December 16, 2021, the Deputy Chairman of the DECR archimandrite Filaret (Bulekov) met with the Secretary of State for Assistance to Persecuted Christians of the Administration of the Prime Minister of Hungary Tristan Azbey. The interlocutors agreed that by joint efforts it is necessary to try to maintain the Christian presence in the countries of the Middle East and North Africa, showing concern for the restoration of the relevant infrastructure, the construction of churches, schools and hospitals. In addition, the participants noted the presence of cruel persecution of Christians in Nigeria and other African countries, which are ignored by many influential states of the world and international organizations. Tristan Azbey also discussed the topic of protecting Christians with the head of the IOPS S.V. Stepashin<sup>820</sup>.

## 2. Charitable and humanitarian assistance to needy religious communities

November 12, 2020 representative of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus to the Patriarchal Throne of Antioch, hegumen Arseniy (Sokolov) visited a school restored by Russian religious communities in the Damascus region of Barzaa and donated humanitarian aid<sup>821</sup>. On January 13, 2021, hegumen Arseniy (Sokolov) visited the Amal school for disabled children located in Damascus, met with the director of the school, Mosab al-Kanj, with students and donated three wheelchairs to the school<sup>822</sup>. On January 15, 2021, hegumen Arseniy (Sokolov) visited the village of Marmarita (Homs governorate), where he met with Bishop Elijah of Marmarita (Patriarchate of Antioch) and discussed cooperation in helping Christians in Syria<sup>823</sup>. On February 16, 2021, hegumen Arseniy together with the First Secretary of the Russian Embassy in Syria T.A. Bokov and representatives of the All-Russian veteran organization “Combat Brotherhood” again visited the school for disabled children “Amal” in Damascus. Six wheelchairs were donated to the school students. On February 18, another stroller was handed over to the social department of the Patriarchate of Antioch<sup>824</sup>. On March 6-12, 2021, a delegation of

<sup>819</sup> URL: <https://mospat.ru/ru/news/87315/>

<sup>820</sup> URL: <https://mospat.ru/en/news/88653/12/16/21>

<sup>821</sup> URL: <https://ruspodvorie.wordpress.com/2020/11/12/prayer-and-meetings/>

<sup>822</sup> URL: <https://ruspodvorie.wordpress.com/2021/01/13/wheelchairs-for-school-amal/>

<sup>823</sup> URL: <https://ruspodvorie.wordpress.com/2021/01/15/about-meeting-in-der-maryamite/>

<sup>824</sup> URL: <https://ruspodvorie.wordpress.com/2021/02/19/wheelchairs-for-syrian-children/>

the Union for Promoting the Preservation of Traditional Spiritual Values “Christian World” visited Syria on a humanitarian mission. The participants donated aid to the Sunday school in Skelbia, Hama province, and also met with the leaders of the people’s militia. Then they visited Safita, where a meeting with Bishop Demetrius of Safita (Antioch Orthodox Church), participation in the divine service and the transfer of humanitarian aid to the diocese took place. In Damascus, the group met with representatives of the Armenian Apostolic Church and handed over humanitarian aid for the Sunday school.

On September 3, 2021, to the parishioners of the Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Syrian city of Zabadani, which is currently being restored with Russian assistance, during a joint humanitarian action of the Representation of the Russian Orthodox Church in Damascus, the Center for the Reconciliation of Warring Parties on the Territory of the Syrian Arab Republic and the All-Russian Organization of Veterans “Combat Brotherhood” were handed over gifts from Russia.

Hegumen Arseniy (Sokolov), the representative of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus to the Patriarchal Throne of Antioch, donated icons and lamps to the temple. He also donated a wheelchair to a parishioner injured during the war. Sunday school students, future first graders were given school backpacks and school supplies. The Russian military brought equipment for the Sunday school sports ground - swings and football goals. Before the war, more than 700 children attended the school, sports competitions and holidays were organized for them. Today the school has about 200 students. Many families have nowhere to return - the city was badly damaged during the war.<sup>825</sup>

On November 1, 2021, a joint humanitarian action of the Representation of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Center for the Reconciliation of Warring Parties took place in Damascus. Hegumen Arseniy (Sokolov) and the head of the Center for the Reconciliation of the Warring Parties Counter Admiral V.F. Kulit visited the Amal (Hope) school located in the Syrian capital, where children with limited mobility are studied. As a gift to the school, they donated a batch of wheelchairs delivered from Russia, as well as sweets<sup>826</sup>.

On November 18, 2021, a humanitarian action was held in Bosra in southern Syria, organized by the All-Russian veteran organization “Combat Brotherhood” together with the Center for the Reconciliation of Warring Parties and the Representation of the Russian Orthodox Church under the Patriarchate of Antioch. Warm winter jackets, school backpacks, office equipment and sweets were donated to one of the secondary schools.<sup>827</sup>

On December 28, 2021, the representative of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia to the Patriarchal See of Antioch, hegumen Arseniy (Sokolov) donated another batch of humanitarian aid to the Amal school in Damascus, which teaches children with disorders of the musculoskeletal system, another

<sup>825</sup> URL: <https://ruspodvorie.wordpress.com/page/4/>

<sup>826</sup> URL: <https://ruspodvorie.wordpress.com/page/2/>

<sup>827</sup> URL: <https://ruspodvorie.wordpress.com/page/2/>

batch of humanitarian aid - blood pressure measuring devices, a printer and 150 children's Christmas gifts.<sup>828</sup>

Humanitarian aid to Syria was coordinated by the Interreligious Working Group for Assistance to the Population of Syria of the Council for Cooperation with Religious Associations under the President of the Russian Federation. On April 14, 2021, its 10th meeting was held in the building of the Administration of the President of the Russian Federation<sup>829</sup>.

On November 10, 2021, Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation for the Middle East and Africa, Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov met in Moscow with Patriarch Ignatius Ephraim II of Antioch and the All East of the Syrian-Jacobite Church, who is in the Russian capital on a private visit. During the conversation, the situation in the Middle East was discussed with an emphasis on the tasks of a comprehensive settlement in Syria, including the solution of humanitarian problems and the provision of assistance to those in need. Russia is invariably committed to the need to protect Christians living in the Middle East, said M. Bogdanov<sup>830</sup>.

On April 27, 2021, the official website of the Moscow Patriarchate posted the material "On the situation of the Christian population of African countries". "The Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate maintains direct contacts with representatives of African Christians who trust the Russian Orthodox Church. These contacts are a unique resource necessary for the implementation of humanitarian projects in the African direction."<sup>831</sup>

Charity organization ACN supports refugees in **Mozambique**<sup>832</sup>.

### 3. The situation of religious minorities

In December 2020, Moscow hosted an international conference dedicated to the situation of Christians on the African continent. The basis for the discussion were the results of the monitoring conducted by the Russian Association for the Protection of Religious Freedom and other human rights organizations, which demonstrated the extremely difficult situation of representatives of Christian denominations on the Black Continent. The participants of the event discussed in detail the current situation and proposed measures to create a mechanism for the protection of believers in this region of the world. "The main goal of this conference is to consolidate the efforts of Christian denominations and international organizations that provide support to African Christians. We must regularly exchange

<sup>828</sup> URL: <https://ruspodvorie.wordpress.com/2021/12/28/>

<sup>829</sup> URL: <https://mospat.ru/en/news/86996/>

<sup>830</sup> URL: <http://blagovest-info.ru/index.php?ss=2&s=3&id=97485>

<sup>831</sup> URL: <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5803081.html>

<sup>832</sup> URL: <https://www.churchinneed.org/acn-provides-psychosocial-support-to-idps-in-mozambique/>

information about ongoing events, and, above all, create conditions for the voice of the suffering Christians of Africa to be heard. In parallel, we need to think about how to combine our efforts to implement joint humanitarian initiatives on the African continent. The Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs are already taking steps in this direction. In particular, we have made a proposal that the issue of persecution of Christians be included in the agenda of the Russia-Africa summit. I would like to call on all interested forces and, first of all, Orthodox churches and organizations to form an alliance in order to stand up for the persecuted Christians in Africa,” Metropolitan Hilarion, head of the DECR MP, noted in his speech. RARF Chairman Sergey Melnikov presented the results of monitoring the violation of the rights of believers in Africa. According to the expert, African countries are divided into those in which Physical violence against Christians is encouraged and not stopped by the state, and those in which terrorist groups operate. Priest Igor Kovalevsky, Chancellor of the Curia of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese in Moscow, noted that the leading media of the largest states pay very little attention to the persecution of Christians in Africa. Because of this, their situation on this continent is constantly deteriorating. The Coptic Patriarch Tawadros II agreed with the position of the conference participants. In his online address, he acknowledged that the number of crimes against Christians has increased especially in the situation of the spread of COVID-19. “Humanity should pay more attention to this problem,” he said. Sergey Melnikov, on behalf of RARF, proposed to adopt an International Convention for the Protection of the Rights of Believers, which would be a legally binding document for states that ratify it.<sup>833</sup>

The American human rights center International Christian Concern published the report “Persecutor of the Year - 2021”, which analyzes information regularly collected by the ICC on cases of persecution of Christians. “Persecutors of the Year” were: the leader of North Korea Kim Jong-un, the Taliban movement, the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The report states that over 50,000 Christians have been killed by terrorists in Nigeria over the past 20 years, and 2.5 million have become refugees. In India, the influence of nationalists, who have achieved the adoption of anti-proselyte laws, Hindu leaders openly demonize Christianity, Islam and other religions, is growing. Proselytes in the Protestant communities in Iran continue to be persecuted. In Myanmar, the Tatmadaw army rampages through the Christian states of Chin and Karen. Since February, more than 1,000 civilians have been killed, 6,000 are in custody. In Pakistan during the year, at least 25 Christians were accused of “blasphemy”, for which the death penalty is required by law, 118 cases of severe persecution of Christians were recorded. In Central Africa, the influence of the extremist “United Democratic Forces” destroying the civilian population, which is mostly Christian, has noticeably increased. Somali terrorists from Al-Shabaab have also become more frequent attacks in Kenya and other countries - over 4 thousand people have become their

<sup>833</sup> URL: <https://interaffairs.ru/news/show/28577>

victims in 10 years. Several Christians were victims of targeted attacks by the Mujahideen of Eastern Indonesia, and the Jamaa Ansharut Daulya group committed a terrorist attack in a Catholic church in Sulawesi on Palm Sunday.<sup>834</sup>

Residents of Christian villages in Iraqi Kurdistan are forced to flee due to fighting between Turkey and the KWP. For example, the village of Navkandalan, located in Zakho, in the north of Dohuk, where Christian families live. Many of the families fled to Kurdistan after facing ISIS persecution. Now they face another form of violence. In total, 11 Christian villages were recently evacuated and 500 Christian families were displaced<sup>835</sup>.

His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III of Jerusalem and All Palestine spoke about the difficulties that the Christians of Jerusalem are currently experiencing, speaking on December 21, 2021 at a meeting with King Abdullah II of Jordan held in Al-Husseiniya Palace. Traditionally, in the days leading up to the celebration of Christmas, the Jordanian monarch holds an event to which the heads and representatives of the Christian Churches of the Holy Land are invited. In his speech at the solemn event, the Primate of the Jerusalem Orthodox Church mentioned that attacks on Christians and Muslims living in Jerusalem and its suburbs have recently become more frequent. “Christians have become targets of constantly repeated attacks by radical Zionist groups, especially in the Holy City,” His Beatitude Vladyka stated. — Since 2012, countless crimes were committed against Christians, including physical and verbal attacks on priests and other clerics; churches were attacked, holy places were vandalized and systematically desecrated. And this is in addition to constantly intimidating the Christian population, and all they want is to live a normal life, since God gave them this right.<sup>836</sup> Adviser to the Assembly of Catholic Bishops, Wadi Abunassar, has criticized **Israel’s** policy of allowing the “Jewish Roots” program to accept repatriates despite the ban on everyone else. He noted that “allowing young Jews from abroad to come to Israel under the Birthright program, while at the same time not allowing Christian pilgrims and tourists during the Christmas season, is discriminatory.”<sup>837</sup> On December 9, 2021, the heads and representatives of the Christian Churches of the Holy Land, official representatives of the Orthodox Patriarchates in Jerusalem, leaders of Christian public organizations in Israel, Palestine, the United States, Sweden and other countries of the world, representatives of the diplomatic corps of several countries and numerous Christians of Jerusalem gathered at the Jaffa Gate Square of the Old city to support the Jerusalem Orthodox Church in its efforts to uphold the Christian presence in Jerusalem. From the balcony of the pilgrimage house “Imperial” His Beatitude Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem and All Palestine

<sup>834</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/initiatives/poy/>

<sup>835</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/06/25/iraqi-christian-villagers-displaced-turkey-pkk-fighting/>

<sup>836</sup> URL: <https://mospat.ru/ru/news/88692/>

<sup>837</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/church-leader-criticizes-israels-discriminatory-travel-policy/9542312/20/21>

Theophilus III addressed the audience. The protesters pointed to the need to preserve the status quo of the Old City, and especially the so-called pilgrimage route - the street starting from the Jaffa Gate of Jerusalem and leading to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, along which millions of pilgrims usually make their way to the greatest shrine of the world. In the event that the pilgrimage houses of the Jerusalem Church become the property of Israeli owners, the "pilgrimage route" may be completely blocked, and the right of passage along it to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher for Christians may be lost. For several years now, the Jerusalem Orthodox Church has been trying to defend its rights to several pilgrimage houses in the Christian quarter of Jerusalem, which are unfairly contested by radical Jewish public organizations."<sup>838</sup> On Christmas eve primates and leaders of Christian communities of Jerusalem suggested local authorities to develop the dialogue culture and make the Christian district safe. They suggest to adopt an international Statute, according to which "the Old City" and its shrines must remain under guaranteed guard.<sup>839</sup>

It is reported that the Christians, Jews and Baha'is of **Yemen** have decided to establish a Coordinating Council of Religious and Ethnic Minorities to protect their rights from encroachment by the Houthis, at the initiative of which the country continues to oppress minorities, close places of worship and people leave the country<sup>840</sup>.

<sup>838</sup> URL: <https://sedmitza.ru/text/10067665.html>

<sup>839</sup> URL: [http://fides.org/en/news/71319-ASIA\\_HOLY\\_LAND\\_Patriarchs\\_and\\_Heads\\_of\\_Churches\\_ask\\_local\\_governments\\_for\\_a\\_safeguard\\_area\\_for\\_the\\_Christian\\_quarter\\_of\\_Jerusalem12/15/21](http://fides.org/en/news/71319-ASIA_HOLY_LAND_Patriarchs_and_Heads_of_Churches_ask_local_governments_for_a_safeguard_area_for_the_Christian_quarter_of_Jerusalem12/15/21)

<sup>840</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2021/12/14/new-yemen-council-seeks-promote-religious-ethnic-rights/12/15/21>

## V. Interreligious dialogue

Muslim clerics to be taught history of other religions in **Iraq**<sup>841</sup>.

Christians and Muslims of **Pakistan** pay tribute to Catholic priest Francis Nadeem, Secretary of the National Commission for Interreligious Dialogue<sup>842</sup>.

On July 5, the Christian and Muslim communities of **Nigeria** held a joint prayer for deliverance from the coronavirus epidemic.<sup>843</sup>

Catholic Bishops Celebrate Strengthening Dialogue with **French** Muslims<sup>844</sup>.

**Malaysia** held a series of events aimed at strengthening the interaction of Christian, Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim communities<sup>845</sup>.

Jesuit priest Aloysius Peiris organized a platform for interreligious dialogue in **Sri Lanka**<sup>846</sup>.

In the governorate of Minya (**Egypt**), one of the Christian families was saved by Muslim neighbors from the attack of radicals<sup>847</sup>.

The Chicago Catholic Organization (**USA**) has joined the Alliance of Civilizations project, which aims to spread the culture of religious freedom and the protection of shrines<sup>848</sup>.

From March 5 to March 8, 2021, Pope Francis' visit in **Iraq** took place, that had a clear inter-religious focus. On the first day of the visit, welcoming members of other Christian churches, Muslims and representatives of other religions, the Pope wished them that the Most High would help all believers to remain firmly convinced that the true teachings of religions encourage us to remain committed to the values of peace and brotherly coexistence.<sup>849</sup> On March 6, the second day of his apostolic visit to Iraq, Pope Francis flew from Baghdad to Najaf, one of the most revered places in Shiite Islam, and paid a courtesy call to the 90-year-old Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani<sup>850</sup>. On March 7, representatives of Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Yezidism,

<sup>841</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/07/02/iraq-works-interfaith-discourse/07/02/2020>

<sup>842</sup> URL: <https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/3996507/06/2020>

<sup>843</sup> URL: <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/world/news/2020-07/nigeriya-hristiane-i-musulmane-vmeste-molyatsya-o-prekrashenii-p.html07/07/2020>

<sup>844</sup> URL: <https://www.vaticannews.va/ru/world/news/2020-07/episcopio-francii-musulmanam-budem-ediny-v-nadezhde-i-bratstve.html07/30/2020>

<sup>845</sup> URL: [http://www.fides.org/it/news/68658-ASIA\\_MALAYSIA\\_Celebrazioni\\_inter-religiose\\_e\\_pregghiera\\_per\\_la\\_nazione\\_tutti\\_uniti\\_nella\\_lotta\\_alla\\_pandemia09/18/2020](http://www.fides.org/it/news/68658-ASIA_MALAYSIA_Celebrazioni_inter-religiose_e_pregghiera_per_la_nazione_tutti_uniti_nella_lotta_alla_pandemia09/18/2020)

<sup>846</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/jesuit-teacher-initiates-buddhist-christian-dialogue-in-sri-lanka/89843#10/12/2020>

<sup>847</sup> URL: <https://news.barnabasfund.org/Muslim-neighbours-protect-Christian-family-from-extremist-mob-when-violence-erupted-in-Egyptian-village-after-insulting--Facebook-post/02.12.2020>

<sup>848</sup> URL: <https://crurow.com/church-in-the-usa/2021/02/campaign-aims-to-foster-respect-for-religious-freedom-religious-sites/25.02.2021>

<sup>849</sup> URL: <https://www.vaticannews.va/ru/pope/news/2021-03/papa-nikto-ne-dolzhen-schitatsya-grazhdaninom-vtorogo-sorta.html>

<sup>850</sup> URL: <https://www.vaticannews.va/ru/pope/news/2021-03/papa-vstretilsya-s-velikim-ayatolloj.html>

led by the Pope in Ur, where Abraham lived, prayed together that the Lord would make them witnesses of His care for everyone, especially migrants and refugees, widows and orphans, the poor and the sick<sup>851</sup>.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the relevance of the development of interreligious dialogue, as evidenced by the VI annual meeting on interreligious dialogue, which was held and was dedicated to the theme “The role of faith in times of coronavirus.” As the Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the UN, Archbishop Ivan Yurkovic noted at the forum, COVID-19 has intensified “existing tensions and threatened the unity between people, peoples, cultures and nations, exacerbating inequalities”<sup>852</sup>.

The head of the Muslims of **Azerbaijan**, Sheikh-ul-Islam Pashazade, held an online meeting with the President of the Call of Conscience Foundation (USA), 91-year-old rabbi Arthur Schneier. The situation in Nagorno-Karabakh was discussed. The parties also noted the situation of interreligious and intercultural peace and tolerance in Azerbaijan.<sup>853</sup>

The head of the Caucasian Muslims Office, Sheikh-ul-Islam Allahshukur Pashazade, during a meeting in Istanbul with Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, invited him to visit churches and mosques in Nagorno-Karabakh. The head of the Phanar and Pashazade “discussed in detail issues related to the ongoing dialogue between Orthodoxy and Islam, as well as other issues of broader interest,” Romfea reports.<sup>854</sup>

An interreligious seminar was held in **New Delhi**, at which the results of the meeting between Prime Minister N. Modi and Pope Francis of Rome held on October 30 in Rome on the sidelines of the G20 summit were discussed. The head of the Vatican was invited to visit India, and the leaders of the Christian, Islamic, Hindu, Jain and Krishna communities welcomed the papal visit, expressing their willingness to show peaceful inter-religious relations in the country.<sup>855</sup>

A joint appeal to the international community with a call to take urgent measures to protect and heal the common home was made on October 4 by the participants of the Summit of Religious Leaders in **Rome**. The meeting was held on the eve of the 26th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP-26). The event, organized by the embassies of Great Britain and Italy to the Holy See, was attended by heads and representatives of Christian Churches, world religions, and the diplomatic corps. In particular, Pope Francis, Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, Supreme Imam of Al-Azhar University

<sup>851</sup> URL: <https://www.vaticannews.va/ru/pope/news/2021-03/papa-v-ure-haldeyskom-vrazhda-predatelstvo-religii.html>

<sup>852</sup> URL: <https://www-vn.azureedge.net/ru/vatican-city/news/2021-02/vatikan-nelzya-nedocenovat-skrytye-posledstviya-pandemii.html>

<sup>853</sup> URL: <https://appealofconscience.org/>

<sup>854</sup> URL: <https://spzh.news/ru/news/78626-patriarkha-varfolomeja-priglasili-posetity-mecheti-i-armyanskije-khramy-karabaha>

<sup>855</sup> URL: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/interfaith-leaders-hail-prospect-of-papal-visit-to-india/9507711/23/21>



(Egypt) Ahmad Mohammed at-Tayeb, Acting Secretary General of the World Council of Churches archpriest John Sauka, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Italy Luigi Di Maio, Chairman of the 26th session of the UN Conference on Climate Change Alok Sharma. Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk greeted those present on behalf of Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia. The signed document calls for reaching zero greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible, as well as funding the reduction of these emissions in the poorest countries: “All governments should take a course to limit the increase in global average temperature to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.” Our religions and spirituality teach the duty of caring for the human family and the environment, the Address notes. The participants of the meeting, among whom were the Supreme Imam of Al-Azhar Ahmad Al-Tayib and Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople, committed themselves to intensify efforts.<sup>856</sup>

The 8th **Parliament of the World’s Religions** was organized virtually for the first time on October 16-18, 2021. Traditional religious communities do not participate in the activities of the organization, considering it to be syncretic, but the meetings were attended by the leaders of a number of interreligious organizations: Secretary General of the WCWP (Religions for Peace) prof. Azza Karam and Secretary General of the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Center for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID) Faisal bin Muammar.<sup>857</sup>

<sup>856</sup> URL: <http://blagovest-info.ru/index.php?ss=2&s=3&id=96883>

<sup>857</sup> URL: <https://parliamentofreligions.org/parliament/2021-virtual>

## Conclusion

Since 2014, the Russian Association for the Protection of Religious Freedom (RARF) has united representatives of all traditional confessions, being one of the main public platforms for interreligious dialogue and developing a joint position on topical issues of religious organizations. In the course of joint events at the RARF sites, religious organizations in Russia, with the participation of representatives of state authorities and civil society institutions, synchronize approaches to a wide range of issues and participate in the preparation of recommendations for their practical implementation. In particular, experts pay attention to the issues of legislative consolidation of the principles of protecting the rights and feelings of believers, preventing discrimination on religious grounds, non-interference of politicians and state bodies in the activities of religious associations.

Over the past years, RARF has supported innovations in the legislation of the Russian Federation on protecting the feelings of believers, ensuring the freedom of missionary activities of traditional religious associations, ending civil confrontation in Ukraine and discrimination against believers of the country's dominant confession - the Ukrainian Orthodox Church - within the framework of existing mechanisms and norms of international law, development of a dialogue between state bodies, the expert community and religious leaders in order to protect and ensure the rights of believers around the world.

Members of the RARF Council and involved experts are convinced that Russia is a world leader in building effective interaction between state bodies and religious associations and protecting traditional values. The legal norms and law enforcement experience developed by Russian legislators in the course of a wide public discussion can be presented on authoritative platforms around the world as an example of strict adherence to the principles of international law in the field of ensuring human rights and preventing discrimination based on religious beliefs or nationality.

RARF carries out daily monitoring of the situation in the field of state-confessional relations in the world, the observance of the rights of believers, the most significant events in the activities of religious associations, the international scientific and expert community. Every year the association publishes a report on the situation in the field of legal provision of believers in the world, and monthly monitoring is published as brochures, and also posted on the RARF website along with daily news.

Summing up its results, it is necessary to name the countries that, as a result of the analysis of the level of religious freedom, caused the greatest concern to RARF. Violence against religious minorities increased most actively during the analyzed period in India. Violence against Christians and other religious minorities by Hindus continued in the country. Tendencies to increase

pressure on minorities emerged as early as 2014, with the coming to power in this country of the nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The year 2021 in India began with a new surge of Hindu violence against Christians. Throughout the year, reports of cases of persecution of Christians with particular cruelty continued to come from India. Nine Indian states have anti-conversion laws, giving radicals legal cover, under which they can persecute Christians with impunity. The increase in violence follows states' announcements of intent to pass legislation to ban conversion. In the first nine months of 2021 alone, more than 300 cases of persecution of Christians in India were documented. As a result, 2021 showed the highest number of cases of persecution of Christians in a single year.

Nigeria has been the leader in terms of Physical violence against Christians for several years. Fulani extremists responsible for most killings, followed by Boko Haram<sup>858</sup>, ISWAP<sup>859</sup>. The perpetrators of the anti-Christian massacres in the country continue to go unpunished, which leads to repeated atrocities. Militant Fulani herdsmen have an extremist ideology, causing rampant persecution of Christians in Nigeria. The militants are ruthless and uncompromising. They kill Christian families, steal everything they can, and then burn everything else. The Fulani are one of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria. Although many of them are nomads, many senior officials, including President Muhammadu Buhari, are Fulani. The number of Fulani today is 35 million people settled in 15 African countries. The second country after Nigeria in terms of violence against Christians in Africa by a wide margin is the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Violence has also been recorded in other countries of West Africa - Cameroon, Chad, Niger. Attacks in the northern part and in the central region of Nigeria are in the nature of a war of extermination. The state here does not provide protection to the communities. Often, the military forces and regional authorities did not take any action in response to the requests of the population, as a result of which the terrorists received unlimited access to villages and cities where only civilians were located. For a long time, the authorities denied religious hatred as the main motive for the attacks of the groups, and also allowed such incidents to be hushed up in order not to draw attention to their incompetent actions in terms of ensuring the safety of citizens. Among the countries whose authorities encourage or do not prevent the persecution of Christians are Algeria, Sudan, Ethiopia and Eritrea. True, in Egypt and Algeria the authorities have taken certain steps to promote freedom of religion and improve the lives of Christian communities, but at this point they are not enough. In particular, in Egypt, such actions are no longer the nature of state-inspired acts, but actions related to the activities of militants.

Terrible testimonies of violence against Christian children came from Pakistan throughout 2021. Violence perpetrated against Christian or Hindu girls by Muslim people who despise, discriminate and abuse girls belonging

<sup>858</sup> The organization is banned in the Russian Federation.

<sup>859</sup> ISIS structure in Nigeria, banned in the Russian Federation.

to religious minority communities fits into this framework with the idea that these crimes of violence, kidnapping and rape can easily remain unpunished. There has been an increase in the abduction of teenage girls from families of religious minorities for the purpose of sexual violence, often accompanied by forced conversion to Islam. Christians in Pakistan face the highest levels of domestic discrimination. It affects the jobs Christians can do, the schools Christians can attend, and even the neighborhoods Christians are allowed to live in. In the summer of 2021, the number of reports of discrimination from Pakistan slightly decreased; under pressure from the world community, the authorities of this country are forced to make small concessions. In Afghanistan, after the Taliban came to power, discrimination against religious minorities - Christians, Hindus, Bahais and Sikhs - intensified.

When evaluating the degree of religious freedom in the world, the United States and other Western countries are often guided by purely political considerations. On November 18, 2021, a Russian religious scholar rightly pointed out that the so-called “freedom of religion” can be used by some countries as an instrument of foreign policy influence: “Washington’s statements are based on the so-called international religious freedom act, which was adopted by the United States Congress in 1998. In this law, the United States appointed itself “the guarantor of the observance of religious freedoms in the world.” In fact, the Americans have created for themselves the possibility of political pressure on any country that may be “uncomfortable” for them. They issue similar reports every year, criticizing sovereign states and passing over their country in silence,<sup>860</sup>. The political motivation of most of the published information about the religious situation in the PRC, caused by the confrontation of this country with the United States, did not allow presenting an analysis of the processes in this country on the pages of the report. The RARF report focuses on cases of religious violence and violations of religious freedom in the United States and European countries, which increased significantly during the period under review. Religious violence in the US has been directed against Christians and Jews. Throughout the period, Catholic churches and statues throughout the United States were subject to arson and acts of desecration. Attacks on Christians in Europe have increased by 70% amid the rise of secularist and Islamist ideologies. Physical violence, arson, vandalism and harassment, as well as growing discrimination by government agencies, have risen sharply.

Christians in Syria and Lebanon are still in a difficult position. The difficult situation of Middle Eastern Christians was announced during a meeting of the primates of the Orthodox and Syro-Jacobite communities of Syria in Damascus on February 15, 2021<sup>861</sup>. Speaking about the situation of the Christian population of Syria, the continuing threat from extremist groups

<sup>860</sup> URL: <https://riafan.ru/1556505-religioved-dvorkin-obyasnil-pochemu-gosdep-obvinil-rossiyu-v-pritesnenii-veruyushikh>

<sup>861</sup> URL: <https://syriacpatriarchate.org/2021/02/visit-of-his-beatitude-greek-orthodox-patriarch-of-antioch-john-x/>

deployed in the northern regions of the country should be noted. Their actions are forcing Christians to leave their homes and migrate to other regions.<sup>862</sup> Russia and its religious communities provide humanitarian assistance to Syria, which is given special attention in the report.

The situation of Christians in the region of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) continues to be very difficult and in need of support. Although the persecution of Christians is most acute today in sub-Saharan Africa, the Christian heritage of MENA remains demoralized, and Christian-Muslim relations have been seriously damaged by the uncontrolled activities of terrorists. It seems that at the moment the support of Middle Eastern Christians from the Russian Federation remains relevant.

In the space of the former USSR, most often information about violations of the rights of believers came from Ukraine, where supporters of the OCU continued violence against the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, taking away churches from it in a hostile manner. The attempts of Jewish radicals in Israel to oust the presence of Christianity and Islam from this country do not stop, Christian and Muslim leaders of the country have repeatedly stated this.

The decision of the Turkish authorities in July 2020 to return the status of a functioning mosque to the former church and museum of Hagia Sophia, one of the most important symbols for Christians around the world, and especially for the Orthodox population of Russia, caused a serious resonance all over the world. In 2021, the process of creating mosques in ancient Byzantine temples continued, which is shown in detail in the report.

The theme of the promotion of a militant liberal ideology in Western countries, its attack on traditional values, has become a subject of special consideration. Few countries today can uphold traditional family values, including Russia, which has passed laws prohibiting the propaganda of LGBT ideology among minors.

Interreligious cooperation during the pandemic, as the analysis shows, turned out to be more and more in demand. In the last section of the report the most important inter-religious initiatives that have taken place, projects aimed at overcoming extremism, are examined.

As a brief summary of the empirical base accumulated in the Report above, it should be noted that the above facts indicate a tendency in the most problematic countries to exacerbate religious differences, to strengthen fundamentalist interpretations of religious postulates among the broad masses of believers. There is a change in the algorithm in relation to the “holy”, the tendency of intolerant and even barbaric attitude towards the shrines of other religions is becoming more widespread. Against the background of global crisis processes, to which the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic was added in 2020, there is a change in behavioral stereotypes towards representatives of other religions, which is reflected in political reality and in public consciousness. In the context of the politicization of religion, representatives of religions previously perceived as purely peaceful, such as

<sup>862</sup> URL: <https://www.persecution.org/2020/12/22/displacements-ain-issa-increase/>

Hinduism and Buddhism were more susceptible to political mobilization and radical actions. Globalization has destroyed the traditionally established balance between the national and the religious. At present, there is a more rigid binding to nationality and to national borders. What was previously universal, for example, the concept of the Islamic Ummah or universal Orthodoxy, what distinguished world religions, fades into the background and the identification of oneself as part of one's country, national borders, and the struggle for living space come to the fore. It seems that it was these processes that led, for example, to the radicalization of Hinduism in India, the politicization of the religious sphere also affected Buddhists, which prompts them to be aggressive towards representatives of other religions in their countries.

These risks, which lead to violations in the field of religious freedom, can be leveled only by strict international control over states where religious freedoms are massively violated. However, international structures created to assess the level of religious freedom are often highly biased to suit the interests of individual states.



**REPORT  
THE FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE  
AND RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE  
IN TODAY'S WORLD**

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