

Russian Association for Religious Freedom

The Freedom of Conscience and Religious Intolerance in Today's World

Moscow, 2015

UDC 341
BBK 66.3

**The Freedom of Conscience and Religious Intolerance
in Today's World.** M.: Lawyer, 2015. — 130 p.
ISBN 978-5-91835-269-4

*The project is implemented with governmental support funds granted as per
Instruction #243-rp dated 07/25/2014 of the Russian Federation President and
based on the contest conducted by the National Charity Foundation.*

ISBN 978-5-91835-269-4

© Russian Association for Religious Freedom, 2015
© Publishing House "Lawyer", 2015

Introduction

After the “cold war” it was widely assumed that the extent of religious freedom all over the world would increase. It was explained by dramatic changes in most of Central Eastern Europe countries (formerly led by Communist parties) as well as in the republics of the former Soviet Union (as they rejected the policy of state atheism). In Albania under Enver Hoxha religion was not just discriminated, but prohibited by law – as it was in North Korea in 1950–1980. Some improvements were seen in a number of Latin American countries. In these regards one should note increased interest towards the issues of religious freedom and rise of non-governmental sector and human rights defenders along the lines of sustaining religious freedom (which included new and broad connections among different countries and regions of the world).

Thus, religion assumed its legitimate place in many countries and became one of the most important elements of national identity on different levels. This being stated, religion is not only referred to as a confessional marker, but also as sign of ethical identity, or nationality. With this approach, adherence to a particular religious system is regarded not only as display of a believer's feelings, but also as a part of ethnic and civil identity. Yet, in terms of mass consciousness of population in many countries today religion is perceived as return to national traditions of the ancestors and at the same time as a matter of individual choice.

However, the previous challenges having disappeared, new issues have emerged which are as urgent. Active re-entering of religion into public realm, politics and international relations not only led to restoration of broken bonds among generations and memory of the predecessors, but also to radicalization, or expansion of extremist views accompanied by anti-state and anti-social manifestations. By the early 1990s, there were about 500 terrorist organizations and groups of various extremist views operating in the world. In the following decade of their activity they performed 6,500 acts of terrorism¹. But during

¹ International relationships today. M.: Russian political encyclopedia. 1999. P. 45

2006-2008 in 139 countries of the world (70%) acts of oppression, violence and intimidation on religious grounds were reported, and in 35 countries it resulted in deaths. In 16 countries, violent actions of throngs of religious fanatics against representatives of other religions led to deaths. In 60 countries (22%) of the world the situation becomes complicated by activity of terrorist groups hiding behind religion².

Meanwhile, in 2013 alone there were recorded 9,707 acts of terrorism, a significant portion whereof relating with Islamic extremism, not only directed against the "infidels", but also, to a large extent, against other Muslims who are not ready to embrace the concept of "pure Islam" and participate in civil and religious conflicts. Among the top five "leaders" in the number of terrorist acts are Pakistan, Iraq and Afghanistan. For many years there has been armed confrontation with the religious factor in priority in these countries³.

Religion still plays an essential role in a significant number of military conflicts. It is used as means to justify violence directed towards adherents of other religions and "the others" within the same religious community. At the same time, although religion rarely becomes the only grounds for conflicts, confrontation on religious grounds is becoming more of an everyday occurrence in the 21st century than it was in the previous one. There are distinct or latent religious elements seen in more than 50 conflicts in the world today. Since 2000, 43% of civil wars have basically had religious motivation (in 1940-1950s this figure did not exceed 25%)⁴.

However, it would be wrong to reduce the issue of religious fanaticism upsurge only to radical Islamism and Jihadism becoming active. For the last two decades on many occasions terrible acts of violence appeared to be executed by representatives of various totalitarian sects with no – not even rhetorical — connection with Islam. Among such occurrences is a poisonous gas attack in the Tokyo subway in March of 1995 carried out by a destructive movement named "*Aum Shinrikyo*". Or actions of a sect named "*Branch Davidians*" (which led to tragic death of 70 people including 21 children in April 1993).

² <http://www.portal-credo.ru/site/?act=lib&id=3000>

³ <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Terrorism/terrorstats.html>

⁴ <http://www.religion.in.ua/main/analitica/5607-religoznaya-svoboda-globalnye-izmereniya.html>

Up till the early 1990s the focus in discussions of religious intolerance in the world was on state-religious relations whereas today some other forms of intolerance towards believers are a trend. They are propagated not only through bureaucratic activities, but also through activities of various networks, transnational associations operating regardless of state borders and interested in the collapse of the state system as is.

As the second pole in global confrontation disappeared after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States turned into a global hegemon. Washington spread its influence in many ways using many tools among which protection of religious freedom on a global scale was designated. In May and October of 1998 the US Congress approved "The International Religious Freedom Act" (endorsed by the American President almost immediately following approval in Congress)⁵. The main purpose of this bill as it was declared was to provide assistance to people who are persecuted for their religious beliefs. From that moment on, many civil society and human rights activists around the world began to refer to the American Religious Freedom Act provisions to promote religious diversity and enhance criticism of "discriminatory practices".

However, with all the benevolent intentions presented in this document it is far from altruistic ideals. It allowed religious groups, even those using destructive methods in their activity, to report to their respective US Embassy the facts of "restrictions of religious practices abroad." Consequently, there is a selective "protection of human rights" on the basis of religion taking place. For example, in their country surveys for Russia US representatives criticize Russian authorities for prohibiting a number of organizations considered as terrorist in the Russian Federation (most glaring example is the instance with the Turkish Islamist structure named "Nurculuk", or the Nur movement)⁶. American politicians and diplomats focus on their geopolitical rivals (Russia, Iran, China; all these countries are considered by the Commission for International Religious Freedom as the states requiring "special attention"), thereby devaluing the very matter of believers'

⁵ See the whole text of the bill: <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/2297.pdf>

⁶ A. Yunusova. Radical ideology and Muslim youth in Russia // http://www.muslims-volga.ru/?id=376&query_id=6637

rights protection and, in fact, turning it into a tool for interfering in internal affairs of the countries out of favor with Washington⁷.

Thus, the United States basically pay no attention to the issues of freedom of conscience and religious intolerance in the European Union. Meanwhile, there are about 400 radical Islamists whereof 131 presenting great danger (according to the Federal Criminal Police Office in Germany) living today in the Federal Republic of Germany alone. Other 278 people are considered by the Agency as sympathetic to radical ideas.⁸ Many European politicians are ready to artificially inflate the "Islamic threat" and utilize the phobia of their population in order to enlist political support. In these regards, it is no coincidence that in June of 2014, at the opening of the 26th Session of the UN Council for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights at that period (resigned from her office in August of the same year), condemned manifestations of racism in Europe and warned against enhancing xenophobic attitudes. "Even in established democracies supporters of political extremism threaten to weaken our struggle with discrimination".⁹

Speaking at a conference in the European Parliament dedicated to the rise of religious extremism at the end of March of 2015, Frans Timmermans of the Netherlands, First Deputy Chairman of the European Commission (EC), stated that lack of understanding of believers' feelings was one of all-European problems that may lead to serious consequences. Based on Timmermans' initiative supported by Vera Jurova of Czech Republic, Commissioner for Justice, Consumer Rights and Gender Equality, the first colloquium on the foundational rights in EU will take place in Brussels on October 1-2, 2015 which will be attended by representatives of different religious confessions. Its main theme is "Tolerance and Respect: Prevention of and Struggle with Anti-Semitism and Anti-Islamism in Europe".

A large-scale study conducted by "*Pew Research Center*" indicates that in 119 countries religious freedom restrictions are insignificant and even inessential.

⁷ <http://www.uscirf.gov/>

⁸ <http://lenta.ru/news/2010/09/06/gefahr/>

⁹ <http://islamrf.net/world/100020/>

At the same time, in 64 countries — about one-third of all countries of the world — there are significant and serious restrictions to religious life.¹⁰

In some countries religious discrimination results from national legislative systems and the actions of authorities whereas in others it is hostility of a group confessing a certain religion displayed toward adherents of other faiths. For example, in China, Vietnam or Laos there is a significant legacy of religious tolerance, but their governments are not ready for widespread religious activity when, in particular, it relates to politics (as is the case with public activity of the leader of Tibetan Buddhists, Dalai Lama XIV, whom Chinese authorities consider not a religious leader, but a separatist).

The Chinese government endeavors to subject Tibetan monks to indoctrination. Lao authorities demand that Buddhist monks study classical Marxism. The authorities in the PRC even seek to take control over a recognition process of lamas' reincarnation as is the case of the Panchen Lama where the Chinese government and lamas recognize reincarnation of different people to be true.

In Nigeria or Bangladesh the governments are relatively reserved in limiting religious freedom, but aggressiveness of their societies toward religious minorities makes this freedom highly vulnerable.

In some cases states restrict religious freedom defending (as they understand it) cultural and religious identity of their societies. This is the case, primarily, with the countries where majority of the population is Muslim. In some of them, such as Saudi Arabia, not only other religions, but even non-Muslim worship is banned. In various Islamic countries marriages between Muslims and Christians (Lebanon, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Saudi Arabia) are prohibited, recognition of the Koran as the supreme source of law (Oman, Saudi Arabia, Iran) is required, non-Muslim public worship (Qatar) is restricted, severe (up to the death penalty) punishment for blasphemous statements against Islam and its prophet and the Koran is imposed. In Pakistan 25% of those imprisoned is made up of religious minorities (5% of all population). Almost everywhere proselytism, activities of foreign missionaries and conversion from Islam to other religions are

¹⁰ http://www.pewforum.org/files/2015/02/Restrictions2015_fullReport.pdf

prohibited, and in many countries where Sunni Islam dominates Shi'ite minority is subject to severe discrimination. Citizenship in a number of countries (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iran, United Arab Emirates) is directly related to confession of Islam. In many cases, however, restrictions of religious freedom come from both sources (government and society). It is noteworthy that several countries mentioned above (Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates) are strategic partners of the United States. Many of them are involved in military and political campaigns conducted to promote US interests in the Middle East and North Africa (conflicts in Syria, Yemen, Iraq, opposition to Iran).

There is an interesting paradox. In more than ¾ of countries in the world religious freedom is declared in their constitutions or basic laws. Other 20% promise to protect religious practices. Yet declaring appreciation of importance of religious freedom the majority of governments does not provide its protection or does so selectively. Some do not guarantee any safety from the pressure of various social groups (radically minded).

What undermines religious freedom and provokes intolerance the most? First of all, it seems to be the enormous potential of hostility, including that rooted in religious grounds, accumulated by humanity toward "others" — other races, nations, religions, classes, as well as inadequate measures of the authorities to prevent and constrain this hate. According to the study conducted by "Pew Research Center"¹¹, in 131 countries of the world organized groups came to power aspiring political domination, including prevalence of one religion over others and/or expulsion of other religions from their countries. In more than a half of all countries in the world religious groups themselves attempt, with different intensity, of course, to end activities of other religious communities within their country. The pursuit of governments and ruling elite to support these efforts results in severe measures of restricting religious freedom for a number of religious groups. This being the case, it must be noted that most countries with dominating Muslim population are not under radical Islamist leadership, but, on the contrary, oppose them. By looking at the "Taliban" regime in Afghanistan one can only imagine the

¹¹ Ibid.

kind of “religious freedom” that are said to be provided in case of political prevalence of the radical Islamist leadership, if attained. However, there are countries among those that restrict religious freedom that believe such restrictions are justified in terms of the national security (Turkey, Israel).

There are banned religious communities in 38 countries. Governments of 23 countries discriminate certain religions by announcing them as dangerous sects or cults. In 42 countries only certain religious groups are banned to proselytize whereas in 33 countries proselytism is altogether prohibited. In 36 countries there are restrictions concerning conversion from one religion to another. In 50 countries there are differences in legal status of religious leaders relating to different religious doctrines and texts. In 40% of countries there are restrictions on printing and distribution of religious literature. In 81 countries activities of foreign missionaries is limited in one way or another, and in 11 countries their activities are prohibited completely. Finally, religious minorities are discriminated more often than any other minorities.¹²

There is much less tendency objectively leading to sustaining and expansion of religious freedom than that developing in the opposite direction. Perhaps, one of the most encouraging positive trends is the formation of a very powerful intellectual tradition – both philosophical and theological – purposing to create models of support and development of religious diversity (dialogue of civilizations). This intellectual tradition is now making its way through a very fierce struggle with religious exclusiveness, arrogance and hostility to “others”, not to mention attempts to use the religious factor as means of external intervention and imposition of foreign national interests on others.

In these regards, an overview of religious freedom being sustained and the dynamics of religious intolerance in the world seems to be extremely popular. Currently, there is no lack of attempts in such a comprehensive analysis. Annual publications on this subject are made by the Commission for International Religious Freedom, the US State Department, “Open Doors” Christian charity organization, “The Pew Research Center” and many other governmental and

¹² <http://www.portal-credo.ru/site/?act=lib&id=3000>

non-governmental institutions. However, appreciating the significant amount of work being done on a regular basis collecting representative sources on the topic, a certain bias cannot be but noticed in these researches and reviews.

American government materials display focus on promotion of US national interests, rather than presenting an objective picture of the world, while publications of "*Open Doors*" are limited to the issues of Christian communities (mainly in the Middle East). Although the latter is a very urgent and relevant humanitarian problem considering the ongoing violence in Syria, Iraq, Egypt, it cannot be equaled to the global religious dynamics. As for the materials of "*The Pew Center*", possessing a significant sociological value they stray from consideration of the urgent politological and political/cultural issues. They also lack estimates by officials, well-known public and religious figures.

This report being founded on approved developments and researches is designed to present a comprehensive analysis of the problem of religious intolerance and freedom of speech. Conclusions in separate sections and the whole project as well as practical recommendations are addressed both to practitioners (staff of government agencies, diplomats, representatives of deputy corps) and experts, analysts and researchers of religious policy.

Islamic countries

Today there are more than 1.5 billion Muslims in the world. They make up approximately 23% of the total population. Muslim communities exist in more than 120 countries and in 35 they are the majority. Up to date, about 62% of all Muslims live in the South and South-Eastern Asia and Asian Pacific region. In these regions 3 countries are listed among ten most populous countries of the world — Indonesia, Pakistan and Bangladesh where Muslims are majority.¹³ Pakistan, for instance, is a member of the "Nuclear Club." This country possesses nuclear weapons since 1998. About 20% of the Islamic population of the world live in the Middle East and North Africa, 15% in Central and West Africa

¹³ Indonesia is the forth country in the world in population following PRC, India and the USA, Pakistan is the sixth and Bangladesh is the eighth.

(incl. Nigeria which is the seventh most populous country in the world), and, finally, about 3-5% live in Europe (both in the European Union and a number of other European countries, such as Norway, Switzerland, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro).

Increasing popularity of Islam around the world (including the growing number of Muslim worshipers in the European Union and republics of the former USSR) facilitates transforming of the entire spectrum of issues related to the development of this world religion (from issues of culture and education to national security issues and military conflicts) into one of the most relevant global problem.¹⁴

There is an evident demographic growth in the countries of the Islamic world, and its potential makes the government of continental Europe anxious. The vast majority of the countries in South-East Asia, Asian Pacific and the Middle East occupy a favorable geographical position. With that in mind, Middle Eastern countries rich with hydrocarbons present considerable interest in terms of building international energy security.

One of the main problems for countries with a dominant Muslim population (while the vast majority of Muslim believers are in no way connected with any terrorist activities and extremist practices) is spreading radical views as well as armed violence aimed at expansion of the "true faith".

The global threat today is the so-called "Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant" / ISIL (which controls almost 40% of Iraqi and about half of Syrian territory).¹⁵ Although acts of the Nigerian Islamist structure "*Boko Haram*" as well as sabotage and terrorist activities of the Taliban in Afghanistan are mainly considered a phenomenon of regional character, they also represent a significant threat to international security.¹⁶

¹⁴ The Future of the Global Muslim Population: Projections for 2010-2030 //<http://www.pewforum.org/The-Future-of-the-Global-Muslim-Population.aspx>

¹⁵ A. Ignatenko. Wipers of Islam //Independent newspaper. 2010.- 17 November.

¹⁶ Nigerian radical Islamist organization "*Boko Haram*" is known since 2002. Its main goal is initiation of Sharia on the whole territory of Nigeria and termination of the Western way of life. It initiates riots, attacks on Christian churches and police stations. In May 2014 the UN Security Council included it in the list of terrorist organizations.

As Alexander Ignatenko of Russia, an Islamic scholar, fairly notes, “a trouble has emerged in the Islamic world, and it is only now that Muslims begin to realize its true meaning and scale. A sect appeared (there is no other appropriate word for it) that proves its orthodoxy not in deep knowledge of the Koran and Sunnah, not in good deeds, piety and asceticism, but in a very simple way – declaring the unorthodoxy of all other Muslims. According to Sharia law, this implies certain actions against those accused of disbelief: a call to repent, and if this “apostate” does not repent, his “blood and property” become “permitted”, which means that the person can and should be killed, and his property (including wives) appropriated.”¹⁷

Emerging and establishment of such a phenomenon had versatile preconditions. Among these is disappointment in secular models of power and management (establishment of which was often accompanied by large-scale corruption, violations of human rights and nepotism of elites), and dissatisfaction with the Western world (primarily the aggressive policy of the United States) with its double standards. Washington and its allies not only turned a blind eye to fighting against the dissidence, but even strongly encouraged it to solve their opportunistic political problems (as was the case with Pakistan, particularly during the Soviet presence in neighboring Afghanistan, in Indonesia or the Shah Iran for combatting “the communist threat”). After “the cold war” this practice remained in effect. It was continued under the banner of “democracy” support. It well suffices to mention the US actions in Bahrain in 2011 (intervention was executed

“Taliban” is a radical Islamist movement that arose in 1994. It governed Afghanistan from 1996-2001. During that time it gained diplomatic recognition of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. “Taliban” was recognized as a terrorist organization by the UN Security Council in 2003.

¹⁷ “Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant” became widely known in June of 2014 when their forces captured Mosul, one of the largest and strategically most important Iraqi cities. On June 29, 2014 the organization announced establishing “caliphate” in the territories under their control. However, it is impossible to consider ISIL as a novice in the Middle Eastern political game. In October of 2006 “Islamic State of Iraq” was established. ISIL’s biggest attacks were car explosions in central Baghdad (October 2009) with 155 people killed, and taking of hostages at the Cathedral of the Syrian Catholic church in the Iraqi capital (October 2010) when 58 people were killed. Six and a half years later “Islamic State of Iraq” became known as “ISIL”. In some sources it also appears as “the state of Iraq and Syria.”

with the forces of Washington's strategic allies, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, and the opposition was brutally suppressed).

Meanwhile, the West, rhetorically arguing against Islamists, in reality has not always been so consistent. For years Washington has been cooperating with the regimes of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia supporting Islamists in many places of the world (both of these states diplomatically recognized the Taliban regime in Afghanistan). And today ISIL's consolidation in the Middle East is primarily a consequence of the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's secular regime in Iraq (2003) and participation in destabilizing Syria (where President Bashar Assad also fights against extremist Islamist groups). Along the same lines goes reinforcement of religious radicals in Libya after the overthrow and assassination of Muammar Gaddafi in October of 2011. It is noteworthy that the presence of jihadist representatives among Gaddafi's and Assad's opponents was also stated by high-ranking officials of the American intelligence community.¹⁸

Today, most of Muslim countries are politically unstable because, in addition to the terrorist threat from jihadists, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the contradictions of Pakistan and India over Kashmir, "the nuclear issue" of Iran remain unresolved. The situation in Afghanistan is extremely dangerous, especially after the NATO operation in this country and re-formatting of American military presence. All of this creates a potential for external interference in order to "adjust" ongoing processes in one's favor.

Saudi Arabia

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the largest country on the Arabian Peninsula. It borders Jordan and Iraq in the north, Kuwait in the northeast, Qatar, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates in the east, Oman in the southeast, and Yemen in the south. It is washed by the Persian Gulf in the northeast and the Red Sea — in the west. It is a homeland for two main sacred cities for Muslims all over the world — Mecca and Medina (that is why it is called the country of "two mosques").

¹⁸ Praveen Swami, "Libyan rebel commander admits his fighters have al-Qaeda links", The Telegraph, March 25, 2011.; Greg Miller, "Al-Qaeda infiltrating Syrian opposition, U.S. officials say", The Washington Post, February 16, 2012 .

According to the latest census (2010), the country's population exceeds 27 million people.¹⁹ Over 85% of that is Sunni Islam adherents. Approximately 10-15% of all inhabitants of the Kingdom are Shiite Muslims (they mostly populate the provinces annexed from Yemen in the 20th century — Najran, Jizan and Asir). According to foreign embassies, the number of migrants (including illegal immigrants) may exceed 10 million.²⁰ The official statistics of religious affiliation of migrants is absent from public access.

Religious freedom in Saudi Arabia is not recognized and is not protected by the laws of the Kingdom. The first article of the Basic Law (the Regulations) of Saudi Arabia (1992) defines this formation as "a sovereign Arab Islamic state". "Its religion is Islam, its Constitution is the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Prophet, and may Allah bless him."²¹ The country's legal system is totally based on the Hanbali Madh'hab (one of the law schools of Sunni Islam). Confession of any other religions except Islam is forbidden. There is no separation between state and religion. At the same time, Shiite Muslims face discrimination in employment, career, education, worship. Their representation in the authorities is minimal. According to the research by "*Open Doors*" (international charitable Christian organization), Saudi Arabia occupies one of the first places among countries where the rights of Christians are violated the most.²² In textbooks on various humanitarian subjects Jews and Christians are considered to be "the enemies of the true faith."²³

Saudi authorities allow people of other faiths to enter the country, but non-Muslim worship is prohibited. The country has a religious police ("Al-Mutawa"). The royal police officers constantly patrol streets and public places monitoring the observance of the canons of Islam. In case of violation the offender is subjected to punishment (from a fine to beheading). It is "Al-Mutawa" that informs citizens of the Kingdom and its guests of a ban to celebrate the secular New Year

¹⁹ <http://www.saudigazette.com.sa/index.cfm?method=home.regcon&contentID=2010112487888&archiveissuedate=24/11/2010>

²⁰ <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/rlf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>

²¹ <http://worldconstitutions.ru/?p=86>

²² http://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/worldwatch/saudi_arabia.php

²³ <http://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/Saudi%20Arabia%202015.pdf>

(according to the Christian calendar).²⁴ International human rights organizations traditionally point out gender inequality supported by the Kingdom authorities.²⁵

Since 2011 the Saudi government institutions have reinforced the repressive policy against the Shiites. These measures are explained by the need to strengthen security. It is important to mention the geopolitical competition between Riyadh and Tehran (the Islamic Republic of Iran considers itself a patron of Shiites around the world and tries to build its foreign policy in the region based on this principle), which manifests itself in Syria, Yemen, Bahrain, Iraq. In 2013-2014 many famous Shiite clerics in the Kingdom received long prison sentences or were sentenced to death. In October of 2014 a prominent religious figure Nimr al-Nimr was sentenced to death (arrested in 2012). In August of the same year Tawfiq al-Amr was sentenced to 12 years of imprisonment for his preaching activity.

Besides the Shiite leaders, Sunni dissidents also turn out to be in danger. Thus, in November of 2014 Miklif al-Shammari, a writer and Sunni thinker, was sentenced to two years of imprisonment for communicating with Shiite leaders and summoning a dialogue between these two branches in Islam as well as for his criticism of the authorities.²⁶ Often judicial institutions of the Kingdom use accusations against terrorism in their practice (referring to this definition in almost any case of criticism of the authorities). At the same time the new legislation on terrorism enforced in 2014 considers atheism as one of its manifestations. In 2014, a Shiite preacher al-Fadil Manasif was sentenced to 15 years of imprisonment and a fifteen-year ban on traveling abroad for his "terrorist activities".²⁷

However, all these facts do not impede strengthening strategic cooperation between Riyadh and Washington. Since 2012, the US government has allocated 24 billion dollars for sales of weapons to the Kingdom. At the same time, yielding to public opinion, the White House and the State Department randomly

²⁴ <http://islam-today.ru/novosti/2013/12/30/novyj-god-zapretili-v-saudovskoj-aravii/>

²⁵ <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2015/country-chapters/saudi-arabia>

²⁶ <http://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/Saudi%20Arabia%202015.pdf>

²⁷ <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2015/country-chapters/saudi-arabia>

voice formal statements of advisory nature concerning improving of the situation in the religious sphere and law enforcement practice in Saudi Arabia. For example, in 2015 the State Department demanded to revise the sentence of a blogger Raif Badawi.²⁸

Pakistan

Pakistan is an Islamic republic in South Asia (originated in 1947 during the collapse of British India). Washed by the waters of the Arabian Sea in the south, it's bordered by Iran in the south-west, Afghanistan in the north-west and north, China in the north-east and India in the east.

Pakistan is the sixth most populous country in the world (according to the statistics of 2013, there are about 193 million people including migrant workers), and the second largest country with Muslim population after Indonesia. The overwhelming majority of Pakistanis (96%) are Muslims: 75% of them are Sunnites, 25% — the Shiites. The remaining 4% are religious minorities of Hindus, Christians, Sikhs, Zoroastrians, and others.²⁹

The preamble of the Constitution of Pakistan (1973) states, “ Whereas sovereignty over the entire Universe belongs to Almighty Allah alone, and the authority to be exercised by the people of Pakistan within the limits prescribed by Him is a sacred trust; And whereas it is the will of the people of Pakistan to establish an order: Wherein the State shall exercise its powers and authority through the chosen representatives of the people; Wherein the principles of democracy, freedom, equality, tolerance and social justice, as enunciated by Islam, shall be fully observed; Wherein the Muslims shall be enabled to order their lives in the individual and collective spheres in accordance with the teachings and requirements of Islam as set out in the Holy Quran and Sunnah; Wherein adequate provision shall be made for the minorities freely to profess and practice their religions and develop their cultures”. However, only a Muslim has a right to become the president or prime minister of the

²⁸ <http://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/Saudi%20Arabia%202015.pdf>

²⁹ http://pakistanpaedia.com/religion/religion_in_pakistan.html

country. Furthermore, only Muslims have a right to serve as judges in the Federal Sharia Court (which has a right to cancel any law contradicting with Islam).³⁰

Pakistan is the only state where the Ahmadiyya movement is officially recognized by non-Muslim minority.³¹ Meanwhile, the number of Ahmadi Muslims in Pakistan is considered as the largest in the world (according to various estimates, it amounts to 2–5 million people). The Pakistani authorities and law enforcement officers apply the “blasphemy” lay against them. In 2013 alone there were 34 cases of people accused of this crime (and 18 Ahmadi Muslims were arrested).³² Since 1990, 60 Pakistani citizens have been executed on charges of blasphemy. While 17 were expecting (at the beginning of 2015) their death penalty, 19 received life sentences.³³

The country's authorities are ineffective in safety precautions for the country citizens and its visitors (it especially relates to the religious minorities suffering from violence and acts of terrorism). In March and September of 2013 there were suicide attacks against the Christian community of Joseph in Lahore and Church of All Saints in Peshawar. The attack in Peshawar was the largest one on Christian community in Pakistan (more than 80 people killed). Responsibility for the attack on the Church of All Saints was assumed by the Pakistani Taliban group “Dzhunud ul-Hifsa”. Established in the summer of 2013 under the wing of the radical Islamic movement “Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan”, “Dzhunud ul-Hifsa” declared that its goal was to attack foreigners and non-Muslim Pakistanis as a sign of protest against the US actions in Afghanistan and Pakistan.³⁴ In April of the same year there was an attack on the Shiite

³⁰ <http://worldconstitutions.ru/?p=34>

³¹ Ahmadi Muslim community was established on beliefs of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835–1908). He insisted that he was Mujaddid (divine reformer), the promised Mahdi (the image of a renewer of the faith). The followers of the movement Ahmadiyya call themselves Muslims or Ahmadi Muslims.

³² <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/rlf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>
More on the situation of Ahmadi Muslims in Pakistan.: <http://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=country&category=&publisher=IRBC&type=QUERYRESPONSE&coi=PAK&rid=&docid=45f1478f20&skip=0>

³³ <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2015/country-chapters/pakistan>

³⁴ <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2304029>

community in Quetta.³⁵ The famous Pakistani port Karachi remains to be one of the most dangerous places where regular conflicts between Sunnis and Shiites take place. Thus, in September of 2013 and September of 2014 there were recorded 750 deaths from such incidents, including the significant Shiite preacher Ali Abbas.³⁶ Armed violence still continues in Waziristan (a mountainous region in the northwest of the country where in February of 2006 the unrecognized Islamic state was proclaimed). As of 2015, Islamabad is yet to regain full control over the territory although the long conflict has led to appearance of approximately one million forced migrants.³⁷

In December of 2014 9 militants of the "Taliban" movement opened fire on a military school in Peshawar. During this attack 145 people were killed (the majority of these people were students aging 10 to 18), and 114 people received injuries of various severity. In comparison with other attacks in Pakistan, the attack on the school in Peshawar has reported the largest number of victims.³⁸

At the same time the mass media regularly publish appeals for violence against Ahmadi Muslims, Hindus, Jews.³⁹

Relations between the US and Pakistan are developing in a complicated and contradictory way. For years, Islamabad has been a strategic ally of Washington (especially during the Soviet presence in Afghanistan in 1979-1989.). However, after it became known that "terrorist number one" Osama bin Laden resided in Pakistan, relations between the two countries cooled down (this led to a decline in size of assistance to Pakistan which was provided by the Act of 2009 on expanded partnership and which expired in 2014). However, today Islamabad is regarded as an important direction of American foreign policy, despite the incompliance of the country with the high standards of religious freedom. So, in 2015 the Obama administration requested from the Congress assistance to Pakistan in the amount of 882 million US dollars.⁴⁰ All this discredits the "special care"

³⁵ <http://www.svoboda.org/archive/radio-svoboda-news/663/016564/16564.html?id=24542667>

³⁶ <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2015/country-chapters/pakistan>

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/12/16/world/asia/pakistan-peshawar-school-attack/>

³⁹ <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/rlf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>

⁴⁰ <http://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/Pakistan%202015.pdf>

statements of the US government in terms of protecting freedom throughout the world in all its manifestations.

Indonesia

Indonesia is a country in Southeast Asia. Its population (according to the census in 2010) is more than 237.5 million people.⁴¹ Indonesia is the world's fourth most-populous country and the fourteenth largest country in size.

Approximately 87% of Indonesia's population are Muslims, 7% Protestants, 3% Catholics, 1,5% Hindus. Approximately 1,25% of people are other religious groups (Buddhists, followers of different Christian denominations, as well as traditional indigenous beliefs). The majority of Indonesian Muslims are Sunnites (more than 207 million people). Besides them there are other branches (from 1 to 3 million — the Shiites, 200-400 thousand — Ahmadi Muslims). 20 million people in Indonesia (mainly on the islands of Java, Kalimantan) practice traditional religious cults of pre-Islamic origin (it is not uncommon to see the combination of different faiths).

The case with religious freedom in Indonesia remains highly controversial, despite the high standards of religious rights declared by official Jakarta. In accordance with the law (the corresponding standard is stipulated in the country's acting constitution of 1945), Indonesian citizens are obligated to profess one of six officially approved religions: Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Catholicism, Protestantism and Confucianism. In fact, other religions and atheism are prohibited.⁴²

Religious affiliation must be indicated in the corresponding column of the identity card or international passport of Indonesian citizens. As a result, atheists or people professing other beliefs (except those which are stipulated in the legislation) are forced to provide false information in their papers. Moreover, atheist beliefs can entail criminal liability. It is known, for example, that an Indonesian citizen, Alexander Aan, was imprisoned for posting a statement on his page in social networks that there was now God. He was sentenced to 2,5 years.⁴³

⁴¹ <http://www.indonesiainquiry.com/academia/research-resources/census-data-and-statistics/>

⁴² <http://worldconstitutions.ru/?p=29>

⁴³ <http://marinaresidence.net/zhitel-indonezii-provedet-v-tjurme-2-5-goda-iz-za.html>

There are regular violations of rights of the Christian minority who comprise approximately 10% of the 254-million population. For instance, the day before important Christian holidays, especially in regions of dense Muslim population (the provinces of Aceh, East Java, Madura island), representatives of radical Islamic organizations perform anti-Christian campaigns: attacks on church buildings with arsons and damage to property, attempts to stall religious rites, beating of believers. The known resonant case was the Islamists' aggressive actions against foreign tourists in the province of Aceh during the New Year celebration, as a result of which several people were injured. In general, such facts are not widespread and generally suppressed by official authorities; the police enhance protection of churches before Christian holidays. However, radical groups using violence often find patrons among the high-ranking officials which seriously complicates assuming measures against such extremists.

There is direct evidence of Christians being oppressed on the premises of local authorities. Thus, again and again disputable administrative decisions were made concerning property belonging to Catholic or Protestant religious organizations, including temples, which caused public indignation from the Christian community.

The nontraditional Indonesian Islamic movements are subjected to serious oppression, particularly the Shiites, who make up about 2% of the population. Many Sunni organizations regularly conduct boisterous public campaigns only to discredit this branch of Islam. Violence has become a trend as well.⁴⁴

In 2013, 230 assaults on religious minorities in Indonesia were registered, and in 2014, 107 such incidents were recorded. On June 1, 2014 Islamists attacked village Pangukan on Java Island populated by followers of local non-Islamic cults. In July 2014, Lukman Saifuddin, Minister of Religious Affairs, supported followers of Bahá'í teachings.⁴⁵ However, Gavaman Fawzi, Minister of Interior Affairs of

⁴⁴ L. Efimova. Islamic extremism in Indonesia //South East Asia: topical problems of development. 2011. № 17. P. 90-104.

⁴⁵ The founder of the movement is Bahá'u'lláh (1817–1892). He is honored as the last one of "God's personifications". It also includes Abraham, Moses, Buddha, Zoroaster, Krishna, Jesus, Muhammad. According to Bahá'u'lláh, there is only one religion — "the faith of God's, unchanging, eternal in the past, eternal in the future" Bahá'í World Centre is located in Haifa.

Indonesia, rejected this idea because Baha'i faith is not listed among the six officially approved religions, and offered Baha'i adherents to choose one of them.⁴⁶

Syria

Syria is a country in the Middle East bordering with Lebanon and the Mediterranean Sea in the west, Turkey in the north, Iraq in the east, Jordan in the south, and Israel in the southwest. According to the United Nations Population Foundation, the total population of Syria in 2011 amounted to 20,8 million people.⁴⁷

Sunni Muslims make up 74% of the population (Arabs, Kurds, the descendants of Muhaji immigrants from the North Caucasus). Other Muslim groups include Alawites (President Bashar al-Assad' family belongs to this group), Shiites (about 13%). The Druze make up 3% of the population. Christian population in Syria has significantly decreased in recent years due to emigration (about 8% in total). There is a small group of Yezidi (80 000 people).

Started in 2011 the Syrian crisis has now grown into a large-scale civil war with external interference (in various degrees the United States, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Israel have been involved in the Syrian conflict supporting the opponents of the current government while Russia supports Bashar al-Assad). As a result, the country has de-facto ceased to exist as a unified legal and military-political territory. In 2015, half of it went under control of the ISIL militants.

In the territory controlled by the militants Christian rights and those of other religious minorities are consistently violated. Before the war, Christians were represented in top-bracket leadership, held firm positions in business, science and culture. The legislation of the Syrian Arab Republic guaranteed (as it still does today, de-jure) their equal rights with followers of other religions.

As the armed opposition became more radically-minded jihadist terrorist groups — “Islamic state” and “Al-Nusra Dzhabhat” — came to the forefront. The medieval interpretation of Islamic norms underlying in their ideology involves

⁴⁶ <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2015/country-chapters/indonesia>

⁴⁷ <http://www.un.org/ru/development/surveys/docs/population2011.pdf>

assuming discriminatory measures against non-Muslims. The Christian community representatives living in the territories under Islamist control are not an exception.

Jihadists impose a "jizya" tax on Christians and, at the threat of corporal punishment, prohibit demonstration of religious symbols as well as conducting of regular services. In "released" areas there are frequent cases of extrajudicial massacres, kidnapping of Christians for ransom, sale of girls into sexual slavery, plunder of personal and church property. Blown-up and burnt-down Christian church buildings have become an ominous sign of "Syria without Assad".

Among the most blatant crimes committed against Christian minority in Syria during the crisis are the following incidents:

In January of 2012, the Most Holy Virgin Orthodox monastery near Seydnai in Damascus area came under mortar fire.⁴⁸

In September of 2013, militants of "Dzhabhat An-Nusra" raided the town of Maalyula in Damascus area where they plundered and partially burned an ancient Church of Saints Sergius and Bacchus. During the second assault of Nusra followers on the town in December 2013 the Orthodox monastery of St. Thecla was seriously damaged. The terrorists kidnapped a group of nuns and the Mother Superior of the monastery who were only released in March of 2014.⁴⁹

In March of 2014, in the province of Latakia militants attacked a mainly Armenian town Kessab at the border with Turkey. As a result, about 700 families of local residents were forced to vacate their homes.⁵⁰

In September of 2014, ISIL supporters exploded the Armenian Church of the Holy Martyrs in Deir ez-Zor erected in 1991 in the memory of genocide victims.⁵¹

In February of 2015, ISIL detachments launched a punitive raid on settlements in Habur Valley in the north-eastern province of Hasakah, an area of dense residence of Assyrian Christians. About 1,000 Assyrian families fled to cities of

⁴⁸ http://www.ng.ru/politic/2012-04-04/6_crisis.html

⁴⁹ <http://trueinform.ru/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=19823>

⁵⁰ <http://www.notum.info/news/politika/tragediya-v-kesabe-novyij-genocid-armyan-ili-podkop-pod-erdogana>

⁵¹ <http://www.panarmenian.net/rus/news/182741/>

Hasakah and Qamishli to escape persecution and seek protection of the government troops and Kurdish militia detachments. Jihadists defiled and partially destroyed several religious buildings. As a result of the raid more than 200 local people were transported in an unknown direction, fate still unknown.

In April of 2015, on Catholic Easter day ISIL militants launched another assault on the Assyrian community and exploded the Church of the Immaculate Virgin Mary in Tall Nasri village belonging to this denomination. The church was one of the largest in the governorate of Al-Hasakah.⁵²

Some disturbing reports of oppression of local Christians are received from the city of Idlib (north-west of the country) captured by extremists in late March of 2015. Militants of "Ahrar al-Sham" deported several tens of Christian families from the city. A priest of Orthodox Church of Antioch, Ibrahim Farah, is reported missing.⁵³

Representatives of Christian clergy are persecuted in territories occupied by militants. In January of 2012, a celibate priest of the Orthodox Church of Antioch, Basil Nassar, was murdered by militants in Hama.⁵⁴

In April of 2013 in the province of Aleppo one of Islamist factions abducted the Orthodox Metropolitan of Aleppo Pavel Yazidzhi and Syrian Jacobite Archbishop Yuzanna Ibrahim. There is no reliable information on their fate.⁵⁵

In July of 2013, Italian Jesuit P. Dalolo of Raqqa, known for his sympathies with the opposition, was abducted and later killed by Islamic militants.

In April of 2014, Jesuit monk F. Vanderlyuht of Homs who lived in Syria since 1964 was shot dead by an unknown person.

Regular mortar and rocket militant attacks are targeted at the areas in Damascus densely populated by Christians (Bab Tuma, Bab Sharqi) and Aleppo (Sulaymaniyah).

Unfortunately, the United States and the allies in fact obstruct possibilities for a peaceful settlement of the conflict relying on the "regime change" and

⁵² <http://www.sedmitza.ru/text/5512808.html>

⁵³ <http://www.anna-news.info/node/32311>

⁵⁴ <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/news/51201.htm>

⁵⁵ <http://newsru.com/world/23apr2013/kidnap.html>

overthrow of President Assad whose legitimacy is being denied (since 2012 the US Embassy in Damascus has been closed).

Iraq

Iraq is a country in the Middle East, in the Mesopotamian Plain and the valley of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The country borders with Turkey in the north, with Iran in the east, with Kuwait in the southeast, Saudi Arabia in the south, Jordan in the southwest, and Syria in the west. Iraqi territory is washed by the Persian Gulf in the south-east.

In 2003, it was Iraq that became a testing ground for implementation of the US project "Greater Middle East" which implied "democratization" of the huge macroregion from Afghanistan to the Maghreb countries. As a result of the military intervention of the US and its allies the regime of Saddam Hussein was overthrown (he had ruled for 24 years, since 1979) and occupation of the "international coalition forces" was established de facto. After the US began withdrawal of its troops in 2011 the country plunged into chaos, terror and inter-religious confrontation. In Iraq ISIL showed itself in the fullest degree as a challenge of international importance.

Currently, there are about 32 million people in Iraq. 97% of the population are Muslims. Shiites make up from 60 to 65%, and the Sunnis — from 32 to 37%. Approximately 3% of the population are Christians, Yazidis and other religious groups and movements (Baha'i). A significant decrease of Christian population has been notable in the last five years (reduction by 300,000 people).⁵⁶

During Saddam Hussein's rule, despite his commitment to authoritarian methods, the state pursued a policy of religious pluralism when all non-Muslim communities in Iraq were supported by the authorities through a special Ministry of Religious Affairs. The government assisted in constructing temples and inciting of extremism was suppressed. In fact, the government maintained a secular regime that allowed Christians to hold high positions in ministries and security agencies.

⁵⁶ <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>

After the overthrow of Hussein's regime anti-Christian attitudes spread rapidly in the society and, as a result, the matter with the rights of non-Muslim minorities in Iraq began to deteriorate. Since 2003, attacks on churches, kidnapping and murder of priests and parishioners have become more frequent.

Currently, there are about 400 thousand Christians in Iraq, united in 30 communities, which are divided into four main groups: Catholics (about 278 thousand), Orthodox (about 115 thousand), followers of some ancient Oriental churches (about 13 thousand), Protestants and Baptists (about 6 thousand).

When terrorist organizations in Iraq became more active in the summer of 2014 the situation with Christians became even more aggravated. ISIL supporters force non-Muslim representatives to convert to Islam, leave the territory under their control or pay a special tax which does not guarantee their safety. Militants often hold public executions of Christians and other religious minorities for their refusal to change their religion, and Christian women are sold into slavery and subjected to sexual violence. ISIL supporters use Christian temples as warehouses and prisons and openly destroy worship places of non-Muslim religions including ancient monuments.

This is the main reason why most Christians emigrated to the United States, Great Britain, Canada, the Netherlands and Iraq's neighboring countries. Another part of them moved to the Kurdistan Autonomous Region (KAR) of Iraq where the authorities provide conditions for safe accommodation of religious minorities. 130 thousand Christians fled there from just one province of Nineveh, and now there are almost no Christians in the city of Mosul and the surrounding area.

The issue of special significance is persecution of Iraqi Yezidis⁵⁷ who are subjected to a policy of genocide conducted by ISIL supporters and manifested in the physical destruction of Yezidi religious community. As a result of ISIL activity more than 400 thousand Yezidis became refugees and relocated to the KAR, Syria and Turkey. About 5 thousand representatives of Yezidi community, mostly

⁵⁷ Yazidism is a syncretic religion with elements of paganism, ancient Indo-Iranian beliefs, Judaism, Christianity (Nestorian) and Islam. Yezidis believe in one God and his emanation – the Highest angel Melek Taus (Peacock Angel). The founder of the religion is Sheikh Adi (1074-1164) who is considered a prophet by the Yezidis.

women and children, are held captive by the militants. There are recorded blatant violations of human rights (trafficking of human organs, sale into slavery, forced marriages with militants, rape, being used as human shield during international air raids, etc.).⁵⁸

Currently, the leadership of Iraq is trying to improve the situation of religious minorities and reduce the outflow of this part of population from the country. The government decided to allocate funds to support existing churches and construct new ones.

However, according to the “Open Doors” international Christian charity organization, Iraq is the third among the countries where Christians are persecuted the most.⁵⁹

Iran

The Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) is a country in Western Asia. It borders with Iraq in the west, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Turkey and the unrecognized Nagorno-Karabakh Republic in the north-west, Turkmenistan in the north and Afghanistan and Pakistan in the east. The north of the country is washed by the Caspian Sea and the south is washed by the Persian and Oman gulfs of the Indian Ocean.

Iran holds an important strategic military position being simultaneously a Middle Eastern, Caucasian, Central Asian and Caspian state. All the sore points of these regions are somehow related with Iran. That is why in reality most of the seemingly internal problems of the regions are solved or can be effectively solved only with assistance of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Among such problems are ethnic and religious conflicts, military and economic confrontation, conditions of refugees, negative consequences of drug trafficking, terrorism and separatism.

Iran plays a significant role in economic development of South-West Asia and the neighboring regions as a supplier of hydrocarbon natural resources as well as a transit country of oil and natural gas products. Possessing a developed

⁵⁸ <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2015/country-chapters/iraq>

⁵⁹ <https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/world-watch-list/iraq/>

industry, this Islamic Republic is able to maintain in combat readiness its one of the most numerous and well-equipped armies in the region. According to various sources, it numbers from 540 to 900 thousand soldiers. These factors allow Iran to be an influential player in the regional security. Iran has a relative control over the Strait of Hormuz, a strategically important transport avenue for leading powers of the world. More than 40% of the world's oil supplies is transported by sea through the strait.⁶⁰

As the largest country with Shiite majority (there are only 3 other such countries — Iraq, Azerbaijan and Bahrain), Iran plays a role of a patron for all Shiites.

Following the Islamic revolution of 1979 and establishment of theocracy, Iran, being a US ally during the Shah's reign, was considered as, perhaps, the main threat to stability in the Middle East and a challenge for the Western world. At the beginning of 2000s the situation became even more acute in light of Iran's nuclear program. All these attempts were accompanied with successive opposition to the US and the West in general, both in political and ideological realms. In 2012 and for a three-year period Iran became a leader of the Non-Alignment Movement.

Today there are more than 78 million people in Iran.⁶¹ Muslims make up 99% of the total population (90% — the Shiites and 9% — Sunnites). There is no available official statistics on the number of followers of a mystical Islamic branch, Sufism. But some analytical materials estimate the number of Sufis from 2 to 5 million people. Two of the largest non-Muslim communities are represented by Baha'is and Christians. Baha'is and Christians account for about 300,000 people (the figure for the former is slightly higher). The first group is mainly centered around Tehran and Semnan. Christians are mainly ethnic Armenians (most of them live in Tehran and Isfahan).⁶²

According to the Constitution (1979), Iran is an Islamic republic. Shia Islam is declared as the state religion. The preamble of the Constitution states that, "The Constitution creates conditions for continuation of the revolution in the country and

⁶⁰ <http://russiancouncil.ru/common/upload/WP14Russia-Iran.pdf>

⁶¹ <http://www.amar.org.ir/Portals/1/Iran/census-2.pdf>

⁶² <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>

abroad, and through developing relations with other Islamic and popular movements tries to find a way to form the united global Islamic Ummah". The head of IRI is called "Rahbar" (supreme leader). He defines the general policy of the country, is the commander-in-chief of Iranian armed forces and the head of military intelligence. The supreme leader appoints key positions in the state: chairpersons of courts, the head of the police and commanders of all kinds of military forces as well as six out of twelve members of the Guardian Council for the Constitution. The supreme leader is elected by the Board of Experts (authoritative experts on Islam and Islamic law; today 86 people) and is accountable to it.⁶³

Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians⁶⁴ are officially recognized as religious minorities and are allowed to perform religious rites and establish communities, but not to conduct proselytism (punished to the extent of death). Nevertheless, in the Parliament (Majlis) 5 of 290 seats are reserved for the minority representatives (2 for Armenian Christians, 1 for Assyrian Christians, 1 for Jews and 1 for Zoroastrians). Sunnites have no special quota in the Parliament. All minorities have the right to vote, but cannot be elected as president (second highest position in the state following Rahbar).

The most difficult relationships are seen between the Iranian authorities and Baha'is who are considered sectarians and outlawed. Baha'i adherents are frequently persecuted. As of May 2014, 136 Baha'is were imprisoned in Iranian jails. Their cemetery in Shiraz was destroyed. Baha'i supporters are frequently accused of espionage for the "illegal Zionist entity", Israel, wherewith Iran has no contacts whatsoever (taking into account that Baha'i center is located in Haifa, Israel). Conversion from Shi'ism to Christianity is drastically blocked and persecuted by the authorities whereas proselytism of Christian priests is also carefully but strictly suppressed.

There are many difficulties in building relationships between the authorities and Sunnites (a geopolitical rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia and a

⁶³ <http://constitutions.ru/?p=140>

⁶⁴ Zoroastrianism is one of the oldest religions in the world, originated in the revelation of the prophet Zoroaster Spitama. It was widespread in the ancient and medieval Iran, but later expelled by Islam. Currently, the number of Zoroastrians in Iran is estimated as 45 thousand people.

consistent activity of Sunni extremists in the southern regions of Iran play a large part). Obstacles for constructing mosques as well as celebrating independent Islamic holidays (Eid al-Adha, Eid al-Fitr) appear. In March of 2014, the police arrested several members of Sufi orders (brotherhood) of Nimatullahi.⁶⁵

Egypt

The Arab Republic of Egypt is the most populous country (over 82 million people) of the Middle East and the second on the African continent. It is located in North Africa and the Sinai Peninsula in Asia. It borders with the Gaza Strip and Israel in the northeast, Sudan in the south and Libya in the west. In the north the territory is washed by the Mediterranean Sea, and in the east by the Red Sea. The seas are connected through the artificial Suez Canal.

Egypt is the heart of the Arab world. It was the center of the ideology of pan-Arabism during the governing of Gamal Abdel Nasser, it played a vital role in promoting peace in the Middle East at the time of Anwar Sadat and his successor, Hosni Mubarak, and was in the focus of international politics because of "Arab Spring" events in 2011. The powerful Egyptian army is of great importance in term of safety in other Arab countries including small oil-possessing states of the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula along the Red Sea. The crisis in Egypt is likely to affect the supply of oil from the region if the Suez Canal is blocked. Through this shipping artery from 8 to 12% of international trade flows and 22% of all container shipping takes place. This transport channel allows to save thousands of miles in shipping between Asia and Europe, Asia and the east coast of America.⁶⁶

After the historic reconciliation with Israel, Egypt received significant economic assistance from the United States. It helped Egypt to acquire contemporary American weapons.

Washington irrevocably supported Hosni Mubarak, but after he was overthrown in 2011 and replaced by a convinced Islamist Mohamed Morsi, the US

⁶⁵ <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2015/country-chapters/iran?page=3>

⁶⁶ <http://www.ehorussia.com/new/node/8129>

found itself in a difficult situation when Morsi began to gradually concentrate more and more power in hands of “Muslim Brotherhood” instead of democratic reforms.⁶⁷ Morsi’s exile by the Egyptian army headed by Field-Marshal Abdul-Fattah Al-Sisi in early July 2013 forced the United States to take a hold. The US laws prohibit assistance to countries where leadership is taken via military coup. Up-to-date, officially, Washington has not qualified the actions of the Egyptian military a coup.

Over the entire period following the collapse of the Soviet Union Egypt has consistently developed constructive relations with the Russian Federation supporting Moscow in its campaigns in the North Caucasus and condemning the terrorist methods of struggle against Russia. In many ways this approach (as well as the desire to maintain secular power in the Middle East) has determined a skeptical attitude of the Kremlin toward the “Arab Spring” and danger of radical islamization of the largest country of the region.

Currently, the population of Egypt is 85 million people. 90% of them are Sunni Muslims and 10% are Christians. Most Christians belong to the Coptic Orthodox Church (all other Christian denominations do not exceed two percent of the total population). The number of Shiite Muslims is less than 1%.⁶⁸

Religious and political dynamics in the country is determined by a deep split between the supporters of secular and Islamic models of statehood. President Hosni Mubarak (the head of the country since 1981) overthrown in 2011 acted as a guarantor of secular authoritarian model and balance of interests between the Muslim majority and the Christian minority.

In 2012, after the revolution, Islamist Mohamed Morsi won the election, and “Muslim Brotherhood” representatives gained the majority in the national parliament. During Morsi’s brief government the Constitution was adopted containing certain restrictions of believers’ rights. Thus, the Basic Law guaranteed freedom for believers of three Abrahamic religions — Islam, Christianity and Judaism, but

⁶⁷ “Brothers — Moslems” is an International religious political association founded in 1928 by a teacher, Hassan al-Banna in Ismailia (Egypt). Since 1933 the headquarters of the organization has been to Cairo. In December 2013 it was recognized as a terrorist in Egypt.

⁶⁸ <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/egypt-population/>

excluded followers of other faiths, such as Egyptian Bahá'ís and non-believers. At the same time, Sharia laws derivable from the Koran were proclaimed as the main source of legislation.⁶⁹ During Morsi's governing assaults on Coptic Christians and their discrimination became more frequent. In 2012, the situation on the Sinai Peninsula became more serious (when even Israel agreed on the Egyptian military contingent entering the region despite violation of the Camp David Accord). So, in August 2012 during a militant attack 16 Egyptian border guards were killed. Also other armed conflicts between Islamists and supporters of secular government took place.

All of that set grounds for the military coup on July 4, 2013, supported not only by the army representatives (they were the driving force of the action), but also the secular opposition, the Coptic church, a famous public figure and Nobel Peace Prizeman (2005), Mohamed El-Baradei.⁷⁰ Such a turn of events (followed by resignation and arrest of President Morsi), on the one hand, led to a certain political stabilization in the country. But, on the other hand, strategically, it failed to overcome the existing social-political split and even aggravated it.

There were a number of terrorist acts and attacks carried out by radical Islamists. In August of 2013 alone 42 Coptic churches were attacked by radicals. 37 of them were destroyed, and 6 Christians were killed. By the end of 2014, the death toll from these attacks had amounted to 29 people.⁷¹ In December of 2013 a suicide bomber carried out a terrorist act next to the police administration in Mansoura (Dakahlia Governorate, 120 km north of the capital). 17 people died, namely, 16 military officers and 1 civilian.⁷² In 2014, a jihadist terrorist group "Ansar Beit al-Maqdis" threatened foreigners with attacks unless they leave Egypt.⁷³ As a result of two assaults in the Sinai Peninsula in October of 2014, more than 30 security officers were killed (this action was the most severe one since the overthrow of Morsi).⁷⁴ After that the security forces announced coercive evac-

⁶⁹ <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/11/29/egypt-new-constitution-mixed-support-rights>

⁷⁰ <http://www.ca-news.org/news:1072787/>

⁷¹ <http://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/Egypt%202015.pdf>

⁷² <http://www.rosbalt.ru/main/2014/10/24/1331069.html>

⁷³ <http://izvestia.ru/news/566094>

⁷⁴ http://www.gazeta.ru/social/news/2014/10/25/n_6592493.shtml

uation and demolition of more than 800 houses located just one kilometer from the border with the Gaza Strip and Israel. This eventually led to the demolition of a large part of Rafah, a border town. Authorities reported it was necessary to block the tunnels under the border with Gaza that, according to them, were used by militants for their sorties. However, on January 29, 2015, there were more explosions resulting in at least 26 people killed.⁷⁵ Attacks on the police and other such incidents became almost an everyday event on the peninsula.

Growth of terrorism led to strengthening repressive policy of the authorities. In July of 2014 Egypt's Interior Affairs Ministry officially recognized that after Morsi's resignation 22,000 people were arrested most of whom were suspected of supporting "Muslim Brotherhood". The organization was declared terrorist. According to Egyptian human rights defenders, 41,000 people were arrested from July 2013 till May 2014. In 2014, the campaign of arrests was expanded (which was also extended over the left-wing activists who oppose the government and conducted for security reasons).⁷⁶

On 21 April, 2015 Cairo Criminal Court sentenced Mohammed Morsi and 12 other leaders of "Muslim Brotherhood" to 20 years in a maximum security prison. They were charged on the case of the tragic events at the presidential palace "Al-Ittihad" in the Egyptian capital at the end of 2012 (at that time during the disorders six people died and more than 100 were injured), and a mass escape of Islamists from prison during the revolutionary upheavals.⁷⁷ Morsi and 16 other Islamists were sentenced to death on 15 May, 2015.⁷⁸ A month later, the final sentence on the case was passed. Besides, the court also sentenced to death the leader of "Muslim Brotherhood" Mohammed Badie.⁷⁹

In total, for one and a half years after the dismissal of former Egyptian president 2,600 people were killed in armed violence (and 700 from these 2600 people are the policemen) and prisons became overcrowded by 160%.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ <http://www.rg.ru/2015/01/30/sinay-site.html>

⁷⁶ <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2015/country-chapters/egypt>

⁷⁷ <http://vz.ru/news/2015/4/21/741226.html>

⁷⁸ <https://news.mail.ru/politics/22046263/?frommail=1>

⁷⁹ http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/news/2015/06/16/n_7291977.shtml

⁸⁰ <http://mignews.com.ua/sobitiya/inukraine/5776510.html>

Turkey

The Republic of Turkey is a country located in South-West Asia and partly (about 3% of the territory with 20% of the population) — in South-Eastern Europe (Eastern Thrace). The main part of the country lies on the Anatolian peninsula and the Armenian Highland, the smaller one — on the Balkan peninsula between the Black and Mediterranean seas. Turkey is bordered by Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Iran in the east, by Iraq and Syria in the south and by Greece and Bulgaria in the west. The country is washed by four seas: the Black, the Mediterranean, Aegean and Marmara. The country's population exceeds 76 million people.⁸¹

99% of the population is Muslim, most of them are Sunni Muslims and followers of Hanbalites. According to various estimates, from 15 to 20 million Alevis live here being followers of a religious system that combines elements of Sunni and Shiite Islam as well as local traditions (Alevi themselves estimate their number at 25 million people).⁸² Other religious groups (Shia Muslims, Christians of different denominations, Yazidis, Baha'i) are located mainly in Istanbul and other large cities. Turkey is a spiritual and administrative center of the first local Orthodox Church – Patriarchate of Constantinople. The seat of its Ecumenical Patriarch is located in Istanbul. Many Orthodox parishes in Turkey and other neighboring countries submit to the Patriarchate.

Turkey is the first country in the world where the Muslim religion was separated from the state. This happened as a result of the reforms of Mustafa Kemal (Ataturk), who established republican principles and secularism as the basis of the new Turkish state. After a military coup in 1980 a strategy of "Turkish Islamic synthesis" was adopted when the government started to rely more on the religious institutions.⁸³ In 2002 when "Justice and Development Party" came to power (its leader, a brilliant politician Recep Erdogan Tayyip), Islamization

⁸¹ <http://www.turkstat.gov.tr/UstMenu.do?metod=temelist>

⁸² D. Zhigulskaya. Alevits in the context of social policy of Turkey //Theory and practice of social development. 2013. - № 3.- P. 147-148.

⁸³ <http://www.turkishnews.ru/politika-i-obschestvo-turcii/article/religiya-i-politika-v-turcii>

considerably increased, although today, according to surveys, about two-thirds of respondents oppose practicing the Sharia law in everyday life.⁸⁴

The Turkish Constitution (1982) guarantees religious freedom and prohibits religious discrimination. At the same time the government pursues a patronizing policy towards Sunni Islam. The state fulfills it through the Office of Religious Affairs (Diyanet), founded in 1924. Its functions are regulated by Article 136 of the Basic Law. All Sunni clerics are employees of the Diyanet and get civilian salaries.⁸⁵ The Diyanet has a department for Public Affairs that commissions its religion advisers to other countries, both Muslim and non-Muslim. Turkey promotes its interests abroad through structures that do not have any opportunity for public activities within its borders (or even are in confrontation with the government).⁸⁶

"On paper Turkey may look like a secular state — says Izettin Dogan, a prominent Alevi — but from the point of view of international law it is really a Sunni Islamic state."⁸⁷ His adherents have serious trouble trying to build places of worship (not mosques, but cemevi). These buildings do not have the appropriate status and solicit no support from the Diyanet. In Alevi representatives' opinion, they need about 40,000 cemevi (whereas today there are only about 3,000). They continue to demands cemevi as places for worshiping to be officially recognized, yet without success.

There is still a practice of turning some former Orthodox churches into mosques. It happened with the Byzantine church of Saint Sophia in Trabzon (XII century). For 50 years it had been a museum, but then in July 2013 it became

⁸⁴ <http://carnegie.ru/events/?fa=3422>

<http://sanat.bugun.com.tr/turkiye-nin-dindarligi-bu-kitapta-haberi-207998>

Turkey was the first Muslim country, which officially banned women to wear hijab in 1925. However, in 2013-2015 many restrictions on its wearing in public schools and the army were canceled (though it was the army that had been considered the guarantor of the secular state for a long time).

⁸⁵ <http://worldconstitutions.ru/?p=84>

⁸⁶ The most striking example of such a partnership is the work of a famous Turkish preacher Fethullah Gülen (who now is living in the United States). Gülen movement promotes the educational projects aimed at "Turkization of Islam" and "Islamization of the Turkish world". More details: <http://carnegieendowment.org/2014/02/04/g%C3%BClen-movement-and-turkish-soft-power>

⁸⁷ <http://voprosik.net/religioznaya-politika-v-turcii/>

a mosque.⁸⁸ Non-Muslim faiths face different administrative barriers (denial of visas) in employment of foreigners.

For many years, the issue with the Orthodox seminary on the island of Halki (founded in 1844) has not been solved. It was closed in 1971 (7 years before foreigners were forbidden to visit it). This decision caused considerable damage to theological training of the clergy of the Constantinople Patriarchate and its situation in general (according to the laws of Turkey only the republic citizens are allowed to take the highest positions of the Ecumenical Patriarch, and they can only get theological education abroad). In May of 2015, Turkish mass media reported that President Erdogan proposed the following condition: opening of the seminary in exchange for constructing a mosque in Greek Thessaloniki. Subsequently Metine Kyulyunk, a member of "Justice and Development Party" specified that the question was about a mosque "Fethiye-Jami 'in Athens (the only European capital where there is no mosque).⁸⁹

With Recep Erdogan coming to power in Turkey anti-Semitism manifestations significantly increased (especially after a scandal with the "freedom flotilla" in May 2010⁹⁰ and events of the "Arab Spring" in Egypt in 2011). In this situation anti-Israeli rhetoric was actively used by the Turkish leader, not to mention mass media. Active involvement of Ankara in a Middle East policy (especially in a civil conflict in Syria on the side of opponents of President Bashar al-Assad and support of Egyptian President and an Islamist Mohammed Morsi) has intensified the Islamist discourse in the country (officially and unofficially).⁹¹

A number of radical groups related with terrorist activities (such as the "Islamic Front of the Conquerors of the Great East") consider the Justice and Development Party as a pro-Western force.⁹²

⁸⁸ <http://golosislama.ru/news.php?id=14919>

⁸⁹ <http://mission-center.com/ru/pravoslavnje-novosti/1-pravoslavnje-novosti/20879-gon-turkey-seminary-halki>

⁹⁰ The incident between the Israel Defense Forces (Operation "Sea Breeze") and activists of "Free Gaza" who were trying to break the Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip and were detained by the Israeli security forces.

⁹¹ <http://isrageo.com/2014/08/21/erdo101/>

⁹² <http://kavkaz.sfedu.ru/sites/default/files/Tsibenko%20Hizbullah%20and%20the%20Turkish%20polemics%20on%20radical%20Islam.pdf>

Yemen

The Republic of Yemen is a country located in the south of the Arabian Peninsula in Southwest Asia. It is bordered by Saudi Arabia and Oman. It's washed by the Red Sea and the Arabian Sea. Yemen has great strategic importance. Its location on the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, one of the most important straits for international maritime transport, is a passage for ships coming from Europe and to Europe via the Suez Canal. Every day in both directions millions of barrels of oil are transported: from the Mediterranean Sea through the Suez Canal and from Saudi oil refineries – to the Asian market.

Yemen's population is 25.4 million people. Most citizens of the republic are Muslims. Approximately 65% of Yemen's Muslims are Sunnites (followers of Shafi'i madhab, one of the Islamic law schools), and 35% — Shiites. All other religious groups (Jews, Christians, Hindus, and Baha'is) are less than 0.5%.⁹³

Despite the fact that Yemeni lands have a history of many thousands of years, today's Yemen is a young state, and its borders were defined only in 1990 after uniting the North and South Yemen. The republic appeared after eight years of civil war between monarchists and republicans, and the South Yemen chose the pro-Soviet orientation in 1970. In 1994, after uniting two Yemeni, the republic had to go through another civil conflict. The task of social and political consolidation has not been solved for the period of the republic existence. For all this time the local tribal armed groups have retained considerable autonomy from the central government interference and submitted to the traditions and leaders' authority, not the Constitution.

Huthis, Zaidi branch of Shi'ite Islam, play a special role in political life of Yemen. The group takes its name from the dominant family of the tribe. A religious leader Hussein Badruddin al Houthi (1956-2004), a former member of the Yemeni Parliament had a great part in consolidation of the movement. After his death in 2004 (and the mass repression of the government against his supporters) the fight of Huthis with the government intensified.⁹⁴ All this time Huthis

⁹³ http://islam-today.ru/islam_v_mire/bliznij-vostok/jemen/

⁹⁴ <http://rusk.ru/newsdata.php?idar=412342>

accused the authorities of neglecting the needs of Shiites in general and Zaidi tribes in particular, as well as a one-sided course of the government towards Saudi Arabia.

In 2009, a new factor leading to a conflict was “Al-Qaeda” penetration into Yemen and its reinforcement there. “Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula” (AQAP) is one of the most dangerous operating branches of the terrorist organization. It controls a part of the territory in the south of Yemen. Also “Al-Qaeda” is partly supported by so-called “people’s committees”.

In 2012 Huthis actively participated in an overthrow of Yemen's long-term leader Ali Abdullah Saleh (became a leader in North Yemen in 1978, and the united Yemen in 1990). But they did not receive any representation in the new government and continued to fight. Escalation of the conflict happened in 2014. In January of 2015 Huthis took control over Yemeni capital, and in March over Aden. President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi fled to Saudi Arabia. However, they met stiff AQAP resistance in the south of the country. In February if 2015 "Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula" announced its union with the "Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant" (ISIL) and gave their pledge of loyalty to its leader Abu al-Baghdadi.⁹⁵

Saudi Arabia and Iran actively interfered in the inter-faith conflict in Yemen. Sunni-Shiite conflict in Yemen is also considered as one of the reasons for confrontation between Riyadh and Tehran for influence in the Middle East. Shiite Iran supplies arms and equipment to the Huthi rebels by sea and by air. In response Sunni of Saudi Arabia established a coalition with other oil emirates and Egypt, and launched an air force operation against Huthis. At the same time they accept the fact that they support "Al-Qaeda" de facto, although the organization is considered by Washington, a strategic ally of Riyadh, as one of the main terrorist threats to the world.⁹⁶ And none of the parties is willing to compromise and

⁹⁵ <http://yipyideoclub.ru/novosti/ijemenskaja-al-kaida-objavila-o-svoem-pri.html>

96 http://www.dw.de/%D0%BA%D1%82%D0%BE-%D1%81-%D0%BA%D0%B5%D0%BC-
% D 0 % B 8 - % D 0 % B 7 % D 0 % B 0 - % D 1 % 8 7 % D 1 % 8 2 % D 0 % B E - % D 0 % B 2
%D0%BE%D1%8E%D0%B5%D1%82-%D0%B2-%D0%B9%D0%B5%D0%BC%D0%B5%D0%
BD%D0%B5/a-18359213

make concessions. All this makes existence of Yemen as a unified wealthy state very troublesome. On the contrary, it is now turning into a hotbed of protracted inter-religious conflict.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan is a country in the Middle East. It is bordered by Pakistan in the south and east; Iran in the west; Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan in the north; China in the far northeast, India (the territory Jammu and Kashmir debated by India, China and Pakistan) in the east.

Located between the South and Central Asia on the one side and the Middle East on the other side, Afghanistan for centuries has been an important center of trade and migration, a link between different cultures. However, since the 1970s, this country has been involved in a number of internal revolutionary upheavals, coups, civil wars. Permanent instability in the country led to social and political processes in Afghanistan attracting international attention. It endured the Soviet military and political intervention (1979-1989), and the intervention of the Western coalition (NATO, where the leading role belonged to the United States and the United Kingdom) in 2001-2014. According to a fair remark of an Afghan journalist Mirwais Tarina, the problem of Afghanistan today is actually the only important issue of international politics, which "combines positions of different countries of the world."⁹⁷ It is hard to find at least one more topic of the world agenda where opinions of the United States, Russia, China and Iran would not diverge, but, on the contrary, a certain level of co-operation over the existing differences be suggested.

The population of Afghanistan is around 31 million. Sunni Muslims are 80% of the total population, and Shiites — 19%. All other religious groups do not exceed 1% of the population (Hindus, Sikhs, Baha'is, Christians).⁹⁸

Thirteen-year presence of the Western forces in Afghanistan and carrying out of military and anti-terrorist operations has shown that the crisis in this country

⁹⁷ <http://www.afghanistan.ru/doc/16533.html>

⁹⁸ <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>

cannot be solved on the battlefield. A final military defeat of the Taliban (that ruled Afghanistan for five years, 1996-2001) has not happened. Moreover, today it is possible to notice certain signs of local population supporting them. Their military-political activities as well as growing ISIL interest to the country still produce significant risk. Another great danger coming from Afghanistan is drug trafficking. Today acreage of opium poppy in Afghanistan exceeds the coca plantations in Colombia, Peru and Bolivia combined. At the same time 80% of opium is produced in the provinces bordering Pakistan (i.e. in the area of the most active confrontation between the Taliban and NATO).⁹⁹

For many years of the NATO operation in Afghanistan an appropriate state system has not been established. The central government does not control a significant part of its territory. In fact, despite the Western control, today Afghanistan has revived the practice of late years of Mohammad Najibullah' governing (who was the country's leader in 1987-1992). This is the practice of "treaty areas" when the central government (weak and ephemeral) does not interfere in local affairs while the local leaders show their loyalty.

On October 26, 2014, the US and British troops handed over their base under the control of the Afghan army. By January 1, 2015, the presence of the Western contingent decreased by more than tenfold and is around 12,500 people in 9 locations. By 2016 the number of US troops will have decreased by half, and in 2017 the total US military presence will be reduced to a few hundred military advisers at the Embassy in Kabul. The situation in Afghanistan after the presidential election which de facto led to "double" governing of two main candidates (Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah) still remains very difficult. Despite the fact that there is a small contingent of the US troops in the country, many experts predict a possible complication of the situation.¹⁰⁰

The Constitution of Afghanistan (2004), in spite of all the statements of Western politicians about "democratization" limits the religious freedom. Although the text of the Basic Law says that "followers of other religions are free

⁹⁹ <http://topwar.ru/35237-ssha-afganistan-problema-narkotikov.html>

¹⁰⁰ http://www.minchenko.ru/netcat_files/File/Political%20risk%20Central%20Asia.pdf

to express their faith," it declares Islam the state religion and the laws can not contradict the norms of the "holy Islam". Conversion to another religion is punished even with death penalty unless the neophyte repents.¹⁰¹

Currently, there are some considerable difficulties in relationship between Sunni majority and Shiite minority (the latter is considered by the authorities as a tool of Iranian influence). Thus inter-ethnic issues affect inter-religious relations. However, in places where Shia followers (mainly Hazaras and Tajiks) have significant numerical presence, there are examples of cooperation (Herat province).

Armed violence still lasts in the country. In early 2014, the Taliban carried out several attacks on government officials and activists involved in organizing the presidential elections. In January 2014, a suicide bomber tried to attack one of Kabul's restaurants which resulted in 20 people killed (including 13 foreigners). In general, foreigners have become one of the "objectives" of militants, and they particularly "advertise" this part of their activity. In March 2014 an armed man attacked a hotel "Serena" in the center of the Afghan capital and killed 9 people (among them there was a journalist of the famous French agency "France-Presse" Sardar Ahmad, his wife and two children). In the spring of 2014 the Taliban expressed the need to use force for disrupting the elections. Just in one province of Herat, the Taliban killed 40 civilians and injured about 100 people.¹⁰² In December 2014 the "Taliban" declared its victory in the war against the US and its allies.¹⁰³

In mid-January 2015 ISIL group announced commencement of their operations in Afghanistan.¹⁰⁴

On June 6, 2015, Taliban militants managed to capture Yamgan district in the northern province of Badakhshan. A day later the Taliban captured most of Gizar district in the southern Afghan province of Uruzgan. Representatives of the Afghan police reported that during the military operation 4 security officers and 12 militants were killed. All official sources report that 12 police checkpoints were

¹⁰¹ <http://worldconstitutions.ru/?p=24>

¹⁰² <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2015/country-chapters/afghanistan>

¹⁰³ http://lenta.ru/news/2014/12/30/taliban_victory/

¹⁰⁴ <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/01/22/capture-the-flag-in-afghanistan/>

overthrown by the Taliban which refers to capturing a significant part of the district. Deputy Chief of the police told journalists that “the security forces retreated in some areas of the county Gizab”.¹⁰⁵

At the same time, the Taliban and ISIL consider each other as adversaries. Some documents have been released in which they expressed their willingness to carry on jihad and destroy their opponents. Also there is an “employee turnover” when former Taliban followers switch to ISIL. Both forces advocate islamization of the state, but the Taliban focuses on a national Afghan Islamic project rather than global ones. It is possible that this line of confrontation will be one of new dividing lines in the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan.¹⁰⁶

Republic of post-Soviet Central Asia

The Central Asian region includes Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan and has great strategic significance due to its economic potential and geographic location. With population of 92 million people, significant energy resources (two countries in the region, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, have access to mineral-rich Caspian Sea) and location at the crossroads of Asia, Europe, the Persian Gulf, the Middle and Far East, Central Asia is important in perspectives of trade and communications development.

The region is bordered by Russia and China, two permanent members of the UN Security Council, claiming first positions in the world politics. Central Asia is also connected with Afghanistan, a source of whole range of threats for regional and international security. For stability in Central Asia as well as its deep involvement in social and economic projects it is extremely important to prevent any ethnic and religious conflicts. Islam is a religion of the majority in the former Soviet republics of Central Asia. 93% of population in Uzbekistan, 95% in Tajikistan, 65% in Kazakhstan, 83% in Kyrgyzstan and more than 99% in Turkmenistan are Muslims.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ <http://warsonline.info/afghanistan/talibi-zachvatili-rayoni-na-severe-i-iuge-afganistana.html>

¹⁰⁶ <http://www.pravda.ru/news/accidents/global/hotspots/20-04-2015/1257129-isis-0/>

¹⁰⁷ The current data of new independent states and materials of a research center Pews “Mapping the Global Muslim Population”.

Although Muslims in Central Asia often talk about their religious unity, Islam is not monolithic there. Central Asian Muslims do not form homogeneous ethno-linguistic space. They have different traditions of religion practice and active relations with foreign environment. In daily life Central Asian Islam is often a bizarre combination of a secular way of life, Islamic and pre-Islamic religious norms and indigenous ethnic traditions and customs.

The majority of post-Soviet Central Asian Muslims are Sunnites, Madhab Hanifah followers (this faith is more tolerant towards the local traditions and variations of Islamic practice in comparison with Shafi'i school). Shiite Islam is less popular in the region. About 4% of Tajikistan's Muslims are Shia Ismaili (they live in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region) and consider themselves Aga Khan's followers.¹⁰⁸ Approximately 1% of Uzbek Muslims are Shiites.

Central Asia, especially Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, is historically associated with Sufism, a mystical school in Islam. Tariqat Naqshbandi (was founded in Bukhara in the 16th century) plays an important role in Uzbekistan, and Qadiriyya (founded in Baghdad in the 12th century) does in Tajikistan. Sufis have a great influence in the south Kazakhstan, where the founder of Yassaviya Order Khoja Ahmed Yasawi lived and preached (1103-1166/67). His work "Hikmet" ("Knowledge") is appraised as a common heritage of the Turk world.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union representatives of various radical movements non-traditional for the region (the Salafis, supporters of the "Hizb ut-Tahrir" party and schools of Turkish origin "Nurdzhular" and "Fethullahchilar") have increased their influence in Central Asia.

For years, **Kazakhstan** has been an example of displaying most tolerant and open religious policy in Central Asia. The Constitution of the Republic (1995) guarantees freedom of religion and defines the state as secular thus providing right to reject all religions.¹⁰⁹ The government and President Nursultan Nazarbayev in person traditionally promoted peaceful coexistence of Islam and Orthodoxy as an example of a special Eurasian identity and legitimization of the

¹⁰⁸ Aga Khan is a name which has been used by imam of Nizarian Ismails since.

¹⁰⁹ http://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=1005029

new state system. Foreign missionaries for many years have enjoyed many significant benefits of religious tolerance.

However, expansion of activity of Afghan, Tajik and Kyrgyz radical groups and active penetration of the Salafis and "Hizb ut-Tahrir" followers (especially to the south of the country) compelled the authorities to make some adjustments in their approaches to the religious policy. So, in 1999 the National Security Council established a special commission for religious anti-extremism. In 2011, the government introduced rules requiring obligatory registration of missionaries and religious groups. Some groups (e.g., Ahmadi Muslims) were denied registration.

In the second decade of the 21st century, the society and the state faced a new challenge of radical Islamists. Rapid Islamization was caused by several factors. Some of the most important reasons may be external influence, passiveness of official Islamic structures (the Spiritual Directorate of Muslims in Kazakhstan) and socio-economic difficulties.

In 2011 several terrorist attacks in several major cities and regional centers took place (Aktobe, Atyrau, Astana, Almaty, Taraz). On 13-14 of August, 2012, 12 people were murdered in the Ili-Alatau National Park in Almaty region. Throughout the year the Kazakh security officers conducted 5 anti-terrorist operations.¹¹⁰ In 2011-2014 more than 10 incidents of terrorist acts were recorded in the republic with 21 people killed including 17 law enforcement and special agency officers.¹¹¹ Unlike the neighboring countries, Kazakhstan has little experience in combating terrorists and religious radicals. It is extremely important to prevent repetition of their mistakes while fulfilling this task (especially broad interpretation of extremism and terrorism and ignoring issues with human rights).

The history of post-Soviet **Tajikistan** significantly differs from other countries of the region. This small country went through three phases of state-and-church relations: the Civil War, the process of reconciliation and formation of a new status quo after the reconciliation.

¹¹⁰ <http://rus.azattyq.org/content/terrorism-map-in-kazakhstan/24747077.html>

¹¹¹ http://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/9-teraktov-presecheno-v-kazahstane-s-2013-goda-262367/

Tajikistan is the only republic of the former Soviet Union where internal civil opposition is built around religious issues and not struggle among different political groups (as it was in Georgia in early 1990s during the strife of supporters of Zviad Gamsakhurdia and Eduard Shevardnadze), or inter-ethnic conflicts (as it was in Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh). After five years of a devastating civil war in 1997 a peace treaty was signed, and according to it the armed opposition gained 30% of offices in various government agencies and 25% of seats in the central electoral commission.¹¹² Until now, IRP (Islamic Renaissance Party) of Tajikistan is the only Islamic structure of the former Soviet Union that is allowed to participate in legal political life of the country. According to the International Crisis Group, Tajikistan was a country of "Islamic compromise".¹¹³ For example, during the 2010 parliamentary elections IRP received 8.2% of votes and in 2015 it did only 1.5% (it did not pass the five-percent election barrier).

However, the government attitude gradually changed. In the early 2000's the authorities minimized political influence of the partners in peace process. Since the mid-2000s, the government has enhanced struggle with Islamic fundamentalism by assuming prohibitive measures. According to the bill of 2012 "On Parental Responsibility" a person under 18 years of age is forbidden to participate in public religious activities except in funeral rites. Previously, women were de facto prohibited to attend religious services.¹¹⁴ A ban on wearing hijab in schools and universities was in effect. Many Western observers tend to explain this change by the "Soviet mentality" and authoritarian manners of President Emomali Rakhmonov (Rahmon) who was in office since November 1994.¹¹⁵ Meanwhile, this conclusion seems to be some a kind of oversimplification because the authorities of the country, regardless of their desire to preserve their

¹¹² Is radical Islam inevitable in Central Asia //International Crisis Group. Asian Report # 72. Osh/Brussels. December, 2003.

¹¹³ Central Asia: Islam and State. International Crisis Group. 2003. Asia Report # 59. Osh/Brussels. P.13.

¹¹⁴ http://www.gazeta.ru/news/lenta/2011/03/07/n_1734697.shtml

¹¹⁵ <http://www.fairoobserver.com/article/moderating-political-islam-central-asia>
[http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/religiousfreedom/#wrapper /](http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/religiousfreedom/#wrapper/)

political domination, today confront a new generation of Islamic radicals who have not experienced civil war and consider the representatives of IRP as “infidel servants”.

However, this tight control justified by security measures seems to be effective only in tactics. Strategically it has a lot of flaws, because it ignores important considerations. First, it is limited by bureaucratic format and not aimed at a successful solution of social and political issues (regional differences, clan system, nepotism, corruption, lack of religious training of officially recognized Islamic clergy — all those topics that Islamists actively use in their propaganda).

In Soviet times, **Uzbekistan** had its special part in relations between the atheist Soviet state and the Islamic community in the Soviet Union. The Council for Religious Affairs (a special body responsible for state-and-church relations) considered SADUM (The Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan), located in Tashkent, as an important resource of domestic and foreign policy. It was Uzbekistan that had two schools in the whole Soviet Union where Islamic clergy were trained: the Tashkent Islamic Institute and madrasah Miri-Arab. Numerous delegations from countries of the Muslim world with whom Moscow was going to build partnerships were received in the capital. However, in 1970 small groups of Islamists appeared in the republic who did not submit to the officially recognized clergy (their popularity increased during the Soviet military campaign in Afghanistan).¹¹⁶

With the collapse of the Soviet Union a radical politicization of state-religious relations in Uzbekistan took place. Unlike Tajikistan, the Uzbek authorities failed to prevent a full-scale civil war in the early 1990s and successfully confront radical organizations (“Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan” and other groups) during the following period. The government considers religious extremism as a serious threat to national security. Many agencies connected with Islamic movements that are non-traditional for the country are prohibited. Confrontation with religious extremism was accompanied by actual suppression of secular opposition (as a

¹¹⁶ Martha Brill Olcott, “Roots of Radical Islam in Central Asia” //Carnegie Papers. Carnegie Endowment. Russia and Eurasian Program. 2007. # 77. P.17.

result, it became a marginal force) and establishment of an authoritarian regime of President Islam Karimov (in office since 1990). Personification of power of the first person in the state and weakness of state institutions makes Uzbekistan vulnerable. Moreover, pressure of the radicals has not ceased. And apparently it will grow taking into account ISIL's increasing interest in the region.¹¹⁷

Kyrgyzstan has to puzzle out a large tangle of challenges and risks. The country has significant regional differences. In the north of the country Islam is interwoven with the local traditions (originating from a pre-Islamic period) whereas in the south (where a significant part of Uzbek population lives) with much higher religious awareness the influence of radical and extremist groups is evident. A problem of Uzbek minority adds urgency to the situation. It is (and this is 15% of the whole population!) represented very slightly in official authorities and administration of Kyrgyzstan, and the number of Uzbek schools significantly decreased over 2002-2012 (from 141 to 91). Unlike the Russian language, the Uzbek language has no official status (though quantitatively Russians are only a third ethnic group in the country).

Unlike in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, “the Islamic factor” did not play a significant role in social and political life of Kyrgyzstan during the first years of independence.¹¹⁸ However, since the second half of the 1990s the liberal religious course has been gradually revised. Protectionist policies began to be put in effect concerning the “traditional faiths” (Islam and Orthodoxy supported by the authorities). To a large extent this change was dictated by a threat from the “Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan” whose militants raided Kyrgyz territory in 1999 and 2000.¹¹⁹ Since that time the national government has limited access of foreign preachers (especially from Saudi Arabia and Pakistan) to the country.

In 2005 and 2010 the authorities of the republic were overthrown as a result of mass riots accompanied by massacres (especially in the south of the country). At present Kyrgyzstan lacks strong and effective government. Also there is

¹¹⁷ <http://news.tj/ru/news/boeviki-igil-planirovali-terakty-v-uzbekistane>

¹¹⁸ In those years, the Kyrgyz Ombudsman Tursunbai Bakir-Ulu said: “I am the only politician in Kyrgyzstan who prays” Quote: Central Asia: Islam and the State... P. 13

¹¹⁹ http://ruskline.ru/monitoring_smi/2010/avgust/26/kirgiziya_novaya_cel_idu/

an acuteness of such problems as integration of Uzbek minority and the south of the country in general. Meanwhile, the solution to these problems comes amid a growing interest of international terrorist organizations in Central Asia. So, in August of 2013, Kyrgyz security services detained militants of the "Islamic Jihad Union". They were specially transferred from the military operations area in Syria to prepare and launch terrorist acts in Bishkek the day before the summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).¹²⁰

In early 2015 Kyrgyz media published alarming statistics: to date, more than one and half thousand Kyrgyz citizens have gone abroad illegally to get religious education, about 216 of them have completed the training and 137 study at religious centers in Pakistan, 433 in Saudi Arabia, 287 in Egypt, 4 in Kuwait and the rest went to Syria to study the "craft" of terrorism. As a result, emerging of a significant stratum of marginalized youth prone to the influence of radical Islam is a high possibility.¹²¹

Turkmenistan is a particular case in the former Soviet Union in terms of state-religious relations. Unlike in other Central Asian countries, an unprecedented cult of the first president, Saparmurat Niyazov (1940-2006), has been developed and strengthened in Turkmenistan.¹²² In fact, in conditions of the ideology vacuum that followed the collapse of the USSR, the personality cult replaced reverence of the Soviet leaders and "classic" Marxists.

"Rukhnama" ("Book of the Soul") written by Niyazov as a collection of moral and ethical standards, excursions into the historical domain and autobiographical information became a sacred text for the Turkmen. It was intended to become a "spiritual guide of the nation" and the basis for the national culture and literature. Its study became obligatory for all educational institutions, was intended to be referred to for employment and even for acquiring a driver license. In March of 2006, Niyazov even said that reading of "Rukhnama" three times automatically opens the way to paradise.¹²³

¹²⁰ <http://www.mywebs.su/blog/15895.html>

¹²¹ <http://www.paruskg.info/2015/01/19/111380>

¹²² Turkmen media called him "Turkmenbashi" (or "father of the Turkmen"). In his honor the town of Krasnovodsk, schools, airports and even a meteorite were renamed.

¹²³ <http://vikent.ru/author/2358/>

And although the post-Soviet Turkmen first leader's cult was supported to a lesser extent following his death, Niyazov's successor Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov recommended to use "Rukhnama" as a tool for youth education in late 2009. At the same, gradual forming of the second president's cult became notable. In October of 2012 the first monument in honor of the president's father and the first statue in honor of the head of state were erected, and several schools were named after his family.¹²⁴ Berdymukhamedov began to use a title "Arkadag" ("Defender"). In January of 2014 his works (as well as books about him) were included in the school curriculum. It is possible that they will soon replace the works of Saparmurat Niyazov as compulsory reading. In schools, students are taught about the need to bring up faithful "sons and daughters" of the president.¹²⁵

All practices mentioned above are contrary to Islam which is formally confessed by almost the whole population of the republic. Moreover, they can be interpreted as "paganism". Yet, radical forms of Islamism have not been recorded in Turkmenistan up to date. At the same time, it is known that the government is making every effort to limit the external religious influence (in the early 2000s, many preachers were expelled from the country). Besides limiting Islamic foreign agents, the authorities try to restrict the activities of Jehovah Witnesses. The Political Parties Act adopted in January of 2012 prohibits establishment of political parties based on religion.¹²⁶

Kuwait

Kuwait is a state (emirate) in the south-western Asia. It is bordered by Iraq in the north and west, and Saudi Arabia — in the south. It is washed by the Persian Gulf in the east. It is an important exporter of oil and that's why it is an important partner of the US and its allies. In 1991, for "liberation" of Kuwait from "dictator Hussein" Washington held its first campaign against Iraq (known as the "Desert Storm").

¹²⁴ <http://www.cisnews.org/news/tm/6356-turkmenistan-kult-otca-berdymuhamedova-poluchil-novoe-razvitiye.html>

¹²⁵ <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2015/country-chapters/turkmenistan>

¹²⁶ Ibid.

Most of its population which is estimated at 2.8 million people confesses Islam, which is the state religion according to the Constitution (1962).¹²⁷ According to official data, the number of Christians among the citizens of the Emirate (about 1.3 million people) does not exceed 120 people, 25 of them are the Orthodox (descendants of immigrants from Iraq and Turkey), the rest of them — the Greek Catholics and Evangelical Protestants. However, with foreigners holding contracts here the total number of adherents of various Christian confessions is more than 500 thousand people.

Native Kuwaiti Christians (among them are several deacons and one priest) enjoy the same rights as Muslim fellow citizens. Christian visitors do not suffer from oppression on religious basis. The country's leadership and Islamic authorities constantly emphasize their commitment to principles of tolerance, unacceptability of any attempts to provoke religious discord. In particular, in March of 2015 the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Kuwait firmly suppressed the rumors spread by radicals about proselytizing activities supposedly carried out by a number of Christian communities, including the Egyptian Copts (about 70 thousand people) prohibited by the local law. As part of a dialogue among civilizations, promoted by the ruling family, in the emirate regularly international and regional forums on strengthening "inter-religious brotherhood" are held.

Such a constructive approach, however, does not abolish the restrictions on Christian religious rites traditional for the Gulf region. For example, in Kuwait, there are only eight churches belonging to different denominations. It is not allowed to place the crosses on buildings, bell ringing is forbidden. The service is usually carried out only on weekends and holidays. The expansion of church premises or opening of new parishes, in fact, is impossible because of active opposition of the municipal authorities. They delay processing appropriate applications as well as seek to relocate existing churches and houses of worship from residential areas (they say this influx of parishioners creates inconvenience).¹²⁸

¹²⁷ <http://www.worldislamlaw.ru/?p=294>

¹²⁸ <http://ok.ru/goneniyanatopics?st.gpage=36>

Tunisia

The Republic of Tunisia is a country in North Africa. In the north and east it is washed by the Mediterranean Sea, it is bordered by Algeria in the west, by Libya in the south-east. The population of Tunisia is more than 10 million people.¹²⁹ 99% of the population is Sunni Muslims, and the remaining 1% includes Christians, Jews, Muslims, Shiites and Baha'is.

Tunisia became the “cradle of Arab Spring.” In January of 2011 it was the first country to have a coup d'état as a result of mass protest actions.¹³⁰ Divergent political forces, including Islamists, participated in these actions which led to resignation of President Ben Ali. Tunisia also became the initiator of a new trend in Arab political culture: it is Tunisia where the Islamist forces could be mobilized most quickly and come to power through democratic procedures. In autumn of 2011 Islamist party Ennahda won the elections to the Constituent Assembly. They won 89 of 217 seats enlisting support of 37% of the population. This result looks even more impressive in comparison with its closest rivals: the Congress for the Republic gained 29 mandates, “People’s Petition” did 26, the Democratic Forum for work and freedom did 20. Even the alliance of the three parties (75 seats) could not compete with the Islamists¹³¹. All this created risk of political instability and conflicts.

At that time anti-Christian and anti-Semitic actions became more frequent (such as profaning of a Russian cemetery and the Russian Orthodox Church building in the capital, A. Shirinskaya's square in Bizerte, threatening of a senior priest in the capital parish). Sufi Muslim communities were attacked (devastation of mausoleums and attacks on religious ceremonies).

The situation had improved a little by 2012 and such actions had almost stopped. Radical Salafi preachers who instigated people were arrested. The radical organization “Ansar al-Sharia” was prohibited, and the authorities in co-operation with the traditional Muslim clergy and the Ministry of Religious Affairs

¹²⁹ <http://www.ins.nat.tn/indexen.php>

¹³⁰ As a result of so-called “Second Jasmine Revolution” President Ben Ali (in power since 1987) fled the country. He received asylum in Saudi Arabia. He was sentenced in absentia to 35 years in prison.

¹³¹ <http://www.nlobooks.ru/node/4023>

(it supervises staff issues, clergy's salaries, regulates property matters in regards to clergy personal property) launched a nationwide large-scale struggle with extremism.

According to the Constitution of Tunisia (2014) Islam is the state religion. However, the Basic Law declares respect for human rights, equality of all citizens before Law, freedom of individuals, struggle with religious and racial discrimination as the most important social principles of the constitutional system in Tunisia.¹³²

In October of 2014 secular party "Call of Tunisia" (established 2012) won parliamentary elections. It pushed aside Islamists of "An-Nahda" (85 seats in the parliament with 40% of votes). Islamists also lost nearly a quarter of their constituents and gained 69 seats. Hopes for an "alternative" which was promised by the leaders of "An-Nahda" were not fulfilled. Many voters were concerned about the surge of jihadist activities. They were active the most in the mountains on the border of Tunisia and Algeria. The alternative for Islamization became the "Call" combining a wide range of secular-minded forces (liberals, leftists and nationalists, progressives, executives, forming the core of the ruling party dissolved after the revolution); it received support of the powerful General Labor Union and Employers' Association of the country. There was a geographic split during the course of the elections (residents of southern regions which are less developed economically and socially voted for Islamists).¹³³

In December of 2014, Beji Caid Essebsi, an experienced politician and diplomat, who has held many high offices during the "old regime", won the president elections. Radical Islamists declared a boycott against him at the elections.

Today, in general, Tunisian authorities pursue quite a balanced policy regarding religious minorities. Within legislation Christian communities enjoy full autonomy in matters relating to religion. The country has a number of non-government organizations for human rights including the leading one "The Tunisian Association for Assistance to minorities" that monitor this area without hindrance.

¹³² <http://worldconstitutions.ru/?p=1049>

¹³³ Ibid.

Libya

Libya is a country on the Mediterranean coast in North Africa, it is the easternmost country of the Maghreb. It is bordered by Algeria in the west, Tunisia in the north-west, Chad and Niger in the south, Sudan in the southeast, Egypt in the east and is washed by the Mediterranean Sea in the north.

Coastline of Libya is 1770 km, the largest one among African countries of the Mediterranean. The part of the Mediterranean Sea adjacent to the Libya is often called the Libyan Sea.

Libya's population is about 6, 5 million people. 97% of the population are Muslims. The remaining 3% include Christians, Muslims, Ahmadi Muslims, Jews, Hindus and Baha'is. Small Christian communities are represented by immigrants from Egypt and sub-Saharan Africa.¹³⁴

From 1977 to 2011 in the country there was a special political regime based on the "Third World Theory" of its leader Muammar Gaddafi (1940-2011) — the Jamahiriya. Presence of Islamists did not fit into the ideological substantiation of Jamahiriya regime. Gaddafi always considered them as competitors, and that's why massive repressions towards supporters of the Islamic way of development were common during his governing.¹³⁵ However, Gaddafi's authoritarian way, combined with an active social policy provided certain stability in the country.

Gaddafi was overthrown by rebels supported by the US and its allies during the civil war of 2011, which had devastating consequences for the Libyan state and its economy. Afterwards there has not been formed a strong government in the country and up to now Libya has a high level of political instability. Gaddafi's resignation has not led to democratization of the country. On the contrary, there was a collapse of statehood and strengthening of radical jihadists.

From 2012 Libya was governed by General National Congress (GNC). The electing in June 2013 Nuri Abusameyni (he is connected with the movement "Muslim Brotherhood") for the post of GNC chairman became a symbol of the fact that adherents of political Islam took control over the Congress work.

¹³⁴ <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>

¹³⁵ <http://www.nlobooks.ru/node/4023>

Congress did not conduct activities to fight with influence of Islamic groups, could not establish the effective police and army and accepted Sharia law as the basis for all state legislation in December 2013.¹³⁶

In February 2014 the term of office of the Congress expired, but on 23 December, 2013 GNC decided to extend the term of office till the end of 2014. This decision led to mass protests of citizens in many cities in Libya, including Tripoli, Al-Bayda, Ajdabiya and Tobruke. In 14 February, 2014 General Khalifa Haftar ordered the General National Congress to be disbanded and called for formation of a temporary government, which was to organize elections on 25 June. GNC ignored the demand and said that the actions of the general were a coup. On 14 February, 2014 Haftar announced an overthrow of the Libyan government and demanded the dissolution of the General National Congress. Military operations started in March 2014.

The armed violence led to the fact that according to the human rights organization «Human Rights Watch» 400,000 Libyans became temporarily displaced and 150,000, including foreigners, left the country. Many embassies and the UN mission, the International Committee of the Red Cross closed its mission (July 2014). About 250 people (including officials, journalists, imams) were killed in the first nine months in 2014. In June 2014, Michael Groyb, a representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross, was killed. In October 2014 the armed groups in eastern Libya declared accession to ISIL and establishment of an autonomous province with its own sectors in Benghazi and Derna, as well as the Islamic police and Islamic court.¹³⁷ In February 2015 ISIL supporters in Libya carried out execution of 21 Egyptian Coptic.¹³⁸ The battle for the city of Sirte on 14 March started, and on 31 May ISIL terrorists took control over the city. Egypt interfered into the Libyan conflict (its air forces attacked ISIL in Libya).¹³⁹

Thus, as a result of the “regime change” and removal of “tyrant Gaddafi” Libya was turned into a serious source of tension and instability in North Africa.

¹³⁶ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/12/04/us-libya-law-idUSBRE9B30M220131204>

¹³⁷ <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2015/country-chapters/libya?page=2>

¹³⁸ <http://ria.ru/world/20150216/1047872009.html>

¹³⁹ Ibid.

Mali

The Republic of Mali is a country in West Africa. It is bordered by Senegal in the west, by Mauritania and Algeria — in the north, by Niger — in the east, by Burkina Faso — in the south-east, by Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea — in the south. The population of the republic is 16 million people. 95% of the population of Mali are Muslims. Almost all of the country's Muslims are Sunnites, also there is a great influence of a mystical movement — Sufism. Christians make up 2% (two thirds of them — Catholics, and one third — Protestants). 3% of people are followers of local cults, not related to the world religions.¹⁴⁰

Now de facto Mali does not exist as a unified state and political constitutional space. The northeastern part of the country is under Islamist control of a faction "Ansar Dine" which is connected with "al-Qaeda". Previously an unrecognized Independent State of Azawad was proclaimed; its authorities accepted the idea of the region autonomy after the loss of control over this territory.

A kind of a "trigger" of the current instability in Mali was a revolt of Tuareg separatists¹⁴¹ in 2012-2013. Tuareg people had already fought for an independent state Azawad before. However, in April 2012 a national-separatist movement declared its independence (after taking the capital of Azawad Tumbuktu).

But soon after the proclamation of independence some contradictions between national-separatist (moderate) and Islamist (radical) rebel factions intensified. On 8 June 2012 an armed conflict between them started. By the end of June 2012 the radical group "Ansar al-Din" took control over the cities of Gao and Timbuktu (which previously belonged to "moderate"), and started the destruction of ancient mausoleums and even mosques.¹⁴²

One of the leaders of these factions Omar Hamaha said that their goal was not separation of Azawad, but establishment of a sharia state in Mali and perhaps in the territories of the neighboring states.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>

¹⁴¹ Tuareg are Berber people group in Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and Morocco.

¹⁴² <http://lenta.ru/articles/2012/07/02/saints/>

¹⁴³ <http://voprosik.net/sobytiya-v-mali-i-vosstanie-tuaregov/>

On 20 December, 2012 the UN Security Council authorized deployment of its peacekeeping forces in Mali to release the north of the country from Islamic extremists. On 11 January, 2013 international troops landed to start operations against Islamists. It consisted of French and German troops.¹⁴⁴

Although the international intervention stabilized the situation to some extent, it is impossible to talk about radical change and restore the unity of the country. In 2014 Armed factions connected with "Al-Qaeda" intensified their attacks against soldiers and officers of the regular army of Mali, as well as peacekeepers. Approximately 30 UN peacekeepers have been killed in these attacks since the end of September 2013. In February 2014 Islamists took five hostages, employees of the International Committee of the Red Cross (they were released in April of the same year as a result of French rescue operations). In May of 2014 two members of the Norwegian Committee for Refugees were killed near Timbuktu. In 2014, one French and one Algerian citizen died as hostages taken by Islamists of "Islamic Maghreb". In addition, the attacks are carried out on the ordinary citizens of Mali.¹⁴⁵

Nigeria

The Federal Republic of Nigeria is a country in West Africa. It is bordered by Benin in the west, by Niger — in the north, by Chad — in the north-east, by Cameroon — in the east. Nigeria is the most populous state in Africa. In 2014, Nigeria, a leading oil producer in Africa, overtook South Africa in terms of GDP to become Africa's largest economy.¹⁴⁶

The population of Nigeria is 174.5 million people. Slightly more than half of Nigerians are Muslims, and Christians are about 40%. 10% of the population are adherents of local religious cults. Nigerian Muslims are Sunnites. Sufism plays an important role (brotherhoods of Tijaniya and Qadiriyya). A growing

¹⁴⁴ <http://www.lefigaro.fr/flash-actu/2013/01/11/97001-20130111FILWWW00392--info-figaro-mali-des-forces-militaires-francaises-et-allemandes-ont-pris-position.php>

¹⁴⁵ <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2015/country-chapters/mali>

¹⁴⁶ <http://tass.ru/ekonomika/1101744>

number of Salafi (Wahhabi) followers has been evident in recent years.¹⁴⁷ Muslims prevail in the northern regions of the country, and Christians in the southern.

Serious religious confrontations have existed on the territory of modern Nigeria as far back as during British rule. However, the most violent confrontations started after the northern part got the right to live under Sharia law (1999).¹⁴⁸

The very first salafist organizations in Nigeria were established in the 1970s. In 1995 Abubakar Lawan established a group "Followers of the teachings of the prophet and migrants" also known as "Young Muslims". In 2002 Islamist Mohammed Yusuf (1970-2009) founded "Boko Haram" movement that in a few years has turned into the main striking force of jihadists in Nigeria. There have been numerous armed riots, attacks, killings, intimidation under their guidance.

"Boko Haram" opposes Western education, Western culture and science. According to members of the faction, any social and political activities associated with Western values must be prohibited, including voting at elections, wearing shirts and trousers, secular education. From the point of view of "Boko Haram", the government of Nigeria "is spoiled" by Western ideas and consists of "unbelievers" even if the president is formally a Muslim. In general, followers of Yusuf not only oppose "infidels", but also against "wrong Muslims". So on 14 March, 2011 in the city of Maiduguri, Ibrahim Ahmed Abdullah Bolor, a famous Muslim cleric, known for his criticism of "Boko Haram" was shot dead.¹⁴⁹ According to Nigerian Islamists, the current government must be overthrown, and the country should be governed based on Sharia law, more stringent than in the northern states of Nigeria.¹⁵⁰ In 2009 the group leader of that time Mohammed Yusuf stated in an interview with BBC that Western ideas of education (e.g., Darwinism) are contrary to Islam.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁷ <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>

¹⁴⁸ <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2001/octoberweb-only/10-1-23.0.html>

¹⁴⁹ http://www.bbc.com/russian/rolling_news/2011/03/110313_nigeria_muslim_cleric_killed.shtml

¹⁵⁰ http://edition.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/africa/08/31/nigeria.bombing/index.html?_s=PM:WORLD

¹⁵¹ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8172270.stm>

On 14 of May, 2013, the President of Nigeria Goodluck Jonathan announced a state of emergency in Maiduguri region and some other regions in the north of the country in connection with activities of the Islamist faction "Boko Haram".¹⁵² In November of the same year, the United States officially recognized "Boko Haram" and radical movement "Ansar" terrorist organizations.¹⁵³

On 14 of April, 2014, "Boko Haram" kidnapped more than 270 girls from a village school in Chibok (Borno State). The leader of the organization, Abubakar Shekau, explained that "the girls have to leave school and get married".¹⁵⁴ In May of 2014 in a city Jos (Plateau State) a double terrorist attack was launched with more than 160 people killed and over 55 injured. On 21 of August the faction fighters seized the town of Buni Yadi (Yobe). Then the organization announced establishment of a caliphate on the territory under its control.¹⁵⁵ In November of 2014 militants attacked the residents of a fishing village Doron Baga on Lake Chad.

In 2014 in Nigeria due to armed violence 2,500 civilians were killed (since 2009 – more than 6,500 people). 65,000 people became temporarily displaced and 80 000 people became refugees in neighboring countries. For 5 years (2009-2014) "Boko Haram" destroyed 211 schools in a state of Borno alone.¹⁵⁶

In January of 2015 "Boko Haram" burned 16 towns and villages in northern Nigeria in the state of Borno, including a town Bagan with 10,000 people on the Lake Chad shore. The faction carries out attacks not only in Nigeria but also in Cameroon. On 12 January Cameroonian city Kolofat was attacked, and in February — Fotokol.¹⁵⁷ In March "Boko Haram" militants swore allegiance to ISIL.¹⁵⁸ As a countermeasure, the African Union supported the establishment of regional forces of more than eight thousand people to fight with "Boko Haram".

¹⁵² http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/15/world/africa/nigeria-state-of-emergency-declared.html?_r=0

¹⁵³ <http://www.svoboda.org/archive/radio-svoboda-news/297/016564/16564.html?id=25167570>

¹⁵⁴ <http://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/1167138>

¹⁵⁵ <http://www.pravda.ru/news/world/restofworld/africa/24-08-2014/1222762-nig-0/>

¹⁵⁶ <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2015/country-chapters/nigeria>

¹⁵⁷ http://russian.news.cn/world/2015-01/14/c_133917321.htm

¹⁵⁸ <http://news.rambler.ru/29480244/>

On 8 March Nigerien and Chadian armed forces started a land and air offensive operation against "Boko Haram" in northeast Nigeria.

In April 2015 "Boko Haram" announced renaming the faction into "Islamic State's West Africa Province".¹⁵⁹

Relationships between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria and in the southern states of the country are built in conditions of an acute conflict plan. There are numerous cases of denial in construction of mosques and issuing a license to imams. A potential threat of increased terrorist violence in the south of the country comes from the "Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta". It is a Christian anti-government faction that came in full effect in early 2006. It is responsible for the attack on Nigerian security forces, oil fields and oil workers. As a result of its activities in 2006 alone, the country reduced production of "black gold" by 25%.¹⁶⁰ In 2009 the movement renounced a way of violence and came to an agreement with the government. However, in 2010 there were more terrorist attacks.

In 2013 the terrorists announced "Operation Barbarossa" in terms where-with mosques, Muslim organizations, including charities, prominent Muslim clerics and Muslim officials were to be destroyed. Their actions were viewed as a response to the terrorist attacks of Islamists of "Boko Haram".¹⁶¹

An electoral split, which occurred mainly because of religion, adds urgency of the situation. Muslim Mohammed Bukhari won the presidential elections on 28 of March 2015. With 15.4 million votes, he won from his predecessor (at that time the head of state) Christian Goodluck Jonathan, who had 13,3 million votes. Bukhari was a victor in seven states (mostly in the north), while Jonathan was more popular in five oil-producing states and in the capital. "Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta" very negatively apprehended the electoral success of the politic of the Muslim community.¹⁶² Thus, the threat of breakup of the country on religious basis still remains.

¹⁵⁹ <http://lenta.ru/news/2015/04/27/bokoharamvse/>

¹⁶⁰ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-11467394>

¹⁶¹ <http://www.fssb.su/smi-monitor/smi-monitor-terror/406-krestovyy-pohod-nachnetsya-31-maya-v-nigerii.html>

¹⁶² <http://lenta.ru/news/2015/03/31/nigeria/>

European Union: the religious factor

The European Union (EU) is the economic and political union of 28 European states. The total population of the countries included in this integration is about 500 million people.¹⁶³ The process of European integration is a long story of overcoming numerous contradictions, searching the golden mean between unification and preservation of diversity, compromise and adaptation of national interests according to approaches of "a united Europe".

Since its foundation until the mid-1980s the EU evolved linearly and quite predictably. Basically, the integration process developed in the economic sphere — around general customs (based on the customs union) and agricultural policy. Until 1992, the association was called the European Economic Community (EEC), what almost equated the economic integration and integration in general, considered as a process of merging national economies. In addition to this industry aspect EES had another – institutional one. It also was strengthened for years.¹⁶⁴

For a long time, European integration was seen as a successful model to overcome the fears and phobias of the past, as well as strengthening pragmatic and mutually beneficial partnership for all participants of the "united Europe" project. However, EEC, and later EU are gradually replenished with new members. An expansion process of the integration union, along with economic topics demanded greater attention to identity issues. To what extent do the EU countries feel real, not declared, unity? To what extent have their common goals and objectives replaced particularism, inter-ethnic and inter-religious problems? Can we say that stories of the past have lost their relevance and poignancy? Hope of many politicians for destruction "iron curtain", "the return of Eastern Europe" into the "free world" led to reunification of Germany and disappearance of the Berlin wall, a symbol of the "cold war" as well as to a number of ethno-political conflicts on the ruins of the once united Yugoslavia, the breakup of the Soviet Union, confrontation between its former subjects, a surge of ethnic nationalism and ideas

¹⁶³ <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&language=en&pcode=tps00001&tableS election=1&footnotes=yes&labeling=labels&plugin=1>

¹⁶⁴ http://www.globalaffairs.ru/number/n_4212

of religious supremacy. Middle East and Africa has not become stable and secure. On the contrary, increase of conflicts in these regions turned Europe into a kind of magnet ("a safe harbor") for migrants, and migration growth, in its turn, greatly changed the image of European cities. Nowadays the overall percentage of Islamic population of the EU countries, according to various estimates, ranges from 3 to 5%.¹⁶⁵

In May of 2003 Italian politician Romano Prodi (at that time the president of the European Commission) while speaking at a meeting of the Reflection Group on the cultural and spiritual dimension of Europe, said that the religion in European integration was "very important." The matter is that so-called "political construction of Europe cannot ignore a question of relationship with religion".¹⁶⁶ Meanwhile, for many years issues related to infringement of religious freedom in EU have not been dealt with consistently. In fact, they were hushed up, for they were not considered as something significant. However, in recent years, EU representatives and European officials addressed the topics related to religious freedom and religious intolerance more and more. Some recent terrorist attacks in Belgium, Denmark, France and other countries that were considered as "safe", made politicians and experts pay serious attention to the rapid increase of Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, xenophobia (in the broadest sense of the word) in the Old World. At the end of March of 2015 a Dutch politician, the first deputy chairman of the European Commission Frans Timmermans said that misunderstanding and ignoring respect for religious beliefs can lead to serious consequences for European integration.

Significance of the religious factor in Europe can be explained by a number of reasons. First, it has been 70 years since the end of the World War II. Gradually, this event is being "forgotten" among people as its influence on development of today's states and societies is becoming indirect. A generation of politicians, scientists, experts, public figures, civil society activists and representatives of the art world who remember the disastrous consequences (primarily, humanitarian)

¹⁶⁵ <http://www.intertrends.ru/fourteen/007.htm>

¹⁶⁶ <http://kartinamira.info/culture/909-simvolika-evrosoyuza>

and the price paid for nationalist ambitions, claims of “the world domination” and “purity of the race” is stepping off the stage. New generations perceive their connection with that tragic era less and less.

Consequently, there is a basis for revision of value imperatives that previously seemed to be inviolable. This also applies to historical research and the so-called “media history” (journalism, cinema, fiction). There is respect for supporters of “other ideas”, including religious beliefs. In some countries there is a great deal of psychological fatigue because of guilt for the disaster of 1933-1945 (Germany, Austria). And this, among other things, provokes not just avoiding of extremes and inequities to German people after the war, but also extremist “revisionism” (a desire to find a grain of truth in the ruling of the Nazis and their ideology and practice, attempts to separate the values and management efficiency, to oppose “patriotism” and racism in the policy of Hitler).

According to a fair remark of Enzo Traverso, “today racism puts on a new skin and adds new chapters in its endless story full of hatred and xenophobia. Tangled web of racism and fascism, nationalism and anti-Semitism, covered Europe in the first half of the XX century, no longer exists. However, nationalism and anti-Semitism still flourish among the new member states of the European Union, where this tradition was interrupted in 1945, but continues to be fed with resentment accumulated during four decades of “real socialism” and now it manifests itself once again”.¹⁶⁷

According to a survey conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2013), experts found that nearly 25% of the Jews living in Europe avoid doing anything or wearing symbols that can identify them as Jews. Also two-thirds of European citizens admitted that it was useless to complain to the police about actions of anti-Semites because it would result in silence.¹⁶⁸ French Prime Minister Manuel Valls (took office in March of 2014) calls the current wave of violence in Europe “new anti-Semitism”. Only in May 2014, 4 people were fatally injured during a terrorist attack at the Jewish Museum

¹⁶⁷ <http://www.sensusnovus.ru/analytics/2011/11/04/11770.html>

¹⁶⁸ <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/antisemitism-back-europe-9256?page=show>

in Brussels. A pharmacy owned by a Jew in Paris suburbs was destroyed in July by the youth protesting against Israeli politics in Palestine.¹⁶⁹ Recently in France a comedian Dieudonne Mbala Mbala gained popularity by using the Nazi greeting and mocking Jews and the Holocaust many times in his speech.¹⁷⁰

Secondly, one of the most important trends of modern development is globalization of the world economy, accompanied by powerful migration flows. Millions of people from around the world are moving to areas with higher levels of socio-economic development and political stability (especially in Western Europe). The data on the number of foreigners in the population of certain countries does not give a complete picture because it does not take into account naturalized migrants who have passports of European countries, as well as illegal immigrants.

And although most of them are loyal to their new motherland (an orientalist Olivier Roy rightly pointed to the fact that there are much more French Muslims among the police and security services than among the militants of "Al-Qaeda"),¹⁷¹ difficulties of immigrant immigration often lead to their radicalization and involvement in various terrorist organizations. On 7 of January, 2015, during an armed attack on an editorial office of «Charlie Hebdo» in Paris 12 people were killed, including two police officers (ISIL militants took on responsibility for the action). Soon after that a large terrorist attack (which could become a "second Paris") with participation of Islamists was averted in Belgium. It should be noted that the people involved in these terrorist acts in Belgian and French case were citizens of Western countries who were born in Roubaix and Paris respectively (Mehdi Nemmush, attacked Jewish Museum in Brussels, and brothers Said and Sheriff Kuashi — "avengers" for the cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad).¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/24/world/europe/europees-anti-semitism-comes-out-of-shadows.html?ref=europe&_r=1

¹⁷⁰ <http://www.newsru.com/crime/13may2014/40prcantsemifr.html>

¹⁷¹ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/olivier-roy/paris-attack-muslim-cliches_b_6445582.html

¹⁷² <http://www.profile.ru/pryamayarech/item/91002-zerkalo-dlya-rossii>
<http://vz.ru/world/2014/10/23/711914.html>

Besides the difficulties of integration growing economic problems (the euro-zone crisis and European integration as a whole, increasing debt of EU member states) contribute significantly to aggravation of inter-religious relations.

So even in the countries with developed democratic institutions a request for xenophobia, populism and extreme nationalism with racist elements is being formed. As a result, growing awareness of religious identity and issues related to intolerance on religion grounds are the trend.

Germany

The Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) is a country in Western Europe. The population, according to 2011 census, is more than 80 million people.¹⁷³ There is no official statistics on religious groups of the country. However, according to experts, 24.4 million are Catholics, and 23.6 million people are the Protestants (Lutherans and Reformists). Together, these groups make up 64% of the total population of Germany. Other Protestant denominations (Baptists, Evangelical Christians, the Bible Baptists) make up slightly less than 1% of the population. The Islamic community is heterogeneous. It includes 2.6 million of Sunnites 500,000 of Alawites, 280,000 of Shiites, what makes up 5% of the Germany population. About 28 million people (33% of the population) neither have any religious affiliation, nor belong to any religious group.¹⁷⁴

The Constitution and law provide for religious freedom in Germany.¹⁷⁵ The government is taking serious steps to promote programs of religious tolerance and integration of its Muslim community, and law enforcement agencies investigate cases of religious discrimination.

Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel said in an interview with the well-known publication Die Welt on 31 of January, 2015, that "Islam is part of Germany".¹⁷⁶ At the same time the head of the German government, recognizing the failure of

¹⁷³ www.destatis.de/DE/PresseService/Presse/Pressekonferenzen/2013/Zensus2011/bevoelkerung_zensus2011.pdf?__blob=publicationFile

¹⁷⁴ <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/rlf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>

¹⁷⁵ http://www.rfhwb.de/Pravo/Pravo_ru/pravo_ru1.htm

¹⁷⁶ <http://korrespondent.net/world/3473708-merkel-obiasnyla-pochemu-yislam-chast-hermany>

multiculturalism policy, that in reality led to segregation process among minorities, told about strengthening of integration policy. In particular, it is intended to prepare imams for mosques in Germany. German Chancellor spoke in favor of toughening policies concerning the migrants who refuse to be fully integrated or consciously reject it upon arrival to the country.¹⁷⁷

However, it cannot go unnoticed that there is a number of negative trends that can be identified as Islamophobia, radical Islamism, anti-Semitism.

After publication of a book by German politician Thilo Sarrazin (August 2010) "Germany is Self-Destroying" wherein he gave a strict assessment of the migration policy of the government in attracting immigrants from Muslim countries, it turned out that 46% of the population share the author's views. According to some sociologists, a party led by Sarrazin under the certain conditions, could have won more than 20% of votes.¹⁷⁸ For one week up to 70 thousand copies of the book were sold (according to some sources — 100),¹⁷⁹ and the work got an unofficial title of "Islamophobic Bible."

Since 2014 a movement "Patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of the West"/PEGIDA have become known (based in Dresden by Lutz Bachmann). Despite the accusations of "right-wing extremism", the most of activists are from the middle class, working people, ordinary German burghers. It attracted attention of the public when its rallies started to become widespread and cover a large number of people. Demonstration on December 7 gathered about 10 000 people, and on 15 December, 2014 — 15,000 people. During weekly demonstrations there were slogans on banners such as "For protection of our culture", "Against religious fanaticism" and "Against religious wars in German land". The number of PEGIDA supporters is growing, the movement has spread far beyond Saxony and became an event of all-German type. In December 2014 PEGIDA published a manifesto which proclaimed a struggle for defense of Christian culture in Germany. Islamism is called a misogynistic and violent

¹⁷⁷ <http://www.blagovest-info.ru/index.php?ss=2&s=3&id=36739>

¹⁷⁸ <http://www.runewsweek.ru/article/v-mire/24250-ego-borba>

¹⁷⁹ <http://www.polit.ru/news/2010/09/13/svoboda.html>

ideology.¹⁸⁰ In January 2015, a number of prominent political and public figures signed a declaration against German PEGIDA. They include a former German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and Gerhard Schroeder, footballer Oliver Bierhoff, actress Carolina Gertfurt.¹⁸¹

On the other hand, the authorities and all the German society have been concerned about radical Islamists for many years. In July 2010, in Germany, a hotline for members of terrorist organizations and the Islamists who wanted to give up radical ideas was organized.¹⁸² In June 2014 the Federal Office for Protection of the Constitution of Germany submitted a report, and according to it hundreds of German citizens are already fighting on the side of extremists in Iraq and Syria. So a former rapper Denis Kuspert from Berlin is considered a leader of a group "The German team Millat Ibrahim". According to experts from King's college (UK), about 320 people from Germany joined ISIL.¹⁸³

If we talk about anti-Semitism, in Germany it is spread by radical Islamists as well as nationalists (who at the same time firmly oppose each other). Often under the cover of freedom of speech and criticism of Israeli foreign policy anti-Semitic approaches are formulated. A popular example is Jakob Augstein (46-year-old Hamburg journalist, known for his anti-Semitic views in his books, the 9th in the world top list of anti-Semites, opponents of Israel.). According to an “Alliance 90/The Greens” representative Volker Beck, “and now a normal Jewish life in Germany is questionable. This goal is not reached, if synagogues, Jewish schools and Jewish kindergartens, homes for elderly people need some special protection of the police, as required by the security situation”.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁰ <http://www.dw.de/anti-islamization-protests-expand-in-germany/a-18113657>

¹⁸¹ <http://www.interfax-religion.ru/atheism/?act=news&id=57459>

¹⁸² <http://lenta.ru/news/2010/09/06/gefahr/>

183 http://www.dw.de/%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B4%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%B0%D0%BB%D1%8C%D0%BD%D1%8B%D0%B5-%D0%B8%D1%81%D0%BB%D0%B0%D0%BC%D0%B8%D1%81%D1%82%D1%8B-%D0%B2-%D0%B3%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%BC%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%BD%D0%BA%D0%BA-%D0%B2%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%BA%D1%81%D1%83%D1%8E%D1%82-%D0%BD%D0%BC%D0%B5%D0%BC%D0%B5%D1%86%D0%BA%D1%83%D1%8E-%D0%BC%D0%BE%D0%BR%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%BD%D0%BD%D1%8C/a-17176773

France

France is a country in Western Europe. Its population is 64.7 million people.¹⁸⁵ The French authorities do not report the statistics on religious affiliation of its citizens, but researches on the subject are conducted by the state-supported research institutes. According to estimates of the National Institute of Demography 45% of respondents between 18 and 50 years do not have a clear religious affiliation, 43% identify themselves with Catholics, 8% — Muslims, 2% — Protestants and 2% — Orthodox Christians, Jews, Buddhists and others. French Interior Ministry estimates the number of Muslims between 8 and 10%.¹⁸⁶

France today can be called one of the most “Muslim” countries of Europe. The Muslims is the second largest (after the Catholics) religious group (or the third considering atheists and those who do not have a clear religious identity), more than the number of Protestants and Jews. About two-thirds of Muslim population in France are foreigners — representatives of 123 countries of the world.¹⁸⁷

The Constitution of the Fifth French Republic and the law provide religious freedom, and in reality the government takes the necessary steps for bringing harmony into inter-religious relations. At the same time, there is spreading of Christianophobia, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and radical Islamism. In France anti-Semitism and Islamophobia are considered the main manifestations of religious intolerance and xenophobia (in contrast to Christianophobia which Paris refuses to recognize due to “secular society” and “guilt for colonialism” complexes).

Spreading of anti-Christian beliefs is associated with radicalization among French Muslims, as well as value transformation of the society through strengthening of atheism and secularism.

In its report for 2013, an international non-governmental organization “The Supervisory Committee on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians

80%D0%B5%D0%BC%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%B9-%D0%B3%D0%B5%D1%
%80%D0%BC%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%B8/

¹⁸⁵ http://www.insee.fr/fr/themes/document.asp?ref_id=ip1276#inter1

¹⁸⁶ <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>

¹⁸⁷ <http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/2003/0115/analit05.php>

in Europe" (based in Germany) called France the European leader in number of Christianophobia manifestations. According to reports of French NGO "Supervisory Committee Christianophobia" and "General Alliance Against Racism and for the Respect of French and Christian Identity", in 2014 in France about 190 acts of intolerance against Christians were recorded.¹⁸⁸

Slogans offensive for Christians are often found in advertising of large retail chains. Biblical themes and motifs are used without any respect for believers' feelings. In April of 2015 a new scandal shook France: transport state group «RATP» refused to allow a poster for a concert Les Prêtres (Prists) in the underground, planned to include information that the concert would be held for the benefit of Christians in the Middle East (the RATP Group reversed their decision after numerous protests from the government).¹⁸⁹

In most cases, when it comes to acts of Christianophobia, the authorities refer to the 1905 law "On secular character of the state" that supposedly does not allow them to interfere. At the same time they forget about the provisions of the Criminal Code (e.g., article 225-18), and the law "On Freedom of the Press" 1881 (Articles 29 and 33).

French officials often allow themselves Christianophobia statements. Former Education Minister Vincent Peillon proposed "to dismantle the Catholic church and replace it with a republican religion". In February of 2015 newspaper "Liberation" published a quote from a closed interview with Manuel Valls when the prime minister allegedly stated that "the departure of 100 thousand Jews from France will cause more serious damage than leaving of 100 thousand Christians".

Anti-Christian lobby in France reinforced its position after Socialists came to power. Penalties for Christianophobia supporters remain soft – administrative support of influential patrons is evident.

The first and so far the only public recognition of existence of Christianophobia in the country on the part of Francois Hollande was his words about "anti-Christian acts involving the conscience of believers" at a press conference on

¹⁸⁸ <http://www.orthedu.ru/news/11973-15.html>

¹⁸⁹ <http://www.invictory.com/news/story-56383-%D0%BC%D0%B5%D1%82%D1%80%D0%BE.html>

14 of January, 2015.¹⁹⁰ It is noteworthy that Hollande's visit to Vatican on 24 of January, 2015, was preceded by a petition from the Catholic Association of France that got together 125 thousand signatures and drew the attention of the Holy See to breakdown in the country's system of traditional values and persecution of Christians.¹⁹¹

In the government action plan on anti-xenophobia and racial and religious intolerance released on 17 of April, 2015, Islamophobia, homophobia and anti-Semitism are emphasized. Christianophobia evades attention of the French government. Connivance of the French authorities only reinforces the idea in the society that it is all right with Christianophobia. According to an authoritative priest, confessor of Military School Saint-Cyr Abbot Grosjean, this "aggressive secularism" makes French Christians "second-class citizens" and forces "to be ashamed of their religion".¹⁹²

No less in its acuteness in today's France is anti-Semitism. France's Jewish community with 550-600 thousand people (Sephardim and Ashkenazim represented almost equally) is the largest in Europe and third largest in the world (after Israel and the United States). And although Judaism is considered a faith well integrated into French society, but, according to surveys, 15% of the French do not accept them as compatriots.

French anti-Semitism has deep historical roots: for centuries, Jews were persecuted and forcibly converted to Catholicism. Complicity of a collaborationist Vichy regime in deportation of Jews to Nazi death camps (from 76 thousand deportees came back less than 2.5 thousand), as well as discriminatory laws in 1942 (stripped Jews of many civil rights) led to guilt of the French because of the events of those years. This explains the strong opposition of the French political elite to any anti-Semitic manifestations. Responding to incidents of verbal abuse or physical assault, vandalism in places of worship, public anti-Semitic statements are taken by the government under control, investigations and trials widely covered in the national media.

¹⁹⁰ <http://rusoch.fr/lang/ru/soc/olland-otvetil.html>

¹⁹¹ <http://www.iarex.ru/articles/44836.html>

¹⁹² <http://www.reuters.fr/article/topNews/idFRKBN0H50TL20140910>

However, in recent years in the country there has been an increase in anti-Semitic manifestations. Commissioner for Human Rights in the Council of Europe Nils Muiznieks presented interesting statistics in France: in 2014 851 anti-Semitic acts are recorded, in 2010 — 466, in 2011 — 389, in 2012 — 614, in 2013 — 423.¹⁹³

Experts explain this disturbing trend as an increase in the number of Arab-Muslim community in the country and its radicalization. Every new round of Israeli-Palestinian conflict leads to a surge of tensions between the two religions. A recent example — anti-Israel protest actions in the summer of 2014 in a Paris suburb of Sarcelles, which grew into riots of Jewish quarters.¹⁹⁴ The Jewish community was shocked after an attack against a kosher shop in January 2015.¹⁹⁵

The growth of anti-Semitic manifestations leads to departure of French Jews to Israel. In 2014 the number of immigrants reached 7 thousand people — twice more than in 2013. It is expected that in 2015 the flow of seeking permanent residence in the promise land will grow up to 10 thousand people.¹⁹⁶

The government is doing everything possible to ensure the safety of Jews and convince them not to leave France. A decision on protection of socially important objects of the Jewish community — synagogues, schools and shops was made. For these purposes even units of the armed forces of the country are involved.

Islamophobia is a burning issue closely linked with a problem of mass immigration from former French colonies. For a long time French authorities refused to officially recognize a scale of Islamophobia. However, under pressure from human rights activists as well as populist considerations dictated by a desire to get votes of people from immigrant backgrounds, an intolerance theme towards Muslims was definitely included in the domestic agenda — in the list of major threats to a multicultural model of society.

In France, the term “Islamophobia” was first used in December of 2007 by Nicolas Sarkozy who equated Islamophobia to anti-Semitism and condemned

¹⁹³ <http://ria.ru/world/20150217/1048221864.html>

¹⁹⁴ <http://petroffvalerij.livejournal.com/318525.html>

¹⁹⁵ <http://gordonua.com/news/worldnews/Pogibshih-pri-terakte-v-koshernom-magazine-v-Parizhe-pohoronyat-v-Izraile-60700.html>

¹⁹⁶ <http://tass.ru/obschestvo/1682816>

colonialism.¹⁹⁷ In January of 2015, Francois Hollande denounced an outburst of anti-Islamic movements after a series of terrorist attacks in January, saying that Muslims around the world are “the first victims of fanaticism, fundamentalism and intolerance”.¹⁹⁸

However, in 2014, there were 133 acts of religious intolerance against Muslims as well as their cemeteries and mosques. After January terrorist attacks the number of assaults is equal to the annual rate — 178 Islamophobic acts. During February and March when “the dust settled” there were recorded 18 and 26 cases respectively, but in comparison with the same period of 2014 there is an increase by 80% and 100%. Thus, the number of anti-Islamic manifestations in the first quarter of 2015 compared with the first quarter of the previous year, increased by 500%.¹⁹⁹

The policy of multiculturalism conducted by the state in recent decades, actually equating the culture of Muslim immigrants to the French culture, has led to situation when traditions and beliefs of Muslim minority are not just respected, but, in fact, imposed on the majority of the population. Up to rewriting the history curriculum, dominance of halal products in stores and a ban on Christmas trees.

According to human rights activists, most of the anti-Islamic manifestations are seen in actions of law enforcement agencies and mainly against women (80% of all cases). Such statistics with “gender” bias is explained, first of all, with the French law banning wearing headscarves in public places (in public schools, but not universities), and the veil, adopted in 2004 and 2010 respectively. These laws are strong irritants in relations between the state and Muslims and are considered by human rights activists as an infringement on religious freedom.

Islamophobic statements, unlike anti-Semitic statements, often are neglected by justice — especially if they belong to Jewish community representatives and relate to the Arab-Israeli conflict. One of the recent examples is words told by the President of the Representative Council of French Jewish organizations, Roger

¹⁹⁷ http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/russian/international/newsid_7126000/7126154.stm

¹⁹⁸ <http://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/1699240>

¹⁹⁹ <http://lifebel.com/1676-cfcn-konstatiruet-vzryv-islamofobskikh-nastroeniy-vo-francii.html>

Kukermana in February of 2015 that “most of the crimes in France are committed by the Muslim youth”.²⁰⁰ The conflict situation managed to be suppressed by President Francois Hollande who organized a conciliatory meeting of Kukerman and the chairman of French Muslim Council Bubaker Delilah. However, the problem of integration of immigrants, security guarantees for the Jewish citizens of France and balance in interests of secular supporters and Christian believers are still relevant.

Great Britain

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is an island state in the northwestern part of Europe. According to the census in 2011 the population is more than 63 million people.²⁰¹ In England and Wales 59.3% of the population are Christians (identifying themselves with the Anglican Church and the Roman Catholic Church, the Presbyterian Church and various Protestant denominations). About 25% of population are atheists or without religious identity. Muslims account for 4.8%. Mostly they are immigrants from South Asia, the Arabian Peninsula and Africa. However, one must note the growing number of Islam adherents among the local people. 2% are Hindus, Sikhs, Jews and Buddhists.

In Scotland 54% of the population are Christians (32% — Presbyterians, 16% — Catholics). Muslims make up 1.4%, and other groups account for less than 1 percent. More than 36% do not have a clear religious identity.

In Northern Ireland 41% are Catholics and 41.5% — Protestants. All non-Christian groups make up less than 1 percent here. 17% do not have a clear religious identity.²⁰²

The UK law guarantees religious freedom in the country, and government officials consistently advocate tolerance and support of religious diversity. However, all this does not eliminate excesses in British society on the basis of religious intolerance. The most important are anti-Semitism, radical Islamism and Islamophobia.

²⁰⁰ <http://ru.rfi.fr/frantsiya/20150226-natsfront-frantsuzskoi-politiki-bolshe-net-est-politika-nato/>

²⁰¹ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/2011/uk-census/index.html>

²⁰² <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>

At the moment, the UK is the fifth in the world re the number of Jews. Most of them are assimilated within the local society. In the second half of the 20th century all manifestations of anti-Semitism were considered unacceptable, but the early 21st century was marked by growth of hostile attitudes towards this ethnic group.

According to survey YouGov (January 2015), 54% of British Jews believe that in the UK they have no future. More than half of the Jewish population also affirm that for the last two years they had seen more anti-Semitism than ever before. In addition, data of YouGov shows that anti-Semitic attitudes in the country are becoming more popular, and 45% of Britons agreed at least with one anti-Semitic remark. So about 25% of respondents agreed that Jews are interested in money much more than the British, and 20% believe that loyalty of Jews to Israel makes them less loyal to Britain compared with the other British. Another 13% believe that Jews too often talk about the Holocaust in order to get sympathy of others.

In January of 2015, the organization «Community Security Trust» (CST) that monitors anti-Semitic crimes published its vision of the situation. In the first half of 2014 the number of anti-Semitic attacks increased by 36%. However, these data were collected prior to resumption of an Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the figures for the second half of the same year can be even higher.²⁰³ Former Chief Rabbi of the British Commonwealth (held this office from September 1991 till September 2013), a member of the House of Lords Jonathan Sacks said that in recent years (especially after the terrorist attacks of Islamists in Paris), his co-religionists are increasingly refusing to visit synagogues and kosher food shops afraid for their life and safety.²⁰⁴

The galloping growth of anti-Semitism is largely connected with the activities of Islamist organizations, factions and individual supporters of these views. So on 23 of June 2010 it became known that the Jewish community of London plans to start using security measures at bus stations of the British capital because of increasing number of complaints for anti-Semitism. Initiator of the project is

²⁰³ <http://angliya.com/2015/01/14/anti-semitism-in-uk/>

²⁰⁴ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/11353535/British-Jews-scared-to-go-to-shops-in-wake-of-Paris-attacks.html> <http://angliya.com/2015/01/14/anti-semitism-in-uk/>

“Organization of the Jewish police” — a voluntary organization operating in conditions of civil defense. The organization representatives appealed to the transportation management of London with a request to organize direct routes between different Jewish districts of the city, and then Jews would be able to avoid transferring in dangerous for them areas.²⁰⁵

In 2011, without prior arrangement Islamist groups announced establishment of “Sharia zones” with twenty-four-hour patrolling in the Muslim quarters of the UK. Regardless of how these statements correspond to reality, they have led to increasing tension in the country.

Muslim students from the UK universities are influenced a lot by radical groups.²⁰⁶ In a number of Islamic schools in Britain school girls are forced to wear veil or niqab when they go to school and come back home.²⁰⁷

A sensational crime occurred on 22 of May, 2013, in London. Two Muslim radicals attacked a Nigerian-born British soldier Lee Rigby, and then he was killed.²⁰⁸.

In September 2014 a female representative of British jihadists condemned British Prime Minister David Cameron for “warfare” against Muslims and said she would not rest “until she impaled his head”.²⁰⁹

Every year in the UK the degree of anti-Islamic attitudes becomes higher and higher. The authorities are trying to prevent such a development. It is significant that after the murder of Lee Rigby Prime Minister David Cameron interrupted his business trip to France, returned to London where he said, “It was not just an attack on Britain and on the British way of life. It was also a betrayal of Islam and Muslim communities that have given so much to our country”.²¹⁰ Similarly, the situation was appraised by the mayor of London Boris Johnson, “I want to emphasize one thing: we must not blame Islam and Muslims in this terrible crime!

²⁰⁵ <http://www.zman.com/news/2010/06/23/77452.html>

²⁰⁶ <http://www.blagovest-info.ru/index.php?ss=2&s=7&id=35909>

²⁰⁷ <http://www.blagovest-info.ru/index.php?ss=2&s=3&id=37001>

²⁰⁸ <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424127887324412604578515400190063408>

²⁰⁹ <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2748297/I-want-Cameron-s-head-spike-British-jihadist-hits-PM-wars-against-Muslims-says-doesn-t-care-stripped-citizenship.html>

²¹⁰ http://zn.ua/WORLD/kemeron-nazval-ubiystvo-soldata-v-londone-atakoy-na-britaniyu-i-predatelstvom-islama-122733_.html

And I would not link this act with our foreign policy and military operations abroad".²¹¹

However, despite the opinion of the official authorities, the degree of Islamophobia is growing. So-called "English Defence League" is very active in this area. Its goal is, as they declare, fighting against "Islamization". The League organizes marches, public protests against construction of new mosques and imposition of another culture and legal opinions (Shariah).²¹² Generally, the number of participants in such protests is up to 2,000 people.

Under aegis of the NGO "Faith Matters" in the UK a hotline operates for those who suffered violence or discrimination on religious basis. Now there is collecting of statistical data on Islamophobic incidents in the country. The activists point out that 50% of these cases are not recorded by law enforcement agencies: after verbal and physical violence, Muslims avoid going to the police, fearing that they will not be taken seriously.²¹³

But "English Defence League" and similar organizations have a reputation of marginal extreme right-wing forces, while slogans of opposition to the "Islamic challenge" penetrate into ranks of politicians claiming respect. Some moderate euro sceptics, such as "the UK Independence Party", that now owns 24 mandates in the European Parliament, willingly tell about the fight against "Islamization" of Europe and Britain.²¹⁴ At the same time there are pragmatic reasons along with populism in its slogans. In September of 2014 its leader Nigel Farage urged Western nations not to provoke Russia, and to join forces in the fight against "Islamic threat".²¹⁵

Italy

Italy is a country in Southern Europe, in the center of the Mediterranean. It is bordered by France in the north-west, Switzerland and Austria — in the north

²¹¹ http://rg-rb.de/index.php?option=com_rg&task=item&id=9442&Itemid=13

²¹² <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/these-misguided-muslim-sharia-squads-are-playing-right-into-the-edls-hands-8461901.html>

²¹³ <http://www.insted.co.uk/islambook.pdf>

²¹⁴ <http://ria.ru/world/20140526/1009405297.html#ixzz3UdsI8Yzq>

²¹⁵ <http://vz.ru/news/2014/9/16/705960.html>

and Slovenia — in the northeast. It also has internal borders with the Vatican and San Marino.

The population of Italy in 2014 was approximately 62 million people.²¹⁶ 87% of citizens of the Italian Republic are Catholic. The rest of the religious groups together make up 5%.²¹⁷

According to the Constitution Italy is a secular country. The Basic Law guarantees freedom of religion (Articles 8 and 19). Also the state's duty to preserve certain religious freedoms in the context of a pluralistic society is expressed here. In accordance with these constitutional framework, the state is obligated to eliminate any possible obstacles that could limit the "freedom and equality of citizens" (art. 3, p. 2), to allocate additional resources and provide special measures in local government "in order to help implement successfully the rights of individuals" (art. 119, p. 5).²¹⁸

At the same time Italy maintains the state support for religion, mostly Catholic. However, various religious organizations can make an agreement with the state to get support, and it is called Intesa. As part of this agreement the government provides funding for construction of worship facilities, allocates public land for construction and pursues a policy of preservation of historic places of worship.²¹⁹

An unprecedented influx of refugees from North Africa and the Middle East after so-called "Arab Spring" (late 2010 — early 2011) almost led to a humanitarian disaster on an island of Lampedusa and a number of districts of Southern Italy. And once again it revealed the problems of Muslim migrants in Europe in general and the Italian Republic in particular. Today there are, according to various estimates, from 1.2 million to 1.7 million Muslims, including about 20 thousand new converts, which is about 1% of the total population.²²⁰

Most European countries have a significant portion of Muslim immigrants from countries with strong historical connections. Immigrants from North Africa

²¹⁶ <http://demoscope.ru/weekly/2014/0619/barom01.php>

²¹⁷ [http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/rlf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2013&dlid=222229#\(wrapper](http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/rlf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2013&dlid=222229#(wrapper)

²¹⁸ <http://constitutions.ru/?p=262>

²¹⁹ http://www.vatanyum.ru/?an=vs311_mp1

²²⁰ <http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/italy/>
<http://runews24.ru/religion/13022014-islam-v-italii.html>

(especially Algerians) make up the majority of Muslim immigrants in France, as well as the Pakistani and Indian Muslims in the UK, and the Turks in Germany. The Muslim community in Italy has a great diversity in countries of origin of its members, and most of them come from countries that have no historical connections with Italy. Just a small percentage of Muslims living in Italy come from the former Italian colonies in the Muslim world (Libya, Somalia and Eritrea). Two countries that contributed to the increase in number of Muslim immigrants in Italy are Morocco (28.5%) and Albania (20.5%). This leads to extreme diversity in the community. Only in one thing the Muslim community in Italy is homogeneous: 98% of them are Sunnis. This is the reason for a bad internal cohesion and a low level of organization that leads to a lack of unity. Often there is ethnic solidarity instead of Islamic religious identity at the forefront. As a result, lower risks of political radicalization in comparison to neighboring France, Germany and Great Britain.

The highest density of Muslims is in Milano. There is various data in different sources, as the process has been developed in recent years increasingly. According to current estimates, those who come from traditionally Muslim countries are the fastest growing group of immigrants.²²¹

One of the most urgent problems of modern Italy (especially considering the influx of new immigrants) is to build relationships between the official authority and the Islamic community. Thus, according to Izeddin Elzir, a leader of the Union of Islamic Organizations of Italy and the imam of the mosque in Florence, Italian Muslims produce up to one-twentieth of the state's gross domestic product (about 4-5% of GDP)²²².

Among the basic requirements of Italian Muslims are teaching of the Koran in schools or, as an alternative, opening of Muslim schools with equal rights, the right of women to be photographed for identity papers with the head covered, permission of absence from work for Hajj time, recognition of Friday as a day off for Muslims. In the early 2000s Interior Minister of that time Giuseppe Pisanu said

²²¹ Allievi Stefano. Islam in Italy // Shireen T. Hunter, ed., Islam, Europe's Second Religion (Westport, CT: Praeger Publisher, 2012), p. 82.

²²² <http://runews24.ru/religion/13022014-islam-v-italii.html>

about the basics of relations with the Islamic world, "The struggle against Islamic fundamentalism should be carried out in two ways: treatment of terrorists, enemies and moderate Muslims as friends". However, according to the Italian authorities, the Muslim community has not "ripened" for Intesa (special agreement with the state). Disagreements and lack of unity among organizations are the main reasons why they do not have an agreement with the government. The lack of Intesa does not affect free practice of religious groups. However, in contrast with the religious groups that have an agreement with the government, Muslims cannot allocate a quota of their income tax to the Muslim community, to deduct offerings from community taxes.²²³

After the "Arab spring" the Italian government took a number of drastic measures restricting immigration, but these measures were condemned by many civil society representatives as discriminatory. However, in Italian public opinion the word "Muslim" has become synonymous with the word "foreigner" and "immigrant". The media contributed to the negative perceptions of Islam. In newspapers and on television there is almost no positive image of Islam. This image is linked to violence. News mentions about Islam when there is a plot about terrorists or illegal immigrants. For the last 10-20 years, public opinion is slowly shifting from tolerance and curiosity to fear and intolerance.²²⁴ Although in this situation Muslim communities are responsible to a large extent, not being active enough in criticizing radicals (who harm to all Muslims and Islam), but focusing on extending their rights and privileges.

Spain

Spain is a country in southwestern Europe and partly in Africa. It occupies a large part (80%) of the Iberian Peninsula and the Canary and Balearic Islands and small territories on the coast of Africa (cities Ceuta and Melilla). It has land borders with Portugal in the west of the Iberian Peninsula, the British territory of Gibraltar in the south of the Pyrenees, Morocco in North Africa, France and

²²³ http://www.vatanyum.ru/?an=vs311_mp1

²²⁴ Ibid.

Andorra in the north. It is washed by the Atlantic Ocean in the north and west, and the Mediterranean Sea in the south and east.

The population of Spain is 47.4 million people. The Government does not keep a record of religious affiliation. But according to the Spanish Centre for Sociological Research (February 2013), 71% people identified themselves as Catholics, and 3% as adherents of other confessions. 17% identified themselves as nonbelievers, and 8% as atheists. The Episcopal Conference of Spain estimates the number of Catholics in the country as 34.5 million, and the Union of Islamic Communities of Spain says that in the country there are 1.67 million followers of Islam.²²⁵

The Spanish government policy in the field of religions is based on the principle of equidistance from all faiths. Freedom of ideology, religion and worship for citizens and their associations is guaranteed by the Constitution of Spain without any restrictions except those that are necessary to maintain public order (Article 16, p. 1). There is not permitted discrimination, including on religious basis (Article 14), forced expression of opinion, faith or beliefs (Article 16, p. 2). No any religion can be a state religion, but the authorities take into account the religious beliefs of Spanish society and maintain the necessary cooperation with the Catholic Church and other denominations (Article 16, p. 3).²²⁶

There is a public perception of Spanish tolerance that historically goes back to coexistence of three religions — Christianity, Islam and Judaism in the country in the Middle Ages (the fact of exile of the Arabs and the Jews who refused to accept Catholicism in 15-16th centuries is usually omitted). In modern Spain the concept of religious freedom means that the country not only has adherents of all kinds of religious systems, but also anti-clerical activists whose activities are beyond control, although sometimes they become very aggressive. Specific cases of religious intolerance do not get full coverage in the national media and the reports of the Commissioner for Human Rights. For most local human rights experts the theme of religious freedom is not an issue at all.

²²⁵ [http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/rlsreligiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2013&dlid=222229#\(wrapper](http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/rlsreligiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2013&dlid=222229#(wrapper)

²²⁶ <http://worldconstitutions.ru/?p=149>

According to the report of the Spanish Monitoring Centre on religious freedom and freedom of conscience, 96 cases of violation of Christian rights were recorded in the country in 2013, including interruption of worship services, attacks and threats of attacks on places of worship and Christians themselves. The report on religious freedom in 2014 of the Pontifical Charity Fund "Aid to the Church in Need" also revealed attacks on the Church, in particular, a collection of signatures in favor of transferring of the cathedral in the city of Cordoba (Andalusia) to the state, depositing light-duty explosives into churches, destruction and profaning of religious objects and church books.²²⁷

Activities of secularists are becoming more massive, they attack bishops with anti-clerical posters, publish propaganda materials attributing to the clergy what the latter did not say or do, organize pickets with posters summoning to exclude religious education from secular schools (despite the fact that such lessons are optional). In February of 2015 Bishop Fernandez Dionysus' visit to a school Caballeros de Santiago in the city of Cordoba was thwarted on the grounds of one mother's protest against the visit. (The purpose of the visit was a meeting with schoolchildren who willfully chose it after classes.) And this happened despite the interest of other parents and permission given on the basis of voting in the regional board of education.

The conflict between Catholics and secularists originates in early 20th century. In particular, it developed during the civil war in 1936-1939 and the subsequent years of Francisco Franco's reign. Echoes of this confrontation are heard in today's Spain.

In recent years, in Spain there is a tendency of growing anti-Islamic attitudes, including threats against the background of jihadist terrorism in Europe. Especially it is Spain that is the leader in the number of Muslim migrants and has a reputation as one of the most Islamophobic countries of "the Old World".²²⁸ ISIL jihadists from Morocco (more than 3,000 people) started to return home and many of them try to get to Spain through enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla. In

²²⁷ <http://www.sedmitza.ru/text/4524422.html>

²²⁸ Ibid.

August of 2014 Spanish and Moroccan security forces crushed a recruiting network in Moroccan cities near Ceuta. Recruited citizens of Spain and Morocco were trained to handle weapons, produce and deposit explosives and steal cars. Presumably, some of them participated in the massacres of prisoners in Syria and Iraq.²²⁹

Since the beginning of 2015 the Spanish NGO "Civic Platform against Islamophobia" has registered 80 incidents of its manifestations (public insults, including the Internet, damage to mosques), what is by 70% more than for the same period in 2014. According to surveys of the German Bertelsmann Foundation, 61% of Spaniards saw a threat in Islam.²³⁰ At the same time the Spanish edition of "Rason" indicated that 78.3% of the population considers Islamic fundamentalism a real threat, and 58% believe that Spain is the direct target of the "Islamic state"²³¹

Random anti-Semitic manifestations are registered in this region (at least 30 cases annually) which are damaging of synagogues, including graffiti, attacks on Jews, including attacks by neo-Nazi factions, spreading of insulting messages in the Internet. These facts are recorded by Jewish associations in Spain.²³²

Acts of aggression against the Russian Orthodox Church parishes in Spain have not been recorded. It is interesting that Spaniards and other foreigners visit Orthodox churches in various cities of the country conducting themselves respectfully and showing true interest. There are cases of conversion to Orthodoxy. It should also be noted that many Spaniards being in touch with employees of the Russian embassy approved Russian desire to protect traditional values. They recognize that current obsession of Western governments on making concepts of human rights and freedoms absolute as well as excessive secularization of state policy lead to new problems in the religious and moral life of their society.

²²⁹ <http://voprosik.net/islamskij-vopros-v-ispanii/>
http://elpais.com/elpais/2014/10/30/inenglish/1414682950_772016.html

²³⁰ <http://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2015/01/daily-chart-2>

²³¹ <http://www.larazon.es/el-islam-y-los-otros-NX8365971#.Ttt1GL5P27HHqLJ>

²³² observatorioantisemitismo.fcje.org.

Netherlands

Kingdom of the Netherlands is a country in Western Europe. It includes a number of islands in the Caribbean. In Western Europe, the country's territory is washed by the North Sea. It is bordered by Germany and Belgium. The population of the Netherlands is slightly less than 17 million people.²³³ According to the Dutch statistics 45% of the population does not declare their religious identity. 28% identify themselves as Catholics, 18% — Protestants, and 5% (about 850,000 people) — Muslims. 4% are various faiths (Hindus, Jews, Buddhists). Most of Muslims of Turkish, Moroccan and Surinamese origin live in cities. There are many refugees from Somalia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq.²³⁴

Manifestations of neo-Nazism and anti-Semitism in the Netherlands, are sporadic and do not represent any popular public attitudes. Data on any significant activities of racist, nationalist and neo-Nazi movements (and their existence) are not available. One of the recent anti-Semitic incidents, which caused a wide response, was a story connected with naming of the world's largest special vessel-catamaran in honour of Peter Shelte Heeremy — known Dutch Nazi. He served in "Waffen SS" during the Nazi occupation of Netherlands. As a result of ensuing public discussion of an operator and owner of the vessel, the Dutch company "Ollsis", decided to rename the ship in "Pioneering Spirit".²³⁵

Various studies indicate that the number of anti-Semitic incidents in the Netherlands (in contrast to some other European countries) in general is the same. According to the annual report of the Information and Documentation Center of Israel²³⁶ in 2014 the number of reported anti-Semitic incidents increased by 71% compared with 2013. However, in absolute terms, the number

²³³ <http://statline.cbs.nl/StatWeb/publication/?DM=SLEN&PA=37943eng&D1=7&D2=l&LA=EN&HDR=T&STB=G1&VW=T>

²³⁴ <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2013&dlid=222251>

²³⁵ <http://www.jewish.ru/news/world/2015/02/news994327916.php>

²³⁶ Centre Information and Documentation on Israel is an independent foundation, based in The Hague. Its main mission is to "protect the right of peace and security for Israel and the Jewish people" as well as the strengthening of relations of the Netherlands/EU and Israel and fighting with anti-Semitism and racism. The Center regularly comments, including in the press, various issues relating to Israel and anti-Semitism. Since 1983, it annually publishes a report on the monitoring of anti-Semitic incidents in the Netherlands.

is still small. In 2014, the Center recorded 171 incidents, in 2013 – 147, in 2012 – 114, in 2011 – 113, in 2010– 124.²³⁷

According to Verwey-Jonker Institute that presents a general annual analytical report on crime in the area of discrimination (so-called «POLDIS»), in 2013 Dutch police recorded 2,188 incidents with various “anti-Semitic aspects” (in 2010 – 2354, in 2011 – 2668, in 2010 – 2757).²³⁸

There is no violation of Christian rights or active actions in the field of Christianophobia recorded in the Netherlands, and no cases of assaults on representatives of Christian denominations, including the Russian Orthodox Church, have been revealed.

However, there are random discrimination cases against members of ethnic, national and religious minorities recorded in the Netherlands, including legal and naturalized migrants, which arouses concern of the Dutch Board of Human Rights.²³⁹

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) published its fourth report about the Netherlands in October of 2013 wherein positive progress in the government policy of struggling with intolerance as well as to unsolved problems were pointed to. Among those are reduction in financing of institutions that specialize in anti-discrimination, toughening of requirements for foreigners' integration into Dutch society, increasing the cost of residence permits, exploitation of temporary foreign workers, impunity for discrimination statements by some politicians and journalists about Islam, Muslims, immigrants from Eastern Europe, etc.²⁴⁰

It is noted that activities of a number of right-wing politicians in the Netherlands pave the way for spreading racist and xenophobic attitudes, and that is why ECRI, in particular, called for the Netherlands to work out a national strategy for fighting with racism in various spheres of life.²⁴¹

²³⁷ <http://www.cidi.nl/sectie/antisemitisme/cidi-antisemitemonitor/>

²³⁸ <http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-en-publicaties/rapporten/2015/02/12/poldis-rapportage-2013.html>

²³⁹ [http://www.mensenrechten.nl/publicaties/zoek?categorie\[0\]=443438](http://www.mensenrechten.nl/publicaties/zoek?categorie[0]=443438)

²⁴⁰ <http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Netherlands/NLD-CbC-IV-2013-039-ENG.pdf>

²⁴¹ Which has not been presented yet, the Cabinet refers to the absence of the need for its approving in the context of an overall action plan against discrimination adopted in 2010.

Poland

The Republic of Poland is a country in Eastern Europe. According to census data (2011), its population is more than 38.5 million people.²⁴² Poland's territory is washed by the Baltic Sea in the north. It has a land border with Russia (Kaliningrad Region), Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, Slovakia, Czech Republic and Germany.

Almost 89% of the population are Catholics. All other religious denominations are less than 5%. At the beginning of 2013 the number of members in Muslim religious groups was 1251 people, and Jewish — 2 908. However, these figures do not take into account those who are not joined formally to the religious groups (so in fact, these figures may be higher, about 20 000 people).²⁴³ Thus Poland is the country with the largest Catholic population in Eastern Europe.

According to the Constitution (1997), its citizens are guaranteed the religious freedom. The state ensures separation of religion and state.²⁴⁴ The Criminal Code provides punishment for inciting religious intolerance. In 1998 the Polish authorities and the Vatican signed a Concordat. It was a reflection of a significant part of the Roman Catholic Church, that it plays in the social life of the country.

In 2012, the Foundation «Polistrefa» prepared a research on a topic “Between tolerance and discrimination”, dedicated to influence of religion in educational process. According to sociologists, 17% of school principals admitted that the teachers of religion change the content of programs of other subjects that are approved by the teachers' council; 70% of schools organize pilgrimages or tours with religious bias. In 98% of schools there are religious symbols: in 83% of schools crucifix hang in all classes, 45% — in the rooms for teachers, 12% — in the corridors, and in 7% even in sports halls.²⁴⁵

A significant debate, not only in Poland but also in other countries of the European Union was caused by a decision of the Constitutional Court of the Republic (2012) prohibiting the ritual killing of animals in accordance with the

²⁴² <http://polandinfo.ru/Container/Details/988>

²⁴³ <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>

²⁴⁴ <http://worldconstitutions.ru/?p=112>

²⁴⁵ <http://www.polityka.pl/tymekpolityka/kraj/1547507,1,polska-panstwem-wyznaniowym.read>

requirements of Jewish kashrut and Islamic halal. Ritual slaughter, when animals and birds first have their throat cut, and then blood exsanguinated without stunning them, according to the Polish court, is contrary to the Basic Law of the country. This story has lasted over many years. Ten years before the decision of the Constitutional Court at the state level an act "On protection of animals" was passed. It prohibited the Jewish and Islamic rituals. After that, the activists of the Muslim and Jewish organizations tried to challenge this decision in different instances.

However, the verdict of the Constitutional Court of Poland came into conflict with the norms of the European Union, which, from 1 January 2013, allowed ritual slaughter of poultry and livestock. As EU decisions are more priority over national law the Polish government went the following way: the Ministry of Agriculture in this country started to give licenses for certain slaughter enterprises.²⁴⁶

Human rights organizations record numerous acts of vandalism based on religious motifs. Anti-racism NGOs "Never Again" (headquarters in Warsaw) records anti-Semitic manifestations at football matches, various mass actions. In February 2013 there was an act of vandalism at a cemetery in Kalisz (monuments were defaced with graffiti "Kalisz without Jews"). Polish society is faced with Islamophobic manifestations. "In general, Islamophobia has become one of serious problems. I would say that it is growing, and I'm afraid, it will continue to grow. More often we hear talks about so-called Islamic threat", the coordinator of the organization "Never again" Rafale Punkovski said.²⁴⁷ So in October of 2013 in Bohoniki a celebration of religious holiday "Eid al-Adha" was interrupted, and in Gdansk a group of vandals committed arson in a mosque causing damage in the estimate of 15,000 US dollars.²⁴⁸ In June of 2014 unknown people defiled a mosque and a Muslim cemetery in a Tartar village Kruszyniany in eastern Poland. The walls of the wooden church were covered with pigs' drawings and other images offensive to Islamic followers.²⁴⁹ Xenophobic attitudes are

²⁴⁶ <http://zeleneet.com/polsha-zapretila-kashrut-i-xalyal/6728/>

²⁴⁷ <http://www.meta.kz/542168-pravozaschitniki-predosteregayut-o-roste-islamofobii-v-polshe.html>

²⁴⁸ <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/rfr/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>

²⁴⁹ <http://islam-today.ru/novosti/2014/07/01/v-polse-ramadan-nacalsa-s-oskvernenia-meceti/>

promoted by the Catholic radio station “Maria” where harsh statements about Islam are allowed.²⁵⁰

Greece

The Hellenic Republic is a country in Southern Europe, located on the Balkan Peninsula and numerous islands. It is washed by the Aegean and Thracian Seas in the east, the Ionian Sea to the west, the Mediterranean and the Cretan Sea – in the south. It shares land borders with Albania, Macedonia and Bulgaria to the north and with Turkey to the east. The population of Greece is about 11 million people.²⁵¹

The Greek government does not publish statistics on religious affiliation. However, researchers say that there are 95-97% of the adherents of Orthodox Christianity. Autocephalous Orthodox Church exercises jurisdiction over central Greece, the Peloponnese, the Ionian Islands and the Cyclades, but Crete and the Aegean islands are under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate (Orthodox Church of Constantinople). Thrace, Epirus and Aegean Macedonia are under spiritual supervision of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, but administratively are under the Greek Church.²⁵²

According to the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923 (that put the end to the war between Turkey and Greece and provided for “exchange of populations”), the “Muslim minority” living in Thrace (Greek territory) was officially recognized (their number is estimated today between 100 and 140 thousand people).²⁵³ In addition to the “traditional” Islamic community in Greece today, Muslim immigrants from Albania, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, and North Africa live here. NGOs estimate their number at 200-500,000 people.²⁵⁴

²⁵⁰ <http://www.radiomaryja.pl/>

²⁵¹ <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&language=en&pcode=tps00001&tableSelection=1&footnotes=yes&labeling=labels&plugin=1>

²⁵² <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>

²⁵³ This group is dissimilar. It includes the country's inhabitants of Turkish origin, the Muslim Bulgarians (“Pomaks”), Muslim Roma, Muslims — ethnic Greeks, whose ancestors were converted to Islam in XVII-XVIII centuries at times of the Ottoman Empire.

²⁵⁴ <http://www.islamnews.ru/news-445465.html>

Hellenic Republic legislation provides religious freedom, but with certain restrictions. Orthodox Church enjoys some privileges (taxation, institutional linkage with the government). At the same time the Church is active in information space (especially at the regional level), promoting a thesis of determining role of religious choice for the Greek national identity.

The religious policy of the state is strongly influenced by a long history of Greek-Turkish relations, including an unresolved conflict over Cyprus. As a result, difficult relationships between the Islamic community and the state, as well as established Islamophobia (currently its active promoter is a party "Golden Dawn"). Thus, according to the law of 1980, confirmed by a presidential decree in 1990, the right of managing wakuf, or endowment (the property given for religious purposes and charity) went to the state authorities. Also, with a special decision of the government in 1990 the Greek Islamic Ummah was deprived of the right to choose muftis, and since then they have been appointed by the authorities. All this leads to the protests of followers of Islam in northern Greece.²⁵⁵

The two largest cities of the country, where a large quantity of Muslims lives — Athens and Thessaloniki, still have no official mosques. Athens today is the only European capital that has no mosques, and Muslims of the Greek capital use for worshiping 130 different places (including underground parking, specially refitted for this purpose). In January of 2013, after a meeting of Recep Tayyip Erdogan (at that time the Prime Minister of Turkey) with Antonis Samaras (at that time — the head of the Greek government) a decision was made to allocate land for a new mosque.²⁵⁶ However, the implementation of this solution is constantly postponed, including resistance of the Church (a kind of locomotive of the resistance was the Metropolitan of Piraeus). Only in May of 2015 after hot debate in the national parliament the legislation was amended to allow such construction.²⁵⁷

However, this decision was possible largely due to electoral success of left-wing Greek coalition SYRIZA in January of 2015. Its leader Alexis Tsipras, who

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ <http://www.muslim-info.com/Afina-islam-mecet.html>

²⁵⁷ <http://islam-today.ru/novosti/2015/05/15/parlament-soglasilsa-na-mecet-v-afinah/>

became prime minister after the election, describes himself as an atheist.²⁵⁸ Meanwhile, an internal political struggle in Greece has a religious dimension. Traditionally, the right-wing forces hold themselves as “traditionalists”, based on authority of the church, while the left-wing (especially the Communists) are supporters of secularism (at least of minimizing influence of the church community). This contradiction goes back to the first half of the 20th century (especially the civil war of 1946-1949).

A significant danger is growing anti-Semitism in Greece. According to the Anti-Defamation League,²⁵⁹ Greece is the anti-leader in the European Union (in 2014, 69% of respondents expressed anti-Semitic views).²⁶⁰ A party “Golden Dawn” (founded in 1993) promotes anti-Semitic views most from all political forces. It holds itself as a project of “hard-line nationalists.” In elections for the European Parliament (2014) it gained 9.38% of the votes and in the parliamentary elections in Greece (2015) — 6.92% and 18 seats.²⁶¹ All this makes anti-Semitic discourse more immanent to the system thus depriving it of the status of a marginal force.

Norway

The Kingdom of Norway is a country in Northern Europe, located in the western part of the Scandinavian Peninsula, on a huge amount of surrounding smaller islands and the archipelago of Svalbard (Spitsbergen), Jan Mayen and Bear Islands in the Arctic Ocean. Overseas territory of Norway is Bouvet Island in the South Atlantic Ocean. Norway is bordered by three countries: Sweden — in the east, Finland and Russia — in the north-east. The country is washed by the Barents Sea in the north-east, the Norwegian Sea — in the west and the North Sea — in the southwest.

Norway has a population of 4.7 million people. The leading denomination is the Evangelical Lutheran Church (79%). Until May 21, 2012, it had had the status

²⁵⁸ <http://rua.gr/news/gospol/13472-tsipras-ya-ne-veryu-v-boga.html>

²⁵⁹ The US human rights organization, its main goal is to fight with anti-Semitism (was established in 1913).

²⁶⁰ <http://newrezume.org/news/2014-11-20-4038>

²⁶¹ <http://www.xryshaygh.com/>

of a state religion (the government appointed bishops and senior pastors). The debate about separation of church and state had lasted in Norway since 1840. But only in 2012, the Norwegian parliamentarians voted for a constitutional amendment changing the traditions of church-state relations. However, the church preserved some privileges (the status of civil servants for priests, funding ecclesiastical objects from the state budget).²⁶²

Various Christian denominations in Norway account for 313,000 registered members (57% of them are Catholics). Outside the dominant Evangelical Lutheran Church, Muslims make up 22% of the total number of believers (more than 120 000 people). The Muslim population is concentrated mainly in Oslo and Akershus. They are immigrants from Pakistan, Somalia and other countries, including representatives of the Russian North Caucasus.²⁶³ From 2009 to 2013, the number of Islamic religious communities in Norway increased by 55%.²⁶⁴

According to the Norwegian Constitution, all residents are free to choose their religion. The law on religious freedom provides the right to choose faith and practice of its profession. All individuals on reaching 15 years old have the right to join or leave a religious community, but until that age, the prerogatives of religious choice belong to parents (but starting from 7 years old, the child's opinion should be taken into account).²⁶⁵ At the same time there are certain restrictions (kosher food for the Jewish believers has to be imported, it cannot be produced domestically).

Nevertheless, despite many advances in respecting religious freedom and tolerance situation in Norway is far from perfect. According to the latest public surveys 59% of the population is seriously concerned about growth of xenophobia in the country, 58% believe that the state does not cope with integration of immigrants into Norwegian society.²⁶⁶ Extreme manifestations of these underlying

²⁶² <http://www.svoboda.org/archive/radio-svoboda-news/613/016564/16564.html?id=24583184>

²⁶³ In the 1990s — early 2000s in Norway about 10-12 thousand Chechens settled down. However, in 2011 the country's authorities deported 50 Chechen families to Russia after a review of personnel files of immigrants. // <http://www.kp.ru/daily/25645/809478/>

²⁶⁴ <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/rlf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>

²⁶⁵ <http://worldconstitutions.ru/?p=142>

²⁶⁶ <http://sciencenordic.com/norways-problem-immigration>

attitudes were attacks in Oslo and Utoya Island, committed by Anders Behring Breivik in 22 July, 2011.²⁶⁷

The problems connected with the lack of effective integration of Muslims and unsuccessful inoculating “the universal democratic values”, lead to increase of Islamophobia manifestations. In recent years, this trend has received an additional impulse due to the phenomenon of Islamist terrorist militants and a very real threat coming from them towards society. So in February 2015, the first trial started in Norway (in the Oslo City Court) against the militants involved in ISIL terroristic war in Syria. The accused were Jibril Bashir and Valon Avdilim, Norwegians of Somali and Albanian origin respectively.²⁶⁸ In Norway, there is a stable anti-Muslim right radical movement (the most famous “The Norwegian Defence League”, “Let's stop the Islamization of Norway”, “Norwegian anti-jihad”), markedly intensified after the terrorist attacks in Paris and Copenhagen in January 2015. After these tragic events in the country there was the most right-wing mass action after World War II (200 people).

The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination of UN and the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance have repeatedly drawn attention of the Norwegian authorities on growth of Islamophobia in the national internet space and encouraged to take under special control the local anti-Muslim right-wing extremist activities on the worldwide web. Referring to a need to protect the principle of freedom of opinion expression, the official Oslo avoids taking any real action in this area. A law on prosecution for public expression of discriminatory and extremist views on the Internet passed in May 2013 has not still worked.

A problem of anti-Semitism stands apart in Norway, connected not so much with anti-immigrant attitudes (the number of Norwegian Jews is small — about 1.5 thousand people) as with historical and political stereotypes. 12.5% of

²⁶⁷ As a result of the attacks 77 people were killed and 151 injured. Breivik confessed to these crimes, but refused to admit his guilt. On 24 August, 2012 he was ruled sane, convicted and sentenced to 21 years in prison with the possibility of unlimited extension.

²⁶⁸ http://kavpolit.com/articles/pobeg_iz_norvegii-5882/
<http://www.thelocal.no/20150224/norway-starts-first-trial-under-new-anti-jihadist-law>

Norwegians have hostility or prejudice towards the Jews, and most of them extrapolate their discontent of “aggressive Israeli policies against the Palestinians” to the Jews living in the country. Everyday anti-Semitism is quite widespread: 8% of respondents would not like to have Jews as their neighbors or belonged to a circle of friends; there is no rejection of anti-Semitism in school education.²⁶⁹

There is no single and clear policy on using religious symbols in public places. Thus, soldiers are allowed to wear religious headgear, but there is a ban on using religious symbols along with the police uniform. The right to permit or prohibit the Islamic dress (the niqab and the burqa) in public schools is given by the government to schools leadership. A great public response was caused by a case occurred in November 2013 when an editor's office of TV and radio broadcasters “NRC” Siv Kristin Sellmann prohibited to one of its announcers to wear a pendant with a Christian cross in the air.²⁷⁰ It can be stated that at the moment the prevailing trend is moving toward restricting or banning the use of religious symbols at work and in public places.

Switzerland

The Swiss Confederation is a country in Western Europe. It is bordered by Germany in the north, by Italy — in the south, by France — in the west, by Austria and Liechtenstein — in the east.

The country population is about 8 million people.²⁷¹ 41.8% of them are Catholics, 35.3% — the Protestants of different denominations, 4, 9% — Muslims and 1.8% — followers of orthodox Christianity. 11% identify themselves as atheists. Immigrants are mostly representatives of religious groups which differ from those who were born and grew up in Switzerland.

More than 90% of Swiss Muslims are of foreign origin. They represent 26 countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Serbian autonomous province of Kosovo, Albania, Turkey and countries in North Africa). At the same the vast majority of Swiss adherents of Islam came from the republics of the former

²⁶⁹ http://mnenia.zahav.ru/Articles/1525/politcorrectny_antisemitism

²⁷⁰ <http://svspb.net/novosti/v-norvegii-televizionnye-zapretili-nosit-krestik/>

²⁷¹ <http://countryometers.info/ru/Switzerland>

Yugoslavia and Turkey. Their sense of justice and understanding of society is close enough to European standards that distinguish Switzerland (which is not included in the EU, being in the Schengen area) from EU countries. The largest group of Muslims living in Switzerland is Sunnites. Another numerous group is Kurdish Alevis (from Turkey). An important characteristic of Islam in Switzerland is its heterogeneity, and the lack of a single public organization that would play a part of a consolidating Muslim spiritual center. Among 300 different ethnic and cultural Islamic associations in Switzerland there is no any single approach to the fundamental concepts of Islam. However, the number of Muslims in Switzerland is gradually increasing. They form in the Swiss cantons and cities Muslim associations and national unions. About 100 new youth organizations have emerged in recent years.²⁷²

The law provides for religious freedom. Any forms of religious discrimination are prohibited. There is a punishment up to three years of imprisonment for actions based on racial intolerance, incitement to ethnic hatred or hatred on the religious basis. There is no state church, and religious affairs are given to jurisdiction of the cantons (subjects of the Swiss Confederation).²⁷³ It is worth noting a constitutional ban on the construction of minarets. In a referendum in November 2009, almost 57.5% of the participants voted against their construction (4 out of 26 cantons did not agree with the decision).²⁷⁴

Human rights organizations in the country and abroad criticized the constitutional law concerning the minarets. In November 2014 the Swiss court repealed the previous law banning the hijab in schools of northeastern canton of St. Gallen, calling it unfair and too harsh. It was stated that the headscarf did not have any risk, and did not prevent integration into Swiss society.²⁷⁵

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that, despite the high standards for protection of freedom of conscience and the rights of believers in Switzerland, hostile incidents do occur (especially anti-Semitic and Islamophobic).

²⁷² <http://viperson.ru/wind.php?ID=678761>

²⁷³ <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2013&dlid=222275#wrapper>

²⁷⁴ <http://www.iimes.ru/rus/stat/2009/02-12-09b.htm>

²⁷⁵ <http://viperson.ru/wind.php?ID=678761>

According to the Union of Israel communities of Switzerland, a leading Jewish NGO, in 2014 the number of public anti-Semitic incidents increased. There were 66 recorded incidents in comparison with 33 ones recorded in 2013. It is mainly kindling hatred graffiti, two violence cases causing bodily harm were also recorded. There also have been more tightened anti-Semitic attacks in recent time. According to the Union, lion's share of them is carried out by the local Islamic radicals, and was mainly caused by aggressive rejection of Israeli policies in the Middle East (the main surge in 2014 occurred in the period of exacerbation of a conflict in the Gaza Strip). Thus, in Switzerland, one can state a general paradigm shift in Europe — from the "old" anti-Semitism of right-wing conservative parties to a "new" anti-Semitism of Islamists.²⁷⁶

Resonance and systematic manifestations of Christianophobia in the country in recent years have not been recorded. Surges of Christianofobia (and wider — anti-Western) attacks by Islamic radicals occurring from time to time in social networks and blogs are usually a reaction to actions and initiatives of anti-Islamism, inspired by the right-wing forces of the local political spectrum. It includes a referendum on a ban of construction of minarets in Ticino, a cantonal referendum on a ban of wearing headscarves, totally or partially covering face (September 2013), collecting signatures for an initiative of introducing the issue at the federal referendum discussion.

About 53% of the Swiss take seriously the possible threat posed by Islam. For the majority of the population, Islam is associated with acts of terrorism, radical movements, and problems of integration, what is certainly stirred up by the media. After the terrorist attacks in France in January 2015 in pages of Swiss press articles were published expressing concern because of emergence of a new Islamic Center at the University of Freiburg, which prepared imams and Islamic teachers. Some parties in the Swiss parliament, in particular the Swiss People's Party, demanded to abandon this dangerous, as they thought, project.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁶ <http://antisemitism.org.il/article/97320/2014-antisemitism-report>

²⁷⁷ <http://viperson.ru/wind.php?ID=678761>

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is a state in the Balkans in Europe. It is bordered by Croatia in the north and west, Serbia and Montenegro — in the east and south-east. It has a small outlet to the Adriatic Sea. The country has 3.9 million people.²⁷⁸ BiH is a federation of equal Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republika Srpska and Brcko District.

In a breakup process in Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, it was Bosnian territory that became the scene of the most violent armed conflict in Europe since World War II. According to different estimates from 100 to 200 000 people were killed there.²⁷⁹ In this conflict of interests there were Bosnians (mostly Muslims, in 1991 44% of the population), Serbs (mostly Orthodox Christians, 31%) and Croats (mostly Roman Catholics, 17%). The newly independent states of the Balkans as well as the leading world powers and international organizations became involved into the confrontation. Religious identity played a defining role in the armed confrontation. Actually it combined ethnic origin and religion. Religious factor defined (and defines today) ethnicity.

The armed conflict ended with signing of the Dayton Accords (1995), which defined the constitutional and political future of BiH. The state Bosnia and Herzegovina is to consist of two parts — the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Federation) and the Republika Srpska as well as Brcko District. A resident of Bosnia and Herzegovina could be a citizen in both a union republic and one of the two entities. At the same time the central government (represented by the Presidium of the representatives from three main groups in the country) has some limited prerogatives. The total power is concentrated in the republics that make up Bosnia and Herzegovina. Today the US and the European Union consider existence of “pacification” of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a “success story” in resolving the Balkan conflict and a process of “Europeanization of the region”.

Today, Muslims are 45% of the population of BiH, Orthodox (adherents of the Serbian Orthodox Church) — 36%, and Catholics — 15%. All other faiths — 3%.

²⁷⁸ http://www.bhas.ba/?option=com_publikacija&id=1&lang=ba

²⁷⁹ Gerard Toal and Carl T. Dahlman “Bosnia Remade: Ethnic cleansing and its reversal”. Oxford. 2011/

De facto there is still segregation in the republic. The vast majority of Orthodox Serbs live in the territory of Republika Srpska, and within the Federation, there are regions with predominance of Catholics or Muslims (the latter live mainly in the capital Sarajevo).²⁸⁰

Despite the de facto existence of the EU and US protectorate over BiH and formal constitutional guarantees of religious freedom and choice of religion the problem of religious discrimination has not been solved in the country. So from January till November 2013 in BiH there were 34 acts of vandalism in relation to places of religious worship in all parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In comparison with 2012 there was an increase of such incidents. Vandals attacked 17 sites related to Islam (in the Republic of Srpska), 9 places associated with Orthodoxy and 7 — with Catholicism (in the Federation territory). Discrimination remains a serious problem for the whole country (we talk about Muslims in the Republic of Srpska, non-Catholics in Herzegovina, non-Muslims in central Bosnia and in Sarajevo). According to authors of the annual report of the international human rights organization «Human Rights Watch» (2014), the government did not make any progress in proposing the constitutional amendments recommended by the European Court, “in order to avoid ethnic and religious discrimination in formation of the tripartite presidency (*in the BiH the Presidium, consisting of representatives of three Republic groups, is the “collective President” – author’s note*) and the House of Peoples”.²⁸¹

Until now, two institutes mentioned above are formed only from three ethnic and religious groups.²⁸² And in the October 2014 elections were held without the recommended amendments. Many observers called their results “returning to the 1990s” because of the victory of nationalist parties who were not ready to compromise and interested in preserving the existing segregation. During the

²⁸⁰ <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/rlf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>

²⁸¹ The upper chamber — the House of Peoples suggests 15 mandates. 10 deputies are elected from the Muslim-Croat Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (5 deputies from the Croats and 5 — by Bosnians), 5 — from the Republic of Srpska. Deputies of the House of Peoples are elected by national parliaments of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska.

²⁸² <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2015/country-chapters/bosnia-and-herzegovina>

election requirements of the country partition and reformatting of the federation in favor of “their” group were exploited.²⁸³

Against the background of the continuing socio-economic problems (unemployment rate is 44%, and the youth employment rate is even higher) in BiH radical Islamists started to strengthen their presence. In 2012 Ovsha village near the town of Maglaj turned into a kind of Islamic Center. In May 2015 the police checked a process of purchasing the piece of land there by ISIL supporters.²⁸⁴

BRICS: the religious dimension

BRICS is a group of five countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa)²⁸⁵, major rapidly emerging national economies, who claim an independent role in world politics. High populations of these countries (43% of the world’s population) and possession of natural resource suggest the possible transformation of their growth into political influence in the international arena, which can lead to loss of the monopoly of the US and its allies. Since the beginning of the Ukrainian crisis and increasing Western sanctions pressure on the Russian Federation a tendency, such as the strengthening of strategic co-operation between China and Russia, and between Russia and India, was recorded. Moscow’s turn to the east makes it possible to strengthen stability and security in the whole of Eurasia in the future.

At the same time, each of BRICS countries goes through a difficult process of formation of political and civic identity. Every country has challenges in relationships of the central government with individual regions, national and religious policy. All this complex of the unsolved problems makes them vulnerable to a large extent, both inside and outside. State-church relations play important part play in the context of strengthening institutions of power and administration, consolidation of the society. In this report on the issues of religious freedom and

²⁸³ <http://islam-today.ru/novosti/2014/10/15/rezulatty-vyborov-v-bosnii-mogut-privesti-k-krizisu/>

²⁸⁴ <http://newsland.com/news/detail/id/1549856/>

http://www.bbc.com/russian/international/2014/10/141012_bosnia_general_elections

²⁸⁵ The term “BRIC” was coined in 2001 by the chairman of Goldman Sachs Asset Management, Jim O’Neill, in his publication *Building Better Global Economic BRICs*.

challenges of religious intolerance in the world, cases of China, India, Brazil and South Africa will be examined.

India

The Republic of India is a country in South Asia. It shares borders with Pakistan in the west, China, Nepal and Bhutan in the north-east, with Bangladesh and Myanmar in the east. In addition, India has sea borders with Maldives in the southwest, with Sri Lanka in the south and with Indonesia in the southeast. The disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir is bordered by Afghanistan. India's population is 1,22 billion (the second largest country in the world after China).²⁸⁶

India is a birth place to several religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism). For thousands of years it has been home for representatives of Christianity, Islam and Zoroastrianism. 80.5% of the country's citizens are Hindus, 13.4% — Muslims, 2.3% — Christians, 1.9% — Sikhs, the remaining less than 2% — the followers of Buddhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, Baha'i, Judaism as well as local animist beliefs.

Although the percentage of Muslims in India is notably less than Indians, the total number of its membership is the third largest in the world. A significant proportion of Muslim population lives in states such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala. The most of Jammu and Kashmir population is Muslims. Approximately 85% of Indian Muslims are Sunnites and the rest are the Shiites. Christians mainly live in the northeastern and southern parts of the country (Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Goa). Three small states of Nagaland, Mizoram and Magalayya have Christian majority. Sikhs make up a majority in the state of Punjab.²⁸⁷

The Indian Constitution (1949) guarantees religious freedom. The Republic is a secular state where all religions are equal before the law.²⁸⁸ In general, the government announces respect for freedom of conscience as a political priority. However, in reality there are restrictions. Some states have laws against

²⁸⁶ <http://countryometers.info/ru/India>

²⁸⁷ <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/rif/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>

²⁸⁸ <http://worldconstitutions.ru/?p=28>

conversion from one religion to another, and law enforcement agencies are not always able to respond effectively and timely to interreligious conflicts and violence against religious minorities.

“Were it not for Rama and Allah, my mother would have been alive”. These are the words of Jamal, the main character of the Oscar-winning movie “Slumdog Millionaire” whose mother was killed during one of the Muslim riots which are relevant to modern India.²⁸⁹ Over the past two decades there has been radicalization among both Hindus and the Muslims. Hindu and Islamic fundamentalism in fact feed off each other.

According to Indian Interior Ministry estimates, from January to September 2013 107 people were killed and 1,647 wounded in 479 cases of violence on religious and communal basis. This is higher than in 2012. The largest-scale example of such conflicts became tragic events in Muzaffanagar district of Uttar Pradesh in August-September 2013, opposition of Hindus and Muslims.²⁹⁰ Local authorities initially did not interfere in the conflict, but when the number of the dead exceeded tens, they said they were not able to cope with the situation and asked for help of the army.

In December of 2014 nearly a dozen Indian Muslim families were forced to leave their homes in a city of Agra after some information about 57 families who had been converted to Hinduism against their will.²⁹¹

From May 2014 to May 2015 there were 560 cases of violence between the Hindu and Muslim communities. Often representatives of the latter are victims of massacres carried out by Hindu chauvinist organizations. Thus, in January of 2015 in eastern India the police arrested eight representatives of the Hindu community on charges of arson of dozens barracks in poor Muslim settlements. As a result of the fire in one of the buildings at least three people were burned alive. State of Jammu and Kashmir is still a hotbed of tension (after riots in August 2008, separatist attitudes became more intensive).²⁹² Trials are being conducted

²⁸⁹ <http://expert.ru/expert/2013/37/rama-bez-allaha/>

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-30429118>

²⁹² <http://www.newsru.com/arch/world/01feb2010/kashmir.html>

for each of the conflicts and several of the guilty persons were sentenced for life imprisonment.²⁹³

Many government officials, journalists, experts, Hindu activists argue that neighboring Pakistan is guilty in radicalization of Muslim communities of the country. Islamabad is seen as the organizer of the “fifth column” by Indian Muslims. Evidence of this theory is very different — from the fact that during cricket matches (popular sport in India and Pakistan with the British origin) between teams of the two countries, Indian Muslims support Pakistanis to many testimonies of their involvement in jihadi organizations. For example, in a faction “Indian Mujahideen”, responsible for a number of barbaric terrorist attacks (such as an attack on the Mahabodhi Buddhist temple announced by UNESCO as World Heritage Sites in July of 2013).²⁹⁴ Meanwhile, in reality the situation is much more complex, it is systemic (lack of education among the Muslim population,²⁹⁵ insufficient and inadequate policy of Muslim integration in India conducted by the central government).

In recent years attacks on Christians became more frequent, as well as cases of discrimination and oppression from a number of Hindu extreme right-wing organizations. The main accusations against Christians are missionary work (representatives of various Christian denominations actively proselytize lower-caste Hindus and followers of animist cults), as well as close relationships of Christian churches with foreign religious organizations, giving radicals a reason for accusations of “insufficient patriotism”. At the end of December

²⁹³ <http://www.rg.ru/2015/01/19/indiya-anons.html>

²⁹⁴ <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/bodh-gaya-blasts-im-tweet-traced-to-pakistan/article1-1090628.aspx>

²⁹⁵ During the split of British India to the Republic of India and Pakistan a significant part of educated and rich Muslim elite went to the neighboring countries. Mainly representatives of the lower classes stayed in India, the religious leaders who learned to earn income from the trade of votes of the Muslim community, became the leaders of the country. In exchange for constant receiving of these votes the state and federal politicians did not interfere in the affairs of the Muslim community and try to inculcate the idea of secularization and modernization. The result was a kind of “pupation” of a large part of the population. At the same time Hindu nationalism was evolving and gaining popularity, which became more strengthened after the collapse of the Soviet Union and weakening connections between Delhi and Moscow (their strategic alliance was personified by the politics of the Indian National Congress, who were critical-minded concerning to the Hindu nationalists).

of 2014 Indian Christians of all denominations published a joint pre-Christmas statement, wherein they expressed their protest over rising anti-Christian persecution, "Demolition of the church of St. Sebastian in Delhi as well as other violent incidents show contempt not only for religious feelings of our community, but also for protection guaranteed by the Constitution of India". "Carefully organized campaign, including influential members of parliament belonging to the ruling party,²⁹⁶ is a threat to peace and national harmony and raises doubts about identity and patriotism of the various religious minorities in India", Christian leaders stressed.²⁹⁷

In February of 2015 Kushulanagare, Karnataka, Hindu nationalists accused the local Christian community of forced conversion of Hindus to Christianity. After the demonstration which was held by Hindus near the worship facility of protestants, the pastor and several Christians were detained by the police. Finding no evidence of illegal conversions, the Christians were released.²⁹⁸ Unfortunately, conditions for Christians have recently become a subject of debate with a clear racist meaning. For example, in Maharashtra a regional party "Shiv Sena" (an ally of the ruling "Bharatiya Janata Party") proposed introduction of forced sterilization of Christians to prevent increasing in their number.²⁹⁹ Meanwhile, in reality, proselytizing activity of Christian missionaries does not give any visible results, and the percentage of Christians is becoming less than in other religious groups due to lower birth rates.

In turn, there are several recorded cases of violence against Hindus conducted by Christians in several northeastern states.

In western India, there is no constantly living community of the Russian Orthodox Church, but in the state of Goa there is always a significant number of Russian tourists (in some years it amounted up to 300 thousand people), many of them live constantly in the region for several months and even years. In this

²⁹⁶ This is the "Bharatiya Janata Party", the right wing party (it is called the exponent of Hindu nationalists), which won the parliamentary elections in India in April-May 2014.

²⁹⁷ <https://www.sedmitza.ru/text/5305568.html>

²⁹⁸ <http://www.sedmitza.ru/text/5385162.html>

²⁹⁹ <http://www.islamnews.ru/news-457746.html>

regard, for five years the issue of allocation of land in Goa for construction of the first Orthodox chapel in the West Indies has been repeatedly raised by the Consulate General in coordination with the state authorities and the Ministry of Tourism in the national government. The Indian side expressed no direct opposition on the issue, but they still have not come to an agreement.³⁰⁰ In addition, the Christian community has sent several requests to the ROC (Russian Orthodox Church) for assistance in construction of the chapel in Western India (Goa or Mumbai).

China

People's Republic of China (PRC) is a country in East Asia. It is the world's most populous country. Its population is more than 1.3 billion people.³⁰¹ China is washed by western seas of the Pacific Ocean. It is bordered by North Korea and Russia in the north-east, by Mongolia — in the north, by Russia and Kazakhstan — in the north-west, by Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Afghanistan — in the west. In the south-west China has a common border with Pakistan, India, Nepal and Bhutan, in the south — with Myanmar, Laos, and Vietnam.

Today China is one of the leading world powers. China is a permanent member of the UN Security Council, the first economy in the world (as of December 2014),³⁰² one of the leading countries in space exploration, holder of nuclear weapons and one of the largest armies in the world. Since the founding of the PRC in 1949 and until now the ruling party is the Communist Party of China (CPC).

Historically, China has been a place of coexistence of many religions as well as religious and ethical teachings (Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Christianity, local cults). At the same time, the ruling party in China officially supports and promotes atheism. There are different estimates of the Chinese

³⁰⁰ <http://lifenews.ru/news/123042>

<http://life-goa.ru/novosti-goa/item/281-na-goa-budet-postroen-pravoslavnyj-khram>

³⁰¹ <http://countrymeters.info/ru/china>

³⁰² <http://www.forbes.com/sites/timworstall/2014/12/07/chinas-now-the-world-number-one-economy-and-it-doesnt-matter-a-darn/>

confessional landscape. According to official government statistics, there are about 100 million believers (i.e. less than 10% of the population), 360,000 ministers, 140,000 places of worship and 5,500 religious groups in China.³⁰³ According to the Research Center «Pew» (2012) in China Buddhists alone make up hundreds of millions of people.³⁰⁴ According to research by the East China University, in Shanghai (2007), 31.4% of the adult population are believers (this means that the number of believers is 300 million people).³⁰⁵ According to the State Administration for Religious Affairs of China (the official institution of the State Council was established in 1950 and is responsible for regulating state-religion relations), in the country there are 21 million of Muslims (the largest ethnic groups professing Islam are the Hui and Uygur), 16 million of Protestants and 6 million of Catholics.³⁰⁶ Until the government ban on religious movement "Falun Gong" (1999), the number of its supporters estimated at 70 million people.³⁰⁷

CPC, the ruling party in China, describes itself as an atheistic power. It prohibits its members (about 90 million) to take part in religious life and public religious ceremonies and requires exclusion of those members who belong to certain religious organizations. Representatives of the party leadership talk about incompatibility of atheism and belief in God. So in January 2015, 15 party officials from Tibet were under investigation for violation of political discipline (and some were even accused of being sympathetic to the Dalai Lama XIV, the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhists).³⁰⁸ In February of 2015, in Zhejiang Province CPC representatives supported verification procedures for candidates for members of the party (in terms of their possible connection with religious organizations).³⁰⁹

³⁰³ <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/CNSession17.aspx>

³⁰⁴ <http://www.pewforum.org/2012/12/18/global-religious-landscape-buddhist/>

<http://www.pewforum.org/2012/12/18/global-religious-landscape-exec/>

³⁰⁵ The survey involved 4500 people. More details: http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2007-02/07/content_802994.htm

³⁰⁶ <http://www.sara.gov.cn/>

³⁰⁷ "Falun Gong" appeared in China on the basis of traditional Chinese qigong exercises, combined with elements of Buddhism, Taoism and folk beliefs. The teaching founder and its permanent leader is Li Hongzhi. The teaching is banned in mainland China as "heretical". The ban does not work in Hong Kong because of the official approach of "one country — two systems".

³⁰⁸ <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/904366.shtml>

³⁰⁹ <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/905305.shtml>

The flexibility of state-party leadership is noteworthy. First, the basic law of the country (1982) declares “freedom of religion”.³¹⁰ Secondly, state atheism during the years of CPC rule has become less influential. De facto it is limited by a few formats. Prohibitions for party members do not apply to non-party people.

At the same time the party-state apparatus is afraid of using the religious factor for interference in the internal affairs of the country to weaken China in the international arena. Article 36 of the Chinese Constitution says that “religious bodies and religious affairs should not be controlled from abroad”.³¹¹

There are grounds for fear, both historical and current. For nearly a hundred years (between the first Opium and the Civil wars between communists and supporters of the party “Kuomintang”), China experienced a period of a multilateral foreign interference and loss of sovereignty (de facto and de jure). The Chinese government faced some serious separatist challenges in Tibet and Xinjiang. Today, the United States and its allies use the religious factor to put pressure on the Chinese authorities. So in 1999, the US State Department included China into the countries of “special concern” in accordance with the “International Religious Freedom Act”.³¹² In the materials of the State Department, as well as various state commissions, China is assessed as “an authoritarian state”, suppressing freedom of conscience and ignoring international standards in this area. In this context, a statement of the Director of the State Administration for Religious Affairs Wang Yi Tszoanya about “determined resistance to the efforts of other countries to force China to Christianity” is not accidental (even typical).³¹³

Thus, in today's religious policy, China is concerned not about the religion issues in itself as their politicization, securitization and use in international relations. All this does not change the fact that the government uses repressive measures and a large arsenal of restrictive means to achieve these goals. For example, officially recognized institutions are 5 “patriotic religious associations”

³¹⁰ <http://worldconstitutions.ru/?p=31>

³¹¹ Ibid. There is another option of translation “religious affairs are free of foreign control”

³¹² <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2013&dlid=222123# wrapper>

³¹³ http://www.bbc.com/russian/rolling_news/2014/12/141225_rn_china_christianity_infiltration

(Buddhist, Taoist, Muslim, Catholic and Protestant). They allowed being registered and owning objects and places of worship.

The biggest challenge of state-religion relations is situation in Xinjiang — Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) and Tibet. The process of spreading Christianity in China is of significant interest (as well as the authorities' response to it).

The Uighurs (a Turk people, mostly Muslim) are almost half of the population in Xinjiang. This region is an object of intense Beijing's concerns due to its neighborhood with the countries of Central Asia, Pakistan and Afghanistan, as well as the activity of terrorist group "East Turkistan Islamic Movement" (ETIM).³¹⁴ In recent years, ethnic separatists, weakened by confrontation with the PRC authorities, have yielded the first position to jihadists, supporters of an Islamic state and an active armed struggle.

In 2008, ETIM militants committed a terrorist attack in Kashgar (16 police officers were killed). In 2011, during a two-day battle between Chinese security forces and supporters of the "Islamic Movement" 24 people died.³¹⁵ In February 2012, in Kashgar market militants slaughtered 20 people (representatives of the Han nationality).³¹⁶ In March 2014, 29 people were slaughtered by militants at a railway station in the southwestern city of Kunming. In April, the Urumqi railway station there was an explosion, then the armed with knives attacked some passengers, three people died and 79 were injured. On 22 May in Urumqi suicide bombers in cars ran into the crowd: 31 people died, 94 were injured. After that, China announced a state of emergency in the area until mid-2015. The introduction of emergency measures was accompanied by certain restrictions (bans on wearing headscarves for women, restrictions on fasting in Ramadan). However, on 21 September, 2014 as a result of explosions in Xinjiang 50 people died (40 of them — suicide bombers), 54 people were injured.³¹⁷

In December 2014, 8 people accused of terrorist attacks in Xinjiang, were sentenced to death and others five people received the same sentence on

³¹⁴ The definition of Xinjiang by Uighur ethnic separatists and Islamists

³¹⁵ <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/article2312879.ece>

³¹⁶ <http://ria.ru/world/20120229/580682668.html>

³¹⁷ <http://www.newsru.com/world/08dec2014/xinjiang.html>

probation (they are given the chance to save their lives in case of good behavior during two years).³¹⁸ The tough measures of the Chinese government were criticized by prominent human rights organizations («Human Rights Watch»), and American think tanks (Council on Foreign Relations). Chinese authorities are accused of disproportionate use of force, repression in preference of dialogue with moderate representatives of the Uighur movement.³¹⁹

The complex and contradictory processes are developing in Tibet, where 6 million ethnic Tibetans live (practicing Buddhism). Active public activities of the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhists, the Dalai Lama XIV, acting for self-determination in Tibet add some urgency of the situation. Until 2011, he had headed the government of Tibet in exile. That's why he received a warm welcome in the West, including the officials. But from the Chinese point of view, the Dalai Lama is "a political exile who has been acting and trying to split China under the sign of religion".³²⁰ At the same time inside Tibet Buddhist monks often organize anti-government protests, including violent actions (as it was in 2008, the day before the Olympic Games in Beijing), and acts of self-immolation.³²¹

In this context, the CPC strictly monitors religious activity in Tibet. In addition to monitoring the activity of monasteries the Communist Party holds "patriotic campaigns" to promote the version of Buddhism, which suits the Chinese state most.³²²

Since the 1980s, in China the number of Christians and influence of Christianity on ordinary citizens has considerably increased. CPC is building relationships with the recognized by the state "patriotic associations" of Christians.³²³ The authorities are of concerns to this trend, especially to unofficial structures

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2015/country-chapters/china>
<http://www.cfr.org/china/religion-china/p16272>

³²⁰ <http://russian1.people.com.cn/31521/7443236.html>

³²¹ <http://expert.ru/2008/03/17/tibet2/> Events of 2008 in Tibet received an unambiguous interpretation in the West, as a manifestation of "the repressive policy of the communist China". At the same time human losses among the Chinese (Han) and violent actions of the protesters were overlooked.

³²² <http://thediplomat.com/2013/08/the-patriotic-education-of-tibet/?allpages=yes>

³²³ <http://www.cfr.org/china/christianity-china/p36503>

(home churches). In 2014, Christian pastor Zhang Shaotse was sentenced to 12 years in prison for "mass actions to disrupt public order".³²⁴ According to the Christian NGO «ChinaAid» (located in Texas, USA) in 2014 there were 572 cases of persecution of Christian adherents by the authorities.³²⁵

In the context of the development of strategic relations between Russia and China religious policy of the Chinese authorities in relation to Orthodoxy is an extremely important issue. This branch of Christianity has existed in China for over three centuries. He plays an important role in the history of culture and spiritual development of the country. Now in China there are about 15,000 Orthodox believers. Mostly they live in Beijing, Shanghai, Heilongjiang, autonomous regions of Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia.

Since signing the Treaty of Good-Neighborliness, Friendship and Cooperation on 16 July, 2001 in Moscow Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China has actively developed cooperation in humanitarian sphere. An important component of this cooperation is collaboration between the major faiths of two countries.

So in February 2009, the head of China's State Administration for Religious Affairs, took part in the enthronement of Patriarch Kirill. Cooperation between the Administration and the Council for Religious Associations under the Russian President became more active. On 8 of June, 2011, the first consultation of the Russian-Chinese group of contacts and cooperation in the religious sphere were held in the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate.

From 10 till 15 of May, 2013, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill visited China. It was the first visit of the Russian Orthodox Church in Chinese history. Meetings of the Patriarch with the President of China Xi Jinping and China's religious leaders were held.

However, despite the positive trend the level of the achieved progress is not sufficient. Even to date, legal registration of the Chinese Autonomous Orthodox Church, suspended at the time of Mao Zedong in 1962, has not been restored.

³²⁴ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/china/10945422/Christian-leader-jailed-for-12-years-amid-Chinese-church-crackdown.html>

³²⁵ <http://www.chinaaid.org/2015/04/china-aid-2014-annual-report-indicates.html>

After ten years of the Cultural Revolution in China (1966-1976) the Orthodox churches are reconstructed. In some Chinese cities — Shenyang, Shanghai — preserved church buildings are included in the list of architecture monuments. Unfortunately, many preserved temples (in Harbin, Shanghai, Shenyang, Wuhan) are partially destroyed or are not used for liturgical purposes. A proposal for the development of interim procedure of sending ROC priests to China in especially revered days — Easter and Christmas to visit the Orthodox communities in China is met with no response. While it is impossible to organize a dialogue between the Russian Orthodox Church and religious organizations in China, first of all, the exchange between theological schools of the Russian Orthodox Church and Christian educational and research institutions of China.

The ideological orientation of the Chinese party leadership leads to the lack of progress in the fields above. It perceives Russian Orthodoxy, as a synonym for the expansionist policy of the Russian Empire. Meanwhile, de facto orthodoxy is the only foreign denomination that existed legally in imperial China, but has no such recognition in the current China. There is just a small progress in this direction. In the modern Chinese literature Orthodoxy occupies an intermediate position between the five major religions of the country (Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Catholicism and Protestantism) and small national religions. The lack of sufficient knowledge and information about the role of Orthodoxy in the world and in Russia among people responsible for important management decisions plays its negative part. However, developing of strategic cooperation between Moscow and Beijing gives a hope that the problem will be solved gradually.

Brazil

The Federative Republic of Brazil is the largest country in South America both by geographical area and by population. It is bordered by all the countries of South America except Chile and Ecuador: French Guiana, Suriname, Guyana, Venezuela in the north, Colombia in the northwest, Peru and Bolivia in the west, Paraguay and Argentina in the south-west and by Uruguay in the south.

It is washed by the Atlantic Ocean in the east. Brazil's population exceeds 200 million people.³²⁶

About 64.6% of the population are Catholics, 22% — Protestants (60% of them are Pentecostals, 18% are traditional Protestants, such as Lutherans). Although Brazil retains the reputation of "Catholic country", the percentage of adherents of the Roman Catholic Church has decreased in recent decades (from 92% at the end of 1960 to 64.6% today).³²⁷ Some groups such as "Jehovah's Witnesses", the Mormons (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) are less than 1%.³²⁸

In addition to Christian denominations in Brazil there are many African Christian cults which arose in the era of slavery. Today such cults as Candomblé in Bahia, Macumba in Rio de Janeiro, Shango in northern Brazil still have thousands of followers. For the past 30 years, none of sociological researches gave a clear answer to the question of how many Brazilians profess this religion because many of those who claim to be Catholics in fact worship Shango or Yemanja.

Sunni Muslims should be noted among representatives of other faith living in Brazil. Their number is estimated from 400,000 to 1.5 million (immigrants from Syria, Lebanon and other Arab countries), Buddhist and Shinto (Japanese colony, with more than 1 million people, as well as Chinese and immigrants from South-East Asia). It is important to say about increase in the number of adherents of Spiritualism (750 thousand in the late 1970s till 1.5 million people in the early 2000s), a syncretic religion that unites the Christian dogma with a typically eastern idea of reincarnation — post-mortem transmigration of souls in a new form. The most influential of spiritualistic doctrines is Kardecism, the founder of which was a French philosopher and psychologist Alain Kardec, who comprehensively developed a theory of after-life existence of soul.³²⁹

³²⁶ <http://www.ibge.gov.br/english/estatistica/populacao/censo2010/default.shtml>

³²⁷ <http://www.pewforum.org/2013/07/18/brazils-changing-religious-landscape/>

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ http://www.braziliada.ru/brazil/religions/religions_a.shtml

The Brazilian Constitution (1988) guarantees freedom of conscience and choice of religion.³³⁰ The country's legislation provides for punishment of up to five years for crimes motivated by religious intolerance. It grants the right to practice the cult of African origin. Their followers have the right to get ministers of these cults in hospitals, prisons and other places. Religious groups are not required any special registration. Religious education is optional, but in reality most of schools teach such subjects obligatorily or do not suggest alternatives. Funding of schools by religious organizations is prohibited.³³¹

With regard to cases of religious xenophobia, its victims are mostly Afro-Christian cult followers. At the same time supporters of xenophobic views may be representatives of bureaucracy as well as criminal structures, teachers, students and the media. Sometimes there are cases of anti-Semitism. So in 2013 the court of Rio de Janeiro conducted a trial of seven men accused of inciting anti-Semitic sentiments.³³²

South Africa

South Africa is a country in the southern part of Africa. It is bordered by Namibia, Botswana and Zimbabwe in the north, by Mozambique and Swaziland in the north-east. There is the State enclave Lesotho inside the territory of the Republic of South Africa. South Africa is one of the most nationally diverse countries in Africa and has the largest percentage of white, Asian and mixed population on the continent. The country is rich in mineral resources, and also it is the most economically development country in Africa and the only African country represented in G-20. The population of the country according to the 2011 census is 51.77 million people.³³³

The most important period in the history of South Africa was a racial conflict between the black majority and the white minority. It reached its climax after establishing a regime of racial segregation (apartheid) in 1948 which lasted until

³³⁰ <http://constitutions.ru/?p=8282>

³³¹ [http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/rlf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2013&dlid=222361#\(wrapper](http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/rlf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2013&dlid=222361#(wrapper)

³³² Ibid.

³³³ http://www.southafrica.info/about/people/population.htm#.VYFCM_ntmko

the first general elections in 1994. However, two decades of transition to democracy did not become a guarantor of stability and prosperity. The country still faces serious social, economic and political challenges. About 47% of the population live below the poverty rate (it is even higher than in 1994), the registered rate of unemployment is 25%, and according to the rate of inequality South Africa is one of the socially split country in the world. A significant threat to security is a rise of crime. An unsolved problem is civil consolidation of multiethnic and multiracial population (in South Africa there are 11 official languages plus some dialects and linguistic subgroups and four racial groups).³³⁴

Against this background, religious issues were almost forgotten because racial and ethnic factor in South Africa plays much more an important role than the unity of confessions. So the country's 80% of population are Christians (among them there are representatives and white, and black, and colored people, but one faith does not make them closer). Hindus, Muslims, Jews, Buddhists and adherents of local cults together make up less than 5% of the population. About 15% of the citizens do not have a clear religious identity. Many people combine Christianity and pagan religious practices.

A community of African Independent Churches (Zion Christian Church, Apostolic Church) represents the institutional majority of Christian believers. Approximately half of all residents of Indian and Asian origin are Hindus. Muslim part of population is immigrants from Indonesia, Pakistan, Somalia, Malaysia. Jewish communities are concentrated in the big cities (Johannesburg and Cape Town).³³⁵

South Africa's Constitution guarantees freedom of conscience and religion. Incidents of religious discrimination are considered by the highest judicial institution of the country — by the Constitutional Court.³³⁶ At the same time various cases of Islamophobia and anti-Semitism are recorded in the country. So, in October of 2012 the court sentenced one Afrikaner (a descendant of white

³³⁴ <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/south-africa/2015-02-10/apartheid-s-long-shadow?gp=140237%3A0f224d2055424dfc>

³³⁵ [http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/rlif/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2013&dlid=222097#\(wrapper](http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/rlif/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2013&dlid=222097#(wrapper)

³³⁶ <http://worldconstitutions.ru/?p=78>

colonists) to 12 years in prison for murdering two Muslims. In June of 2012 in a radio interview Pan Africanist Youth Congress representative Sello Tladi said that “even Adolf Hitler was better than Nelson Mandela (*the first president of post-apartheid South Africa – note of the author*). He did something for the Germans in persecuting the Jews”. In August of the same year, members of the movement for Boycott, deprivation and sanctions (opposing Israeli policies) sang a song with the words “Kill a Jew!” In October of 2012 a newspaper published a caricature of the Hindu god Ganesh, holding a bat for cricket and money. Several Hindu organizations protested this.³³⁷ According to Kantor Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry, in 2014 the number of anti-Semitic incidents increased in South Africa (14 compared to 1 in 2013).³³⁸

The review of some other countries of the world

United States of America

The United States of America is a state in North America. It is bordered by Canada in the north, Mexico — in the south, also have sea borders with Russia. It is washed by the Pacific Ocean in the west, the Atlantic Ocean — in the east, and the Arctic Ocean — in the north. The US population is slightly less than 319 million people.³³⁹

Religion plays a fairly significant role in the US. About 88% of the US population call themselves believers; the number is much more than in most developed countries. According to various estimates, from 21 to 41% of the US population go to church at least once a week. The phrase ‘In God We Trust’ is the national motto of the United States since 1956. In 1864 it was minted on a US two cent coin and since 1957 people can see it on all the US coins and bills.³⁴⁰

The ratio of the number of believers to the number of the whole population in different USA states is dissimilar. Most religious people are in the so-called

³³⁷ [http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2013&dlid=222097#\(wrapper](http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2013&dlid=222097#(wrapper)

³³⁸ <http://www.polosa.co.il/news/world/91730/>

³³⁹ <http://www.census.gov/popclock/>

³⁴⁰ <http://prousa.info/religion>

“Bible Belt” — the states of the American South and center of the country.³⁴¹ There are many members of the Southern Baptist Convention (it unites 16 million of Americans), which is traditionally popular in the region. The least religious states are the Western states, in particular the Pacific Coast states — Oregon and Washington, Colorado and Wyoming.

United States is one of the most multiconfessional states with all the major religions of the world, as well as many “homegrown” denominations and sects. During a public census in the country a question about one’s religious affiliation is not asked, so the information on the number of believers in the United States is gathered from surveys conducted by non-governmental organizations or government agencies, and may vary slightly depending on the source. So according to the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency), in the US 51.3% are Protestants, 23.9% are adherents of the Roman Catholic Church, 1.7% are Mormons, 1.6% are Christians of other denominations, 1.7% are Jews, 0.6% are Muslims, 0.7% are Buddhists.³⁴² However, according to research of «Pew», by 2012 the number of Protestants in the United States for the first time had decreased below 50% and it was the lowest rate in the history of the country — 48%.³⁴³

The First Amendment to the US Constitution, adopted on 15 of December 1791, proclaimed separation of church and state, which was considered by the Founding Fathers as a ban on establishment of state religion, like in the UK. According to it, the Congress shall make no law “respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof”.³⁴⁴ Federal law, in particular the Civil Liberties Act of 1964, prohibits discrimination on several bases, including religious.³⁴⁵ Criminal act is considered an action aimed at depriving a person of the rights protected by the Constitution and laws of the United States; deliberate acts of damage or destruction of property of religious institutions, as well as

³⁴¹ The “Bible Belt” includes states such as Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Missouri, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama and Florida.

³⁴² <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/geos/us.html>

³⁴³ <http://www.pewforum.org/2012/10/09/nones-on-the-rise/>

³⁴⁴ https://www.law.cornell.edu/anncon/html/amdt1toc_user.html

³⁴⁵ <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=97&page=transcript>

hindrances with the use of force or threat of its using in fulfilling the right to religious freedom. US laws also criminalize crimes based on hate.

The United States positions itself as a reference country in terms of freedom of conscience, having the right to evaluate all countries for compliance with the high standards of religious freedom. In May and October of 1998, the US Congress approved the "International Religious Freedom Act" (almost immediately after this decision, it was signed by the American President).³⁴⁶ Approval of this document underpinned the legal foundation for possibility of external interference of Washington (direct or indirect) in matters of religious development of the world. It is significant that the annual review of the State Department and the US Commission on International Religious Freedom does not contain information on the US or comments on the issues of religion.

So on 30 of April, 2014, the Commission on International Religious Freedom recommended to double a list of countries with the worst situation with religious rights. The list of "countries of particular concern", which is made by the State Department, has remained unchanged since 2006. It consists of eight items (among them there are Washington's allies such as Saudi Arabia and foreign policy opponents such as China, North Korea and Iran). It is proposed to include into the list Iraq, Nigeria, Tajikistan, Syria. The Commission also drew its attention to the countries where some violations of religious freedom take place, but do not meet the standard for inclusion in the report of "special attention" (Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Cuba, India, Russia and Turkey).³⁴⁷

The US administration tries to exploit the potential of traditional religious associations to implement the priorities of its foreign policy. As a result, the USA have become the world's leading "exporter" of different confessions. Missionary is one of the fundamental values of Protestantism and a part of the ideology of "spiritual leadership", messianic role of America. Charities and organizations of "religious education" promoting "American way of life" work under the auspices of American sects all over the world. And American churches have a great

³⁴⁶ See the full text of the draft law:<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/2297.pdf>

³⁴⁷ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/04/30/state-department-countries-worst-religious-freedom_n_5241973.html

potential for financial, political and legal support from their foreign affiliates, because in reality they are business projects. Moreover, churches have significant tax benefits. The Internal Revenue Service usually gives them the status of "tax exempt organizations" that allows them not to pay federal income tax and receive tax-free donations. In Russia, there are representative offices of American Baptists, Methodists, Seventh-day Adventists, Pentecostals, Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses. From time to time the topic of "tough actions" of Russian authorities against sects of American origin appears in respective reports of the State Department on the situation of religious freedom in the world.³⁴⁸

However, in the US there are a number of religious conflicts, which do not allow considering this country as a kind of benchmark. According to the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation), in 2013 (more recent statistics has not been available yet) victims of crime on religious basis were 1340 Americans. Followers of Judaism (62.4%) and Muslims (11.6%) suffered the most, what indicates the stability Semitism and Islamophobia in American society.³⁴⁹

The US is one of the main centers of activity of Holocaust deniers, who are protected from criminal prosecution by the First Amendment on freedom of speech.

The fastest growing religion in the United States — Islam is considered by conservative circles as a threat to Christian values and the "American way of life." Historically, many of the slaves brought to America from Africa were Muslims. In the 1930s, a surge of interest in Islam in the United States emerged after the establishing Black Americans racist organization "Nation of Islam" (a fighter for equal civil rights, Malcolm X and a boxer Cassius Clay, known around the world as Mohammed Ali joined it in 1960). The tension of perception of Islam in the United States was aggravated by external factors (terroristic act on 11 September, 2001, and active involvement of the US into the Middle East policy). According to surveys, for 2002-2010, the number of positive-minded people

³⁴⁸ <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2013&dlid=222261# wrapper>

³⁴⁹ <http://wordyou.ru/kolonki/fbr-dokladyaet-amerikancy-nenavidyat-evreev-bolshe-chem-drugix http://russian.rt.com/article/63486>

towards Islam reduced by 10%, and the number of Americans with negative attitude to Islam increased by the same percentage.³⁵⁰

A number of politicians — particularly Republicans, hoping to score points among conservative voters in August and September of 2010, opposed construction of a mosque on the site where a terrorist attack destroyed the twin towers of the World Trade Center (WTC) — so-called «Ground Zero». Later they were supported by some Democrats, seeking to expand their electorate before congressional elections. Despite the fact that imam of the proposed mosque Feisal Abdul Rauf promised to include in the complex prayer rooms for Christians and Jews, as well as a memorial to the victims of the terroristic act in 11 of September, a significant part of Americans saw this project as a symbol of the “triumph” of Muslims over Christians. Three pastors of marginal Protestant churches announced their intention to burn copies of the Koran on the anniversary of the 11 of September attacks. And if the most famous of them, Terry Jones, was dissuaded from his idea, two other pastors from Tennessee burned copies of the Koran.³⁵¹

In this context, human rights NGOs state a total control of intelligence services over the activities of Muslim communities, preachers and charities, including monitoring of their international contacts and financial transactions which under the pretext of protecting national security are often carried out on the basis of discrimination.

On 11 of May, 2015, there was a regular meeting in the framework of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) – it is a mechanism of the Human Rights Council, which four times a year holds regular reviews of implementation of obligations and commitments in the field of human rights by 192 UN Member States. According to the report submitted by the US delegation, the international community paid special attention particularly to problems of discrimination against Muslims.³⁵²

³⁵⁰ <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/09/09/AR2010090900005.html?hpid=topnews>

³⁵¹ <http://www.blagovest-info.ru/index.php?ss=2&s=7&id=36588>

³⁵² <http://www.globalresearch.ca/us-human-rights-violations-geneva-centre-for-justice/5450204>

In fiscal year 2013, the US Commission on Equal Employment Opportunity made 12 claims for religious discrimination. That's three cases more than in fiscal year 2012. It also reported that in fiscal year 2012, the Commission received 3811 complaints of discrimination based on religious affiliation, what is the second highest rate in the history (maximum in 2011 — 4141).³⁵³

The law "On freedom of religion" led to a serious discussion in the American expert and political community (attempts to introduce it in 24 US states in the spring of 2015). It contained the norm, which provides legal protection against discriminatory actions to business owners, if they refuse to provide services that are contrary to their religious beliefs. LGBT activists saw it as a threat to their interests. But supporters of the law claim that it aims to protect religion, not to infringe the rights of minorities.³⁵⁴

Canada

Canada is a country in North America. It is the second largest country in the world after Russia. It is washed by the Atlantic, Pacific and Arctic oceans. It shares borders with the United States in the south and in the north-west, also has maritime borders with Denmark (Greenland) in the north-east and France (Saint Pierre and Miquelon) in the east. The border of Canada and the United States is the longest common border in the world. Canada's population is 34 million people.³⁵⁵

Approximately 67% of Canadians are Christians (Catholics — 40%, various Protestant denominations — 22%). Muslims are 3.2% of the population, but this community is rapidly growing (in 2001 they numbered about 2%). Two-thirds of Canadian Muslims live in three largest cities — Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. In Toronto there is the largest Muslim community — 424 thousand people, in Montreal and Vancouver over 221 and 73 thousand people respectively.³⁵⁶ Approximately 24% of Canadians do not specify their religious identity.

³⁵³ <http://www.insidecounsel.com/2013/11/13/compliance-religious-discrimination-its-on-the-ee>

³⁵⁴ http://www.bbc.com/russian/international/2015/04/150403_indiana_arkansas_religion_law

³⁵⁵ <http://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&SDDS=3901>

³⁵⁶ <http://ru.knowledgr.com/00258506/%D0%98%D1%81%D0%BB%D0%B0%D0%BC%D0%92%D0%9A%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B0%D0%B4%D0%B5>

The Canadian Constitution (1982) guarantees freedom of conscience.³⁵⁷ The only province with the public funding of Catholic religious education is Ontario.³⁵⁸ But despite the positioning of Canada as a democratic state that respects the rights of minorities and where the state holds a line of liberal course, however, in recent years, the country has experienced a number of problems connected with religious matters. Traditionally, the most important ones on the list are anti-Semitism and radicalization of Muslim community.

The total number of anti-Semitism manifestations significantly increased. The number of reported anti-Semitic violations in Canada reached its historical record. As the Jewish organization “B’nai B’rith” activists stated in their annual report, in 2014 in the “land of the maple leaf” 1627 incidents of hate for Jews were recorded, what is by 28% more than in the previous year. The previous anti-record was in 2012 – 1,345 incidents. According to the “B’nai B’rith”, 1,370 (84%) incidents were verbal harassment, 238 (15%) cases included vandalism, and in 19 incidents (1%) violence was used. However, the report notes that during the year there were by approximately 40% less anti-Semitic vandal tricks, the number of harassment towards Jews increased by 30%. Most violations of anti-Semitic happened in Ontario (961), Quebec (259) and Atlantic Canada (259). Like in many other countries, there was a jump in the summer, during an operation “Enduring rock”, but the peak of online activity of anti-Semites at Christmas was also recorded at the end of the year.³⁵⁹

In recent years, a question of developing Islamic radicalism has come up. The issue of women’s wearing the Muslim headscarf at the ceremony of taking the oath in obtaining Canadian citizenship divided the Canadian society equally. The Conservative Party and Prime Minister Stephen Harper (on the post since February 2006) more than once publicly has criticized Islamic traditions of hiding

³⁵⁷ http://www.concourt.am/armenian/legal_resources/world_constitutions/constit/canada/canada-r.htm

³⁵⁸ [http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/rlf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2013&dlid=222363#\(wrapper](http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/rlf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2013&dlid=222363#(wrapper)

³⁵⁹ http://mignews.com/news/disasters/world/130615_82617_75082.html

The operation “Enduring rock” is a code name of an Israeli military operation in Gaza, held from July 7 till August 26, 2014. The stated goal is to destroy the military infrastructure in Gaza of ruling Hamas movement and its allies

a woman's face, unacceptable to the secular state. Opposition (New Democratic and Liberal Parties) opposed sharply against the "politics of fear" cultured by the government.³⁶⁰

In October 2014, the police of Canada launched an investigation in Canada against 90 citizens suspected of connections with an "Islamic state" (those who fought in Syria and Iraq, as well as those who returned home).

Committed in October 2014 terrorist attacks in cities of Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu (Quebec) and Ottawa gave no less powerful impetus to development of Islamophobia, and after that there was a sharp increase in the number of people who opposed "Islamization" of society. In Quebec, a local resident Martin Kutur-Ruye (who adopted Islam a year before), driving a car, deliberately hit two Canadian military men by his car, as a result of which one of them died and another was seriously injured. In Ottawa, a 32-year-old Canadian citizen Michel Zehaf-Bibe (who also became an Islamic radical) started shooting near the memorial to the victims of World War I and killed a soldier of honor guard with a shot in the chest. Then he entered the nearby parliament building, where at that time there were the members as well as Prime Minister Stephen Harper, and also started shooting there. Both terrorists were detained by the police.³⁶¹

Mosques and Islamic cultural centers are damaged from vandal attacks. So in May of 2014, one of Montreal mosques belonging to Assahaba Islamic community was profaned five times.³⁶² The percentage of attacks on believers and insulting their religious feelings also tends to permanent growth, particularly in the provinces of Ontario and Quebec.

Australia

The Commonwealth of Australia is a country in the Southern Hemisphere and occupying the mainland of Australian continent, the island of Tasmania and a number of other islands in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. It is the sixth

³⁶⁰ <http://canrusnews.com/2015/03/veil-debate/>
<http://leaveforcanada.ru/islam-v-kanade-ili-pochemu-devushki-nosyat-platki/>

³⁶¹ <http://rusk.ru/svod.php?date=2014-10-24>

³⁶² <http://delphiexpert.ru/na-mechet-v-monreale-napal-ekstremist.html>

largest state in the world. Neighbouring countries include Papua New Guinea, Indonesia and East Timor in the north; the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu in the north-east; and New Zealand in the south-east. The shortest distance between the main island of Papua — New Guinea and the mainland of Australia is 145 km.

The population of Australia is about 21, 5 million people. According to the census (2011), 61% of citizens consider themselves as Christians (25% — Catholics, 17% — Protestants), and 22.3% do not have a clear religious affiliation. Buddhists make up 2.5% of the population, Muslims – 2.2%, Hindus – 1.3%, Jews – 0.5%. The census recorded 2.5% of the aboriginal population, of which 1% profess indigenous beliefs. In some remote areas the percentage of supporters of indigenous cults is higher (up to 6%). At the same time 60% of Aboriginal people consider themselves Christians, and 20% have no clear identification on religious basis.³⁶³

The Australian Constitution (1900) guarantees freedom of conscience.³⁶⁴ The influential non-governmental organizations, supported by the state, promote tolerance and mutual understanding between religions. Among them there are the Center for Christian-Muslim Relations, National Council of Churches in Australia, the Australian Council of Christians and Jews, as well as many others.

However, it is impossible to talk about the complete religious harmony. Cases of vandalism in mosques, threats or even attacks on Islam representatives are often recorded. “Muslims are evil and have no respect for us” – this sign was written on the walls of a mosque in Brisbane in autumn of 2014. Senator of the city called for banning the burqa and said that people who supported the Islamic Sharia, are “maniacs and depraved people”.

According to the press-secretary of the Nationalist Movement «Reclaim Australia» Katherine Brennan, the organization which she represented advocates for Australian values, which allegedly are in danger of Islamic extremism.

³⁶³ <http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/censushome.nsf/home/data?opendocument#from-banner=LN>

³⁶⁴ <http://worldconstitutions.ru/?p=23>

The movement holds mass rallies against "Islamization of society". One of these rallies took place in April of 2015 in Melbourne.³⁶⁵

Australian Muslim leaders have repeatedly made public statements to the government, urging officials to be more restrained in their statements. It is noted that the federal police does not carry out (or does improperly) monitoring violations of their rights based on religion. As a result, the youth "looks for the answers" in the ranks of extremist groups.³⁶⁶

In October of 2014 there was a discussion about Islamic "dress code" in Australia. Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Federal Parliament of Australia Bronwyn Bishop and Senate President Stephen Parry declared a new rule, according to which women dressed in the burqa can be seated only on glassed platforms of the Chambers boardrooms. The cause of dispute was the warning made by Australian intelligence agencies in mid-September about possible terrorist plans to attack the Parliament and federal employees. However, the decision of parliamentarians led to serious criticism in the media. Thereafter, at the end of October a less tough solution was made. People in such special clothing have to show their face at the entrance checkpoint to the parliament, and then they will be able to sit in the public gallery with other visitors.³⁶⁷

At the same time there is growth of anti-Semitism. According to the Executive Committee of Australian Jewry, in 2013 there were 657 incidents (compared with 543 in 2012).³⁶⁸ During the period of 2013-2014 the number of anti-Semitic manifestations increased by 30%.³⁶⁹ But many tend to blame the local media in this situation, which cover the situation in the Middle East in a biased and prejudiced way. And, first of all, the policy of Tel Aviv on the Palestinian issue. Especially Australian Department of "Hizb ut-Tahrir" is characterized by radical actions; "Hizb ut-Tahrir" has repeatedly stated the

³⁶⁵ http://www.info-islam.ru/publ/statji/v_avstralii_islamofoby_sprovocirovali_massovye_besporjadki/5-1-0-33724

³⁶⁶ http://islam-today.ru/islam_v_mire/islamofobskaa-avstralia/

³⁶⁷ <http://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/1483816>
<http://islam-today.ru/novosti/2014/10/20/v-parlamente-avstralii-otmenili-ogranicenia-na-odezdu-dla-musulmanok/>

³⁶⁸ <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2013&dlid=222115#wrap>

³⁶⁹ <http://www.jewish.ru/news/world/2014/11/news994326786.php>

inevitability of a “holy war” of Muslims against Jews in the pages of the local press and during rallies.³⁷⁰

Myanmar (Burma)

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar is a country in Southeast Asia in the western part of the Indochinese Peninsula. It shares borders with India and Bangladesh in the west, China in the northeast, Laos in the east and Thailand in the southeast. It is washed by the Bay of Bengal, Martaban Gulf (Martaban) and the Andaman Sea in the south and south-west. Its population is less than 54 million people.³⁷¹

Burma is a polyethnic and multi-confessional country. The dominant religion is Buddhism (Theravada school).³⁷² Buddhists make up about 90% of all believers in the country. 4% people in Myanmar are Christians of different branches (Baptists, Catholics, Anglicans), 4% — Sunni Muslims. Religious identity in the country is closely linked to ethnic one. Theravada Buddhism is popular among Burmese, Shan, Mon, and Arakanese. Christianity is widely spread among the Kachin, Naga and Chin. It is also common among the Karen, although there Christians and Muslims in this group. Islam is widely practiced in Rakhine State, where such nations as Rohingya, Kama, Indians are Muslims. South Asians are mostly Hindus or Muslims.³⁷³

Ethnic and religious confrontation in Myanmar originates in the British colonial rule. Since 1948, when the country gained independence, the conflicts between the army and separatists from different ethnic minorities, have not ceased. Armed conflicts have resulted in tens of thousands of refugees and thousands of violations of human rights are recorded.

The situation in Rakhine State was particularly acute, because the central government did not recognize the Muslim as citizens of their country (on the

³⁷⁰ <http://www.smh.com.au/national/controversial-islamic-group-hizb-uttahrir-accused-of-inciting-hatred-against-jews-20150225-13odro.html>

³⁷¹ <http://countrymeters.info/ru/Myanmar>

³⁷² Theravada (Sanskrit “school of the elder monks”) is the oldest extant school of Buddhism. It is quite conservative, and generally closer to early Buddhism than the other existing Buddhist traditions.

³⁷³ <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>

basis of the Citizenship Act of 1982), and often resettled them to the territory of Bangladesh, where they also were not accepted.³⁷⁴ In the mass consciousness of the Burmese Islamic adherents are not autochthons, but migrants. The national policy to this opinion — immediately after independence, U Nu (1907-1995), a devout Buddhist, became a prime minister and later after a military coup he was replaced by General U Ne Win (1911-2002), proclaimed the policy of building "Buddhist socialism". Another cause, provoking discontent of Buddhist majority (and especially elite groups) is Islamic proselytism. With the help of charities and organizations lay Muslims are given support what attracts common people, who are ready to change religious identity for pragmatic reasons (often representatives of the lower classes do not consider the adoption of Islam as the rejection from Buddhism).³⁷⁵

In the 1990s, the growing tension between Muslims and Buddhists in Myanmar resulted in obvious hostility. Burmese radical nationalists started a movement of civil boycott against Muslim goods and services. At the head of this event was an organization "969", which, according to its members, is a symbol number of Buddhism.³⁷⁶ The situation became even more serious in June 2012, when more than 200 people died in inter-religious conflicts in Myanmar, and 140,000 people, mostly Rohingya representatives, became refugees. Tens of thousands of residents crossed by boats to Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand.³⁷⁷ An inspirer of pogroms in 2012 was a Buddhist monk Ashin Virata (born in 1968). For it he received a nickname "Buddhist Bin Laden" in the media.³⁷⁸ In March 2013 a new confrontation took place in several cities in central Myanmar. In town of Meiktila the armed with knives and machetes radical Buddhists led by monks during several hours killed at least 25 people.³⁷⁹

In the spring of 2014, after the attacks on warehouses and offices of the United Nations humanitarian missions in Rakhine State, the employees of these

³⁷⁴ <http://www.rodon.org/relig-121109112001>

³⁷⁵ <http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=137156286>

³⁷⁶ <http://asiarussia.ru/buddhism/753/>

³⁷⁷ <http://www.newsru.com/world/05may2015/humtraffickngthai.html>

³⁷⁸ <http://asiarussia.ru/buddhism/753/>

³⁷⁹ <http://rusplt.ru/articles/world/besporadki-v-birme.html>

organizations fled Myanmar. The Myanmar authorities insist that Muslims announce their emergency in order to “put pressure on the government of this country through the foreign press” and try to prohibit using the term “Rohingya” considering representatives of the people Bengalis.³⁸⁰ In July 2014 the ultranationalist monks of “969” movement attacked the Muslims in the second largest city of Mandalay in Burma (killed 2 people).³⁸¹ The problem is aggravated by the fact that just few Rohingya refugees are allowed to live in neighboring countries, the common thing is refusal. This raised fears that of the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon. In May 2015, he publicly stated about the need for solidarity to solve this humanitarian problem.³⁸²

The Christian population in Burma mostly concentrated in the states of Kachin and Chin is also discriminated. From time to time there is removal and destruction of Christian crosses. So in January 2015, the Chin government ordered to remove a cross and brought criminal charges against the person who erected it. At the same time in the state of Kachin women volunteers (Baptist), teaching there were raped and killed. Although the investigation has not been completed, there is a view among the locals about involving of the Burmese army in the incident.³⁸³

DPRK (North Korea)

North Korea is a country in East Asia, in the northern part of the Korean Peninsula. It is bordered by China in the north, Russia in the north-east, by the Republic of Korea in the south and separated from it with the Demilitarized Zone. It is washed by the Yellow Sea in the west, the Sea of Japan — in the east. The DPRK population is a little bit less than 25 million people.³⁸⁴

Legally speaking, the state guarantees freedom of conscience. The Constitution of the DPRK (1972) declares equal rights for believers and atheists (Article 68). This basic law of the country says that “no one is allowed to use

³⁸⁰ <http://www.newsru.com/world/05may2015/humtraffickngthai.html>

³⁸¹ <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2015/country-chapters/burma?page=2>

³⁸² http://www.bbc.com/russian/rolling_news/2015/05/150514_rn_un_rohingya_refugees

³⁸³ <http://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/Burma%202015.pdf>

³⁸⁴ <http://ria.ru/world/20130713/949467391.html>

religion as a means for penetration of the external forces and violations of the state, the public order".³⁸⁵

The latter wording reflects a socio-political system in North Korea. North Korea is a unique country in many respects. For almost three decades (1950-1980) in fact there was no organized religious activity (although up to that time, Pyongyang had been a center of Christian life in Korea, called the "Jerusalem of the Far East", and the founder of the republic Kim Il Sung in his youth was influenced by strong influence of Protestantism). All churches and temples of all faiths were closed and religious organizations disbanded. They were considered as tools for external interference and obstacles to socialist construction. Only in the late 1970s and early 1980s the situation became less intense (in 1988 in Pyongyang a Protestant church was opened). The Council of Korean believers as well as various federations and associations (Catholic, Orthodox and others) are structures that maintain state control over religious sphere. Currently, in the capital of North Korea there are 4 churches (two Protestant, one Catholic and one Orthodox).³⁸⁶ The Catholic Association of North Korea has no relations with the Holy See in the Vatican.³⁸⁷

The official ideology of the DPRK is "Juche" ("self-reliance") (finally got this status in 1970). It is a nationalized version of the communist ideology, the opposite of "imported Marxism". The country has a personality cult of its leaders Kim Il Sung, Kim Jong Il and the current head of the state, Kim Jong-un. The country exists in conditions of informational isolation from the outside world. Authorities suppress any activity which is regarded as "religious propaganda".

Very little is known about religious life (especially as for daily life) in today's North Korea. As a rule, the topic is covered in the South Korean media. In 2009, they recorded about 350 cases of persecution of believers. In November 2012, it was reported about public executions of 80 people, including illegal listening to foreign radio stations, television viewing and reading religious literature.³⁸⁸

³⁸⁵ <http://worldconstitutions.ru/?p=30>

³⁸⁶ [http://baznica.info/article/khristianstvo-v-severnoi-koree/#s\(hash.MqxfcNv.dpuf](http://baznica.info/article/khristianstvo-v-severnoi-koree/#s(hash.MqxfcNv.dpuf)

³⁸⁷ [http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2013&dlid=222139#\(wrapper](http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2013&dlid=222139#(wrapper)

³⁸⁸ Ibid.

In February of 2015 in South Korea the Commission of Inquiry of the human rights violations in North Korea (established by the Human Rights Council of the UN) published a report which contained some issues of freedom of conscience in the Republic. From the point of view of its authors, Christians experience the greatest constraint in the DPRK. So the Vatican's offer to the Catholic Association of North Korea to attend the mass in the south of the peninsula during the Pope's visit in August of 2014, was rejected by the North Korean authorities. There are also some efforts of DPRK special services to entry the informal religious structures. Also the authorities demonstrate their harsh attitude to foreign missionaries. So in May of 2014 a Baptist preacher from South Korea was sentenced to life imprisonment in a labor camp on charges of espionage and establishing "underground churches".³⁸⁹ According to a research of the «Open Doors», for years the DPRK is the first on the list of countries where the rights of Christians are violated the most, and about 70 thousand people are serving a sentence in 30 labor camps.³⁹⁰

³⁸⁹ <http://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/North%20Korea%202015.pdf>

³⁹⁰ <http://www.sedmitza.ru/text/2684291.htm>

<https://www.opendoors.de/verfolgung/weltverfolgungsindex2015/weltverfolgungsindex2015/>

Conclusions and recommendations

The world has entered the 3rd millennium. However, despite the optimistic forecasts about the “end of history”, it continues with its conflicts (open and latent), xenophobia and aggression. In these processes, religious intolerance, violations of human rights on the grounds of religion play a significant role.

There is a belief that economic growth, in and of itself, can lead to solution of socio-political and even ideological problems. This point of view is erroneous. The experience of such countries as the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait clearly confirms that neither higher level of economic development and a high proportion of the middle class in the country nor oil abundance and the profits from the “black gold” eliminate the heatedness of religious confrontation.

At the same time, adequate understanding of these challenges is possible only if considered as a whole. The growth of neo-Nazism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and migrantophobia in a number of EU countries and the United States can be realized only with the analysis of radical-nationalist and religious extremism that happens among immigrants from Arab and other Muslim countries. Comparison of terrorism with Islam (even with its radical jihadist version) does not seem possible because images of “Buddhist” and “Hindu” “Bin Ladens”, destroying stability and bringing fear and conflict in their own and other countries, today are actively discussed. It is necessary to take a fresh look at atheism as a state policy, especially in a country like China that is gaining momentum in its growth.

Today, one of priorities for the Russian government is opposition to different faces of extremism. In his annual message to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation on 4 of December, 2014, President Vladimir Putin stated unequivocally, “We ourselves will never take path of self-isolation, xenophobia, suspicion or searching for enemies. That is all is symptoms of weakness, but we are strong and confident”.³⁹¹ At present, when Russia is involved in resolution of the

³⁹¹ <http://www.kremlin.ru/news/47173>

serious Ukrainian crisis (having a pan-European and international importance), it is very important to learn from the mistakes of others, and on the contrary, use foreign experience that successfully proved itself and has been tested in practice.

The problem of freedom of conscience and religious development should be a platform where Russia will act for promotion of its national interests. As in the case with human rights, the Russian Federation needs the US monopoly on interpretation of religious issues, standards of their compliance and conflict resolution to be destroyed. In these regards, it would be appropriate to offer the following recommendations. First, start preparation of reports on freedom of conscience and religious intolerance in the world from the Russian perspective of these issues. Such reports should be made on a regular basis (at least, annually). They can be made by several institutions (the Russian Foreign Ministry, the Federal Assembly, the Public Chamber). These reports can also be both global and regional, specialized (touch on issues of either religious extremism, or church-state relations).

Secondly, it is necessary to coordinate exchange of information, establishing of a common data bank on religious development challenges of the Eurasian Economic Community (EAEC). In the context of developing a strategic partnership with China, it would be appropriate to build cooperation on religious issues in the context of an alternative to American hegemony in this area.

Thirdly, it is important to actively coordinate the work on interaction of authorities at all levels with representatives of Russian NGOs and human rights organizations. Fourthly, this kind of materials should be translated into the leading languages of the world, widely published and popularized, both in print media and in the Internet.

Religious freedom issues should eventually become one of the most effective tools of Russia's "soft power" in the international arena.

Information on All-Russian public organization “Russian Association for Religious Freedom”

“The Russian Association for Religious Freedom” (RARF) is registered with the Ministry of Justice of Russia on 28 of November, 2014.

Its founders and members are representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church, Russian Orthodox Old Believers' Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Muslim religious organizations, Buddhist Traditional Sangha of Russia, the Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia, New Nakhichevanskaya Russian Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Protestant — Evangelical alliances as well as religious scholars and human rights activists.

At the same time, RARS is neutral in its religious and political affiliation. All decisions and recommendations are made on a consensus basis according to the By-Laws of the organization.

The governing body is the Board of the Association.

In addition, it is assumed to establish the RARF Expert Council that will include well-known Russian religious scholars, lawyers and human rights activists working in the field of state-religion relations.

The main unifying factor for representatives of different religions and secular society in RARF is preservation and support of traditional spiritual values and priorities.

In recent years Europe has experienced purposeful diversion from and rejection of fundamental values rooted in religious traditions of its nations.

Today small groups of people set their own behavioral systems which are incompatible with universal human values. First of all, it concerns the institution of family, marriage, and parenting.

Unfortunately, the main priority of European policy is not a support of the traditional values of marriage and family, but protection of minority rights, primarily sexual.

Without disputing their rights, RARF opposes an aggressive propaganda and imposition of their addictions on society and children.

RARF also does not accept the practice of homosexual cohabitation being equal to the traditional family and marriage. Surveys show that less than 5% of Russians admit the possibility of legalizing same-sex marriage. This is positive, for rejection of traditional values will lead not only to moral decay, but also to a demographic crisis that jeopardizes the very existence of European nations.

In addition, the opinion and choice of 95% of Russian population holding on to traditional values of marriage and family cannot be ignored.

Simultaneously with the aggressive attack on traditional family and morality institutions there is an assault on Christian and other religious values. There are many cases of profaning of churches and public worship facilities, religious sites, symbols and feelings of believers.

Dealing with these challenges and upholding of traditional moral values should become a platform for consolidation of different religious organizations, promotion of inter-religious and inter-ethnic dialogue and reconciliation.

In its mission RARF will focus on such issues as protection of individual freedom of conscience of citizens and the rights of religious organizations, regardless of their religious affiliation.

There are different estimates of how well religious rights and freedom are observed in Russia and the world today. The estimates are based on awareness of experts and their personal preferences, religious affiliation and, sometimes, unfortunately, on the political orders received.

With that being the case, analytical reports and materials published by various international institutions are often far from the truth.

For these purposes, RARF, in cooperation with state authorities and local governments, law enforcement agencies, public and religious organizations, commits itself to the following:

— Monitoring compliance with the principles of freedom of conscience, preparing impartial materials and reports on religious situation in Russia and presenting them to Russian and international audiences;

- Studying and prevention of appearing and suppressing of evidence of citizens' inequalities and other forms of xenophobia on the basis of religion and ethnicity;
- Assistance in drafting laws and other regulations in the field of freedom of conscience and participation in public evaluations of projects of relevant legal acts.

The initial results of this work were presented by RARF members in October of 2014 at the 18th OSCE meeting on monitoring implementation of commitments in human dimension.

The Freedom of Conscience and Religious Intolerance in Today's World

Technical editor *A. G. Struchalina*
Scientific editor and proofreader *O. A. Shvechkova*
Designer *S. A. Bocharov*

Format: 60x90/16. Printed sheets — 5,25.
Offset printing, paper — 80 g/m²
1500 copies.

Printed
LLC "National printing group".