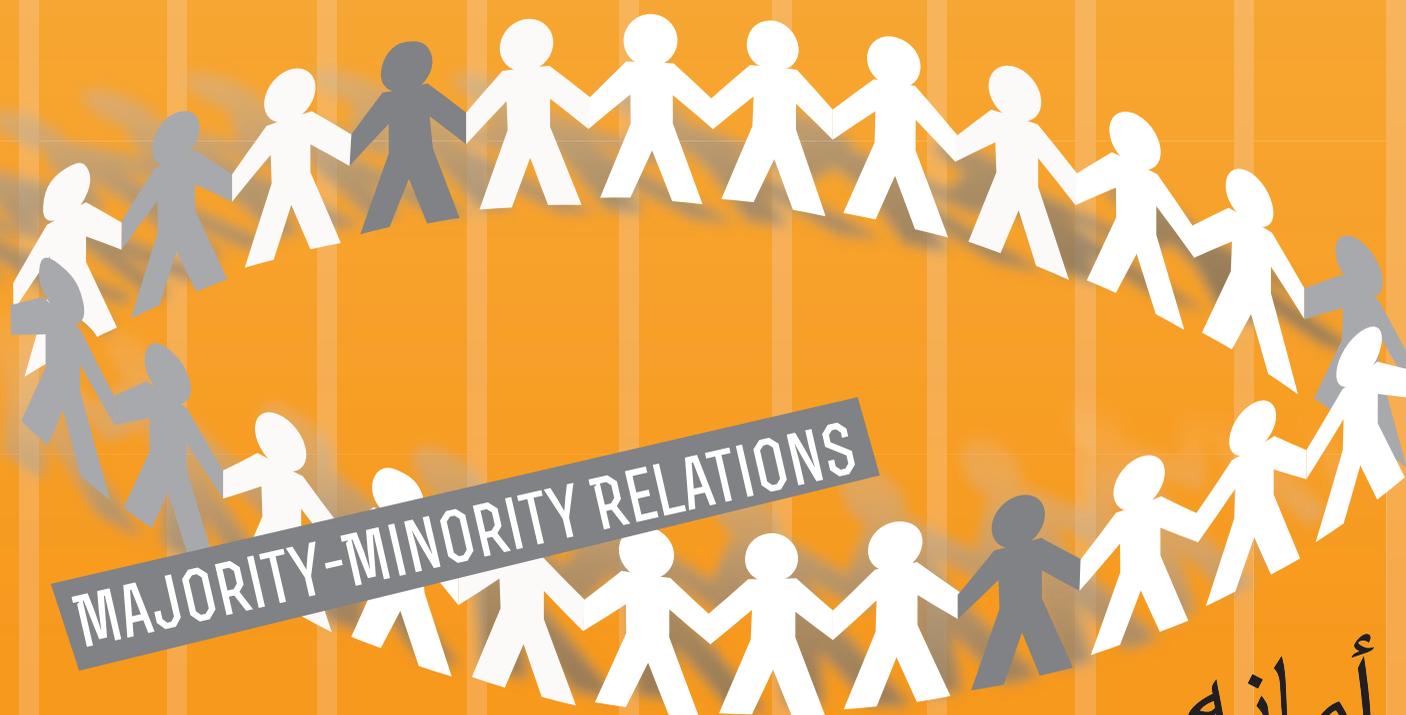


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Editorial

Mohammad Abdus Sabur



It is obvious that the whole world is having an eye on the Middle East, and the war between the Islamic state (ISIS) and the Grand Alliance. The present war is no accident. It is the outburst of accumulated frustration, disappointment and mistrust from both the majority and

minority sides. The greatest tragedy of the present round of war is that this standoff and proxy war is taking so many lives, destroying so many homes and displacing millions of people. The dreams and hopes of children and youth are being shattered. There are many reasons behind this crisis. One of them is the inability to share space between minority and majority populations and build a State where everyone enjoys equal rights of expression and participation. A deep sense of deprivation and injustice is an internal factor leading to conflict at the same time, external interference make it worst.

That peace and conflict in human society do exist side by side, could be considered a pessimistic view or an understatement. But it is a fact of life; a living reality. It is often debated whether the interpretations of beliefs and religions have divided people into minorities and majorities. These divisions do exist in religious, ethnic, cultural, economic and political spheres. But why and how has majority identity become so deep-rooted and sustained for so long?

Divide and rule, deprivation and exclusion, domination and subjugation have, in many ways created this crisis. When religious and ethnic identities mix with politics and shape political goals, then it transcends borders and becomes a global force to counter other existing global forces. That contributes to sharper polarization and exacerbates protracted conflict and violence affecting both insiders and outsiders.

The reasons for such minority, majority divisions are numerous and man-made, often legitimized by the traditional power structure and legal justice systems. They include creation of sectarianism through misinterpretation of religion, formulation and practices of discriminatory laws that pave the way for divide and rule, often institutionalized and administered by the elite of local and national governance. Excluded minorities are given token representation. Exclusion of minority from participation in governance, leads to monopolizing power by the majority. It is also true that in some cases minority led government does dominate the majority such as the Sunni-led government that existed in Iraq and still exists in Bahrain. Inclusive and justly balanced

governance is essential.

In this issue of AMANA, Irfan Engineer focuses on minorities and human rights. He particularly emphasizes governance with the consent of majority citizens and protection of the rights of minorities. He argues against forced assimilation and advocates cultural rights, autonomy and self governance so that different smaller groups can live in harmony, side by side with larger society.

Arshi Khan highlights the strengths and weaknesses of the Western epistemological paradigm of the Nation State which enables sharing of power among the major stake-holders namely political, economic and military blocks. It works, to an extent in largely homogenous societies but fails to secure inclusive policies for the protection of vulnerable communities in plural and diverse societies.

The article on ISIS by Mohammad Al-Dwaraweesh's traces the genesis, emergence and evolution of ISIS in the spirit of the Arabic word "Da'esh". It originated as a movement for revolution against Bashar Al-Asad's regime. The ideology behind this movement is to reject modern Islam and return to pure Islam and ensure prevention of infiltration of corrupted ideas. In the process there has been violation of minority rights in conflict areas. Mohammad, pertinently asks when will people stand together to promote peace and interfaith harmony thereby preventing the possibility of recreation of ISIS?

Clarence Dias examines how minorities such as the Roma, the Kurds, the Palestinians and the Rohingyas have fared when they have brought their plight before the United Nations. Disappointingly, he concludes, because despite the rhetoric in the Preamble of the UN Charter of claiming to speak for "We, the peoples of the United Nations", the UN remains an intergovernmental organization run by its Member States. He does however, lay out the existing UN laws and procedures relating to minorities and suggests avenues for nongovernmental advocacy in support of international recognition and protection of minorities facing oppression so severe and unjust as to virtually constitute crimes against humanity.

This issue of AMANA clearly demonstrates that mere technical, constitutional and legal approaches (such as federalism) may be necessary, but are not sufficient to build lasting and harmonious majority-minority relations. Compassion, understanding, respect for the rights of minorities to be different and most of all acceptance of their *right to be and remain human* are essential, if we are to secure a just and peaceful global future for all and not just the privileged and self-sustaining majorities of the world.

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Minorities and Human Rights

Irfan Engineer



It was believed that stability could be achieved through authoritarian states and by submission to the dominant power. This has been decisively proved to be wrong, if proof was required. Nazi rule is an instance of a state that lacked peace in the 20th century and Israel is an instance of a state that is constantly staring at war and violence. Peace is best assured when the government rules by consent of an overwhelming majority of the citizens, which include citizens from ethnic, linguistic, racial, cultural and religious minorities. The consent of minorities is not difficult to obtain. They need to be treated equally, to be allowed cultural space and to be allowed to live their way and need protection as do other citizens. Ensuring promotion and protection of minority rights ensures not only peace and stability but contributes to the diversity and enriching cultural life a society.

Over the past centuries, minorities have found themselves particularly vulnerable to colonial exploitation, authoritarianism of different political hues and victims of ethnic or religious intolerance. They are often not considered to be nationals of the country which they have inhabited for generations and their loyalty to the country is problematized by the political elite. Minorities are coerced through various means to conform to the religio-cultural norms and beliefs of the majority. If they resist assimilation and hold on to the different way of life they may have, they risk their security and face discrimination.

Minorities worldwide continue to suffer the after-effects of the September 11, 2001 attacks on the twin towers in the US. The “State of World’s Minorities and Indigenous peoples 2010” concludes that religious profiling, particularly of Muslims has increased worldwide. According to recent estimates, the world’s 184 independent states contain over 600

living language groups, and 5,000 ethnic groups. Increased global contacts and interactions, and in particular extensive migrations, have placed diverse practices of different cultures next to one another. Societies in most countries are now becoming more and more culturally diverse with co-existence of many traditions and customs, languages, religions and diverse ethnic and racial groups. The celebration of difference, respect for pluralism, and disavowal of identity politics have come to be regarded as the hallmarks of a progressive, multicultural outlook and as the foundation of modern liberal democracies.

Minorities and majorities increasingly clash over such issues as language rights, regional autonomy, political representation, education curriculum, land claims, immigration and naturalization policy, even national symbols, such as the choice of national anthem or public holidays. It is common knowledge that ruling elites in a democracy are elected by majority vote of citizens. However, rule of the majority often becomes tyranny of the majority. It is in this context that minority rights become significant. It has been said that the real worth of democracy can be tested by how secure the minority feels within the state. The majority and minority identities are often in conflict.

Approaches towards minorities: Melting Pot or Multiculturalism?

During and immediately after the First World War, the concept of the melting pot was equated with complete cultural assimilation towards an Anglo-American norm (“Anglo-conformity”) on the part of immigrants, and immigrants who opposed such assimilation were accused of disloyalty to the United States. The melting pot is a metaphor for a heterogeneous society becoming more homogenous, the different elements “melting together” into a harmonious whole with a common culture. It is considered to be the historic foundation of American integration policy, and represents society as a giant pestle and mortar, where cultural origins and differ-

ences were crushed and blended. To achieve this ideal of homogenous polity, governments throughout history have pursued a variety of policies regarding cultural minorities. Some minorities were physically eliminated, either by mass expulsion (what we now call 'ethnic cleansing') or by genocide. Other minorities were coercively assimilated, forced to adopt the language, religion, and customs of the majority. In yet other cases, minorities were treated as resident aliens, subjected to physical segregation and economic discrimination, and denied political rights.^{iv}

The early 1970s marked the emergence of the multicultural movement, at first in Canada and Australia and then in the U.S.A., U.K., Germany and elsewhere. Its central insights are three. "First, human beings are culturally embedded in the sense that they grow up and live within a culturally-structured world and organize their lives and social relations in terms of a culturally-derived system of meaning and significance and necessarily view the world from within a culture, be it the one they have inherited and uncritically accepted or reflectively revised or, in rare cases, one they have consciously adopted. Second, different cultures represent different systems of meaning and visions of good life. Since each realizes a limited range of human capacities and emotions and grasps only a part of the totality of human existence, it needs other cultures to help it understand itself better, expand its intellectual and moral horizon, stretch its imagination, save it from narcissism to guard it against the obvious temptation to absolutize itself, and so on. This does not mean that one cannot lead a good life within one's own culture, but rather that, other things being equal, one's way of life is likely to be richer if one also enjoys access to others, and that a culturally self-contained life is virtually impossible for most human beings in the modern, mobile and interdependent world. Third, every culture is internally plural and reflects a continuing conversation between its different traditions and strands of thought. This does not mean that it is devoid of coherence and identity, but that its identity is plural, fluid and open." Multiculturalists claim that assimilation can hurt minority cultures by stripping away their distinctive features. They point to situations where institutions of the dominant culture initiate programs to assimilate or integrate minority cultures.

"Multiculturalists typically support loose immigration controls and programs such as multilingual education and affirmative action, which offer certain privileges to minority and/or immigrant groups, cultural pluralism and diversity of traditions and customs. Affirmative action is generally defended as a temporary measure which is needed to move more rapidly towards a 'color-blind' society. It is intended to remedy years of discrimination, and thereby move us closer to the sort of society that would have existed had we observed the separation of state and ethnicity from the beginning. Opponents of multiculturalism often say that it ghettoizes minorities, and impedes their integration into mainstream society. Proponents respond that this concern for integration reflects cultural imperialism."^{vi}

Will Kymlicka outlines two broad patterns of cultural diversity. In the first case, cultural diversity arises from the incorporation of previously self-governing, territorially concentrated cultures into the larger state. These incorporated cultures, typically wish to maintain themselves as distinct societies alongside the majority culture, and demand various forms of autonomy or self-government to ensure their survival as distinct societies. Kymlicka also calls such minorities as "national minorities". In the second case, cultural diversity arises from individual and familial immigration. Such immigrants often coalesce into loose associations which can be called 'ethnic groups'. They typically wish to integrate into the larger society, and to be accepted as full members of it. While they often seek greater recognition of their ethnic identity, their aim is not to become a separate and self-governing nation alongside the larger society, but to modify the institutions and laws of the mainstream society to make them more accommodating of cultural differences.

Protection and Non-Discrimination

"Members of minorities are in a vulnerable position in society. An effective protection of human rights is indeed very important to them... The vulnerability of minorities flows from their non-dominance in combination with their numerical inferiority as these imply a virtual absence of political influence in decisional bodies at legislative and executive level." Most of the states had earlier policy to assimilate the minorities into the mainstream. While minorities would be guaranteed protection and security, it was expected that they would gradually affirm the cul-

ture, language or religion of the majority. If the minority concerned resisted assimilation, their case for protection and security would weaken^{ix}

The UN Sub-Commission acknowledged at a rather early stage, in accordance with the advisory opinion of the PCIJ regarding minority schools in Albania, that the minority issue demands a double approach, namely the prohibition of discrimination and special measures to enable the members of minorities to preserve and develop their own, separate characteristics. The first pillar deals with rules that are expressions and further elaborations of the prohibition of discrimination. Such rules guarantee formal equality and are at the same time conducive to achieve substantive equality. Substantive or real equality can indeed require differential treatment for people in different circumstances. For (members of) minorities these rules would be focused on devising appropriate means to retain and promote their distinctive characteristics. McKean (in *Equality and Discrimination under International Law*, 1983) finds that prohibition of discrimination and minority protection are not identical but are “twin concepts”. Mc Kean says that protective measures providing for “special rights for minority groups” (such as to maintain their own languages, culture, and religious practices, and to establish schools, libraries, churches, and similar institutions), produce “an equilibrium” between different situations and “should be maintained as long as the groups concerned wish.” Minority protection could be described as ‘the best possible accommodation of the ethnic, religious and linguistic population diversity in these societies . Minority protection is justified by, and has as its main aims, the protection of human dignity of individuals, members of minorities, the preservation of peace, and the preservation of cultures.^{xiv}

Affirmative Action

Affirmative measures, are temporary and compensatory. A handicap, for example, is an unchosen circumstance for which redistributive compensation is appropriate for persons affected by it. Expensive tastes on the other hand are a matter of preference and no compensation is due to persons who have them. Kymlicka draws upon this distinction between an unchosen circumstance where compensation is appropriate and mere preference for which it is not. As culture is an unchosen circumstance, not a matter of taste or preference, compensation in the form

of affirmative action is due. Cohen disagrees that culture is an unchosen circumstance. According to him, culture is involuntary taste, part of a person’s constitution in that s/he can be properly satisfied only by his/her own particular culture. The same resources do not yield the same amount of satisfaction for everybody because, by virtue of their respective cultures, people differ in capacity to obtain fulfillment from identical quantity of resources. Cohen argues that if people happen to have physical handicap by birth or history, and if redistributive compensation is justified, people who happen to have expensive tastes, like culture, by birth or history, redistributive compensation is justified. Justice requires that equality of resources yield to equality of access advantage.^{xvi}

Conclusion:

Cultural rights are generally important for members of minorities, especially to the extent that they are related to the protection and promotion of their own culture and way of life. ... through a focus on multiculturalism, which implies a society where several individuals and groups can flourish in the full diversity of their respective cultures. The Right to traditional way of life is an issue of crucial importance to minorities. A section of liberals are wary of collective rights. They press for individual rights vis-à-vis the state and the collective. The rhetoric about individual versus collective rights is unhelpful. We need to distinguish two kinds of claim that an ethnic or national group might make. The first involves the claim of a group against its own members; the second involves the claim of a group against the larger society. Both kinds of claims can be seen as protecting the stability of national or ethnic communities, but they respond to different sources of instability.^{xviii}

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“It is not wrong to be different. It is wrong to be treated differently because you are different”,

from a plaque at the World headquarters of Lighthouse, the organization of people who are visually impaired.



Contested Sites of Majority-Minority Relations

Dr. ARSHI KHAN



Modern political systems and political cultures have evolved in a social milieu in which political, economic and military forces played a major role; defined and justified by ideologues and thinkers who postulated their visions confined within the Western epistemological paradigm.

This evolution passed through difficult phases of upheavals, violence, and rivalries between the old and the new orders which finally resulted in building liberal institutions, principles and values for governing peoples divided into various territorial zones. These forces were simultaneously engaged in two major agendas—reconstructing their own institutions and values within their own territories; and transplant their own experiences and proto-type institutions into their occupied areas/colonies in the non-Western and non-liberal continents.

Most of the non-Western societies are plural in nature with a history of unity in diversity. Unlike the West, they did not experience inter-religious and intra-religious wars before colonial rule. They had tremendous capacity and understanding to live in peace and harmony. It was only during the colonial era, that they entered into communal clashes. But the nature of the society remained federal, which required different sets political mechanisms to resolve conflicting interests. The end of colonial rule in several countries began with volatile situations like violence, partition and distrust as well as the rise of the numerical majority community and its political party in power at various levels of government. Independence fervor coincided with the urgent requirement for a democratic constitution, need for development and holding elections began; with the State making programs focusing on security, non-alignment and unity of the people. Minorities continued to lag behind in several countries resulting in-- a kind of 'absolute exclusion' (in the case of

India) mainly due to the role of parties in power and the, with exceptions, biased performance of enforcement agencies. This largely affected the Rule of Law which is a foundational principle of democracy. Laws are generally implemented through hands and minds whose make-up determines the status and rights of minorities. This is why broad constitutions and provisions of fundamental rights have remained ineffective vis-à-vis selective minority groups.

Liberal social contexts produced two models of governance based on the degree of diversity and homogeneity factors. The latter experimented with unitary Nation-States like France and Turkey while the former endorsed federalism with a strong center and federalism with strong constituent units. Federalism with a strong center can be found in Australia and to some extent the United States which have not satisfactorily responded to the needs and rights of the Native Americans and Native Australians. Federalism with strong constituent units in addition to the protected rights of the Communes can be found in Switzerland where diversity is recognized, valued and respected. To the contrary, the Nation-State by its own nature, is opposed to the rights of minorities and their existence as 'minorities' as such. They are also not friendly to immigrants and guest workers. In the West, France is required to look into the demands of minority groups. The Settler States like the US needs to shift from the plurality system of election to the proportional representation system, while Australia needs to expand the proportional system to ensure the effective participation of the Native people.

Over the years, the West and their liberal outposts in other parts of the world succeeded in making systematic and systemic improvements for ensuring institutional mechanisms effective and operational to benefit their territorial fellows. But their criterion for the administration of colonial peoples was based on exploiting differences rather than minimizing the conflicts. This is generally known as the policy of

‘divide and rule’ or backing one against the other or supporting all rival groups. On the other hand, the colonial masters played a different card in those colonies where Christian and Jews were the colonial subjects. Examples are Palestine and Cyprus (presently divided by the UN Green Line into north and south). Turkey is another example which also suffered from the designs of colonial masters since the Berlin Treaty of 1878. Arabs lost their lands, freedom, rights and dignity during 1916-1948 when Palestine was a British Mandate Territory.

As result, the minority became not only majority but also the only power in this land. Majority Arabs not only became minority but also a Nation without State. Similarly *Osmanli* Turks began to leave the island of Cyprus after the British Government took its partial control in 1878 and full control in 1925. Several measures and policies taken by the British, disturbed peace and balance between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Under the London-Zurich Agreements of 1959, Turkey had to become the guarantor of the constitutional rights and security of Turkish Cypriots. British and later France including the Czarist Russia used the pretext of reforms for Armenians in Eastern Anatolia during 1880-1914 and instigated Armenians against the *Osmanli Devlet* which broke down the historical bond of harmonious relationships, trust, cooperation and power-sharing.

A large number of Afro-Asian post-colonial countries have experienced divide and rule under colonial rule. This resulted in partition of territories, ethnic violence and genocide, and flawed processes of constitution-making and state-making which adversely affected the process of nation-building. In both the cases of sudden and gradual transfer of powers from the colonial masters to the national leaders, liberal democratic laws and institutions became the instruments for the majoritarian takeover. Democracy became a ‘winner-takes-all’ benchmark. Punjabi domination resulted in the creation of Bangladesh. Similarly about 35 per cent Muslim minority in Macedonia seems to be excluded by 65 per cent Orthodox Christians. Greek majority dominance over the Muslim minority group is historically known since 1832.

Prior to the communist takeover, Turks were permitted their own Turkish-language schools, both religious and secular, which followed a separate cur-

riculum. They had their own religious administration and ecclesiastical courts. Assimilation policy began seriously to affect Turks in 1958. By 1975, the teaching of Turkish had been eliminated from the curriculum altogether, and after 1984, newspapers and magazines intended for Turks appeared only in the Bulgarian language. In 1984-1985 the government embarked upon a policy of forcing Turks to adopt Bulgarian names. Bans were imposed on Muslim religious practices and fines were also imposed for the speaking of Turkish in public places. By the end of August 1989, about 350,000 Turks had left Bulgaria and only 130,000 returned by January 1990. In March 1990, the National Assembly passed the Names of Bulgarian Citizens Act, reinstating the right of all Muslims, including Turks, to choose their own names. Legislation passed between 1990 and 1992 facilitated the return of property to Turks who had left the country in 1989 and allowed the teaching of the Turkish language in schools as an extra-curricular subject.

Running a plural federal nation is a big responsibility for administrative agencies and political parties, both in power and in opposition, because it is directly related to managing diversities. Switzerland, Belgium, and Canada have shown successful experiments in integrating non-dominant communities within their borders. Post-colonial societies have largely failed in this regard and there are many instances of ethnic violence, secession and regional disparities in addition to the cases of discrimination and domination. India is the only country in the world where the Muslim minority community has been pushed to the wall particularly since 1952 when the business of elected government started. The pathetic situation of Muslims in economy, jobs (government and private), share in political power, land holding, per capita income, housing, habitations, education, media, sanitation, health facilities, transportation and dismal share in various government schemes have been recorded by the Gopal Singh Committee (1983), Justice Sachar Committee (2006), Justice Ranganath Misra Commission (2007), Report of the Minority Commissioner of Andhra Pradesh (2004), Andhra Pradesh Backward Class Commission Report on Muslims (2004), Mahmoodur Rahman Committee Report (Maharashtra State, 2014), etc.

Despite the data available with the State and Central governments, the subject of the backwardness of the Muslim community, security of dignity, life and property has not been an important issue in India's democracy. Similar problems were also faced by Christian missionaries for some years; in addition to the anti-Sikh violence in 1984. Muslims are the only minority community in India deprived of power-sharing and affirmative policies. The main reason has been their exclusion in enforcement agencies and large private sectors. There are no political safeguards available to them, such as are available to the weaker section of the majority community on the basis of caste.

The election method—First-Past-the-Post System---or the Plurality method has also strengthened the foundations of majoritarian democracy in India which has taken the shape of Hindu domination at all the levels of the government—center, state, local. Majoritarianism has also affected the citizenship rights of the minority. Citizenship policy and rights, have deep influence over political participation, legislation, rule of law, migration, settlements, labor market and welfare programs of the state. Citizenship is a legal right providing full and equal membership to a person within the political community (state). It gives the person legal and political identity which also corresponds with a person's social and educational status. Citizenship also defines some rights and duties of the individual members of the state such as right to vote, right to be elected, right to better employment opportunities, opportunities for education, free movement, protection against exploitation, deprivation and discrimination resulting from another group or individual or from the officials.

There is a massive list of violation of citizenship rights against the minority community in India. During the era of dominant Congress party rule, and later coalition governments since 1996 at the Centre, bureaucracy practiced with prejudices against minority. After the Bhartiya Janata Party (political party of the *Sangh Parivar* consisting of militant and extremist units) formed governments in States, coalition governments in Centre and States and its majority government at the Centre since May 2014, prejudices of the enforcement agencies against the minority is now supplemented by the hatred and anti-Muslim policies of elected leaders and minis-

ters. Muslims have faced immense violence, threats to life, property, honor, religion, culture and identity. The Gujarat Model, run by the State's former chief minister is an example of this kind of lack of justice and security to Muslims. BJP governments have cornered Muslims in terms of security, religion, textbooks, meat trade, housing, jobs and freedom of movement. There are a number of cases framed against Muslims on the pretext of terrorism, riots and making statements. There are cases of fake encounters, extra-judicial killings, murder of under-trials and their lawyers, bomb blasts, hoax terror calls and illegal detentions which have not been addressed so far, as has also happened in the case of rape victims of non-Muslim females and violations of the rights of scheduled Castes (SC).

The remedy lies in the political will of the governments and attitudinal change in the majority for initiating the leveling process through political safeguards, reservations in educational institutions, jobs and promotions as have been arranged for SC and Scheduled Tribes. In the absence of political safeguards, the Plurality system needs to be changed in favor of Proportional Representation Electoral System for ensuring representation. Enforcement agencies engaged in public affairs need to be balanced with the representation of the excluded community. Since the judiciary has not played the kind of role it has played in the case of cow slaughtering, rape of non-Muslim women and in other matters, special courts need to be established for trying of those who are involved in genocidal killings and violence against minorities. The composition of the courts should give at least half space to judges from minority communities. Actions needs to be taken against those who were accused by various inquiry commissions, even if they are old in nature. Similarly, paramilitary forces, armed forces and intelligence units also need to be proportionally inclusive. The main purpose of such kind of suggestions is to ensure political equality, social justice and equity for coherent political development and power-sharing.

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ISIS



In the Arab world they call them “Da’esh” which stands for the same letters of ISIS; “Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham”. Da’esh was founded back in 1999 by the late Abu Musab al-Zarqawi under the name of Jama’at

al-Tawhid wa-al-Jihad “The Organization of Monotheism and Jihad. In October 2004, al-Zarqawi swore loyalty to Osama bin Laden and the name of the group then was changed to “Tanzim qa’idat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn”, the Organization of Jihad’s Base in Mesopotamia”, more commonly known as “Al-Qaeda in Iraq” being recognized as a group formed and operating within Iraq against the American troops and the international armed alliance which was formed in 2003 for the war against the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq.

In April 2013, after the start of the civilian revolution against the “Bashar al-Assad” regime in Syria, the organization expanded to Syria and adopted the name of ISIS: “Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham”.

In its latest version in 2014, and under the leadership of “Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi”, the organization has removed “Iraq” and “al-Sham” from its title to be known as “The Islamic State”, eliminating all the borders for its power and operations to embrace all the Islamic world which they announced their new leader “Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi” as its Caliphate.

Background and Ideology

ISIS is a Sunni extremist group that follows an extreme anti-western interpretation of Islam, promotes religious violence and regards those who do not agree with its interpretations as infidels or apostates in the aim of establishing a Salafist Islamist state in Iraq and Syria mainly based on the teachings of al-Qaeda and the Wahabi’s teaching of the principles of Jihad.

Mohammad Hussein A. Al-Daraweesh

ISIS ideology is based on rejecting the concept of modern Islam, and aiming to return to the early days of Islam. Anything that comes later, as “innovations” will be rejected as well and –in their beliefs- it will corrupt the original spirit of Islam. And in one of their main rules of Jihad; Jihad should be maintained only under the leadership of the Caliphate of the Muslims, and it should start by purification of the Muslim society in the way of confronting the west or the real enemies. So, if taking the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in the Middle East as a case study, ISIS will consider Hamas “the resistance group in Gaza” as a group that is not fighting under the leadership of the Caliphate of the Muslims, so they are sinners, and they need purification first. Jihad starts against Hamas in the way of confronting Israel.

In late September 2014, more than 120 Islamic scholars from around the Muslim world signed an open letter to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, explicitly rejecting and refuting his group’s interpretations of the Qur’an and hadith to justify their actions. The letter rebukes ISIS’s execution of prisoners as “heinous war crimes” and the persecution of the Yazidis of Iraq as “abominable”. It also accuses the group of instigating fitna-sedition-by instituting slavery under its rule in contravention of the anti-slavery consensus of the Islamic scholarly community.

In the opinion of the majority of the Muslim world, ISIS always represented only extremism, sedition, and misrepresentation of Islam in one of its most effective ways, across time, through many of their unjustified acts of violence and abuse of human rights of those whose only guilt was that they were not Muslims, or were Muslims who belong to a different Islamic sector or were even Muslims from the same Sunni sector who did not support ISIS and agree with all of their rules.

The abuse of human rights committed by ISIS started with the process of purification within the

Muslim community in Iraq and Syria against Sunni and Shiite Muslims within the Muslim community. Afterwards, and during their campaign to gain power and control in the main cities in Iraq, ISIS went through cities including a non-Muslim population such as al-Mosul city in Iraq, a city under the governorate of Ninawa which includes a respectful Christian community living side by side with the Muslim as well as the Jewish community, in a historical city, since a very long time ago.

When ISIS arrived in al-Mosul they reportedly persecuted Christians in the city, forcing them to flee their homes in Mosul, Iraq's second-largest city, even as Muslims in Baghdad showed solidarity with persecuted Christians by joining them in symbolic protests across the city. Mosul is one of the holiest cities of Christianity in the Middle East and the ancient churches of Mosul are some of Christianity's oldest. Losing their homes, belongings and almost all that they ever owned except for some clothes to cover up themselves with Christian children, women, and old men were obliged to move to the near borders of Erbil, many of them on their feet, under very hard circumstances. Many suffered death as a result of such an evacuation. Different media sources, reported even more violent acts by ISIS that crossed the limits of humanity.

Also, the Yazidis minority; who are a Kurdish ethnoreligious community in Iraq, suffered at the hands of ISIS. Yazidis have become the focus of the world after being displaced and evacuated from the areas of ISIS control in the Kurdish area in northern Iraq. Yazidi families can be seen living in makeshift camps and half-finished buildings, even under bridges. And experts reported that almost 4,500 individuals - including about 3,000 women and children - remain in ISIS hands. The young women and girls are being treated as spoils of war and trafficked around the region.

Lately, the world's major super powers and some neighboring countries to ISIS territories in the Middle East have formed an alliance against the organization and have already started to take actions against it. Such alliance states its aims as including: the destruction of ISIS in Iraq and Syria; preventing its movements to the neighboring countries; disarming the organization; eliminating the threat it represents to the moderate Muslim community, as well as the non-Muslim minorities in the region; and stopping the influence that ISIS may have on spreading the spirit of extremist Islam in a region that suffers unjust, poverty, being one of the main sources of extreme Islamic movements in the world.

The world alliance has already started its operations against ISIS in Iraq and Syria. And the counting of dead civilians, due to the operations has just started as well, since ISIS is based in major cities in Iraq and Syria that include areas populated by civilians who are just controlled by the Islamic State, while not fighting them.

This study of ISIS today, and during the history of its creation traces its evolution as well as the military action taken against them to end their growing threat. It always raises the same question: when will we stand together against hate, poverty, and lack of education and sectarian opposition in our communities? When are we going to stand together for promoting peace and interfaith harmony, spreading a culture of acceptance and non-discrimination to prevent the roots that might lead to the recreation of ISIS and other radical groups in the Middle East of the Islamic world, instead of just setting all the reasons aside, and finally curing the injured part of our body by simply cutting it out?.

Mohammad Hussein A. Al-Daraweesh
Amman- Jordan
IIPDS Alumni 2008

“The friend of my enemy is my enemy”,

Virtual Universe Study

“The enemy of my enemy is my friend”,

Sanskrit treatise on statecraft,
dating the 4th century B.C.

MINORITIES IN THE UNITED NATIONS

A Hotly-Contested Site

Dr. Clarence J. Dias



The United Nations (UN) thus far, has largely failed the minority peoples of the world. This is hardly surprising. Despite the rhetoric of the Preamble of its Charter, the UN is an international organization composed of Member States represented by their governments. It is an unfortunate political fact of life that the governments of very few States, preoccupied by their nation-building agendas, truly have the interests of their minority peoples at heart. Just four cases suffice to make the point: the Roma, the Palestinian, the Kurd and the Rohingya peoples.

The Roma

The Roma are a nomadic people hailing, 1500 years ago, from northern India who migrated through the Balkans about 900 years ago. While it is believed that the Roma were originally Hindu, over the centuries, most Roma have adopted the religions of their host countries. The majority of Roma communities now practice a form of Islam or Christianity that retains some Romani influences. After leaving northern India, most Roma went to Europe: In some Eastern European countries, such as Romania and Bulgaria, they form up to 12 percent of the total 12 million Roma population worldwide. The Roma are also numerous in Turkey, which has about 2.75 million Roma (according to the New York Times). Other European countries with large Roma populations include Russia, Slovakia, Hungary, Serbia, Spain and France. Though concentrated in Europe, there are also Roma populations on every occupied continent — about 1 million live in the United States, and roughly 800,000 in Brazil.

Shortly after arriving in Europe, the Roma were enslaved in many regions, a practice that continued into the 19th century in countries such as Romania. In England, Switzerland and Denmark, the Roma were put to death throughout the medieval era. Many

countries, such as Germany, Italy and Portugal, ordered the expulsion of all Roma. There are countless reports of Roma children being abducted from their parents, women who had their ears cut off, and Roma who were branded with hot irons. In an effort to force assimilation, the use of their native language was forbidden in some countries; other places forbade the Roma to marry among themselves. Perhaps the most devastating persecution of the Roma occurred in Nazi Germany where an estimated 2 million Roma died in concentration camps and through other means of extermination. In the post-war era, as recently as the 1980s, Roma women in Czechoslovakia were forced to undergo sterilization to limit the Romani population

Many Roma avoid assimilation with the larger societies of their host countries — this may be a legacy of centuries of persecution. Because of their isolation, many Roma children do not attend school. The Roma typically lack access to stable jobs, affordable housing, health care and other social services. As a result, poverty, disease, substance abuse and crime plague many Roma communities. Poor health, low levels of literacy, joblessness, poor accommodation standards, low levels of engagement with education and discrimination are endemic in all states within which Roma reside. (For further information see Marc Lallanilla, *Five Intriguing Facts About the Roma*, posted on *LiveScience* on October 23, 2013).

The Kurds

The Kurdish people can claim one of the longest ethnic histories in the Middle East. Their lineage dates back to as early as 2400 BC, where they occupied the same lands as they do today. However many foreign invasions and immigrants have changed the face of the Kurdish people over time. Though Kurds had followed the teaching of Islam since an Arabic invasion in the 7th century, their culture remained distinctly different from all the others found around it. This early separatism created problems for outside parties ruling the area. Starting

in 1843, the Kurdish area of the Middle East, fell under Ottoman rule. A massive Kurdish uprising there in 1847 led to swift suppression by Ottoman forces that would continue until the Empire fell. The oppression suffered under this system led to the first attempt in organizing a national Kurdish movement as early as 1908.

World War II and the subsequent Cold War made the Kurdish people pawns of pawns. The Middle East was being divided up between areas of American influence and areas of Soviet influence, causing both internal and external strife for many newly-formed nations. However, the Kurds again had a chance for an independent state. The Iranian portion of Kurdistan was under Soviet occupation, and the Soviets allowed Qazi Mohammed, a respected religious and political leader, to create and lead the Mahabad Republic of Kurdistan. During this time Mohammed also founded the Kurdish Democratic Party. However, once again, the good fortune of the Kurds was not meant to endure. Lasting less than a year, the Mahabad Republic was never granted full independence or autonomy. The Soviets withdrew their forces from the area in 1947 and the Iranian central government, backed by the US and Great Britain, destroyed the Kurdish republic and executed the leaders.

During the 1950's and 60's Iraq waged massive campaigns to rid Iraqi territory of Kurds. The war went on and off for nearly twenty years, with widespread massacre and atrocity inflicted on the Kurdish people. The situation worsened to the point to where a United Nations mediator was requested to resolve the conflict. A ceasefire was reached in 1970 but in 1975 Saddam Hussein started bombing Kurdish villages, destroying an estimated 5,000 villages by 1980. Iraq also tested their first chemical weapons, cyanide and mustard gas, on Kurdish civilians.

During the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980's, the Kurds lent their assistance to Ayotollah Khomeini's rise to power. In conjunction with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1991, the Iraqi military violently put down a northern Kurdish uprising. More than one million Kurds fled Iraq, and about 600,000 remained in refugee camps. In this small area of autonomy, the Kurds held their first free elections in 1992. Seeing Kurdish elections in Iraq caused panic over Kurdish elections in Turkey, subsequently the Turkish govern-

ment banned The People's Labor Party from parliament.

A largely Sunni Muslim people with their own language and culture, most Kurds live in the generally contiguous areas of Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Armenia and Syria – a mountainous region of southwest Asia generally known as Kurdistan (“Land of the Kurds”). Traditional Kurdish life is nomadic, revolving around sheep and goat-herding. During the early 20th century, Kurds began to consider the concept of nationalism. The 1920 Treaty of Sevres, which created the modern states of Iraq, Syria and Kuwait, was to have included the possibility of a Kurdish state in the region. However, it was never implemented.

The Kurds have received especially harsh treatment at the hands of the Turkish government, which tried to deprive them of Kurdish identity by designating them “Mountain Turks,” outlawing their language and forbidding them to wear traditional Kurdish costumes in the cities. In Iraq, Kurds have faced similar repression. The Kurds rebelled after the Persian Gulf War only to be crushed by Iraqi troops. About 2 million fled to Iran; 5 million currently live in Iraq. About half of all Kurds live in Turkey and account for 18 percent of the Turkish population.

The Palestinians

The term “Palestinian People” as a description of Arabs in Palestine appeared for the first time in the preamble of the 1964 PLO Charter, drafted in Moscow. The Charter was affirmed by the first 422 members of the Palestinian National Council, hand-picked by the KGB. This term was formally used by newspapers around the world after 1967. The Palestinian people are an Arabic-speaking people with family origins in the region of Palestine. Since 1964, they have been referred to as Palestinians, but before that they were usually referred to as *Palestinian Arabs*.

United Nations Resolution 181 recommended a partition of the territory from the British Mandate for Palestine into two states - one for Jews and one for Palestinian Arabs. But the partition was rejected by the Arabs. All of the Arab countries objected to the creation of the Jewish state and fought a war against its creation. This was Israel's War of Independence in 1948. Despite their superior numbers, the Arab countries lost the war and the Palestinian

state never materialized because of this loss. In the war that was waged, the territory allotted to be the Palestinian state by the UN partition resolution was divided between Israel and Jordan. The 1948 Palestinian Exodus refers to the refugee flight of Palestinian Arabs during and after the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. It is referred to by most Palestinians and Arabs as the Nakba, meaning “disaster”, “catastrophe”, or “cataclysm”. The UN final estimate of the number of Palestinian refugees outside Israel after the 1948 War was placed at 711,000 in 1951. (General Progress Report of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine”). The State of Palestine is a de jure sovereign state and its independence was declared on 15 November 1988 by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in Algiers as a government-in-exile. The State of Palestine has claimed sovereignty over the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and has designated Jerusalem as its capital with partial control of those areas assumed in 1994 by the *Palestinian Authority*.

Most of the areas claimed by the State of Palestine have been occupied by Israel since 1967 in the aftermath of the Six-Day War. The October, 1974 Arab League Summit designated the PLO as the “sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people” and reaffirmed “their right to establish an independent state of urgency.” In November 1974, the PLO was recognized as competent on all matters concerning the question of Palestine by the UN General Assembly granting them observer status as a “non-state entity” at the UN.. In the 1993 Oslo Accords, Israel acknowledged the PLO negotiating team as “representing the Palestinian people”, in return for the PLO recognizing Israel’s right to exist in peace, and its rejection of “violence and terrorism”. As a result, in 1994 the PLO established the Palestinian National Authority (PNA or PA) territorial administration, that exercises some governmental functions in parts of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In 2007, the Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip politically and territorially divided the Palestinians, with Fatah left largely ruling the West Bank and recognized internationally as the official Palestinian Authority while Hamas secured its control over the Gaza Strip. In April 2011, the Palestinian parties signed an agreement of reconciliation, but its implementation stalled until a unity government was formed on 2 June 2014.

On 29 November 2012, in a 138-9 vote (with 41

abstentions and 5 absences), the UN General Assembly passed resolution 67/19, upgrading Palestine from an “observer entity” to a “non-member observer state” within the UN system. On 17 December 2012, UN Chief of Protocol Yeocheol Yoon declared that ‘the designation of “State of Palestine” shall be used by the Secretariat in all official United Nations documents’, thus recognizing the title ‘State of Palestine’ as the nation’s official name for all UN purposes. As of 27 September 2013, 134 (69.4%) of the 193 member states of the United Nations have recognized the State of Palestine. On 25 May 2014 during his visit to the Holy Land, Pope Francis, in a carefully worded statement, made explicit reference to the “State of Palestine”.

So, at least in the case of the Palestinians, the UN has been successful in helping create statehood for the Palestinian people, although it has been unable, and possibly unwilling to do the same for the Roma and the Kurds. The former, lack a single territorial base; while the latter does have a territorial base, but such base spreads over more than 1 member state of the UN. Therein may lie the answer to what the UN can and cannot do for a minority people.

The Rohingyas

One of the world’s most critical and protracted humanitarian catastrophes, which has gained inadequate attention is the sectarian violence against Rohingyas in the Arakan State in Western Myanmar. Rohingyas have been made stateless and are declared to be illegal in their motherland, upon the enforcement of the 1982 Citizenship Act which recognizes the other major ethnic groups who have inhabited Myanmar prior to the British occupation in 1823, but not the Rohingyas, notwithstanding the clear historical and modern evidence of their settlement since the 7th century and their legal status as citizens, with representation in the national parliament and having been a recognized race of Myanmar after independence.

The statelessness due to this Act has not only deprived the Rohingyas of citizenship and excluded them from the national census but has compelled them to live in sub-human conditions, subject to an ethnic cleansing policy characterized by mass killing, brutal persecution, destruction of villages and forced eviction. The perpetrators of violence are not only the state but also civilians of other ethnic backgrounds who have been indoctrinated through the racist

policy of Burmanization under the banner “Burma for Burman” introduced in 1962, to portray the Rohingyas as illegal Bengali immigrants who pose a threat to Burman Buddhist society.

The Rohingya, having a most-distinct physical appearance and religious belief (Islam) have been the worst victims. Human rights violations based on ethnic and religious identities have denied them freedom of choice, forcing them to flee and seek refuge in South and Southeast Asian countries where they are declared illegal and forced into impoverished conditions in prisons or detainment camps. They are also seen as a burden and a cause of instability creating security problems in the region such as cultural clashes with the local populations in the host countries and the conversion of refugee camps into hotbeds of insurgency and militancy, leading to proliferation of small arms in the region. In many cases, they were pushed back as boat people and killed in the sea.

The problem is further fueled by the hatred and prejudice instigated by the mass media and the political rhetoric both at home and abroad. Currently, there are approximately 1.5 million Rohingyas living in Myanmar in a state of limbo. Rohingyas have fled to Bangladesh (approximately 200,000 in number), India, Thailand, Malaysia, China, UAE, Saudi Arabia. No one wants them. Not Myanmar, not Bangladesh, not Malaysia, not Thailand, not Australia, not the UK, not the USA, not the EU. The Rohingyas are the ultimate refugees: ones with no place to go.

The creation and existence of refugees can be a very profitable business. Well over a million Rohingya refugees have been produced. No one knows the exact number. They are not important enough to be counted. Bangladesh boasts a population of 300,000 – 500,000. Saudi Arabia, 400,000 – 700,000. The Malaysian population is in the tens of thousands. Unquantified populations live in India, Pakistan and throughout the Middle East. None of these countries have ratified the refugee convention or the statelessness conventions.

The UN and Minorities

The UN has generally contributed much in the area of international law-making for example on human rights, environment, workers, women, children etc.

It has been less successful however, when it comes to minorities. Affirmation and protection of minority rights has been included in international human rights and humanitarian law. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights made nondiscrimination a fundamental value and universal principle of the UN’s human rights system. Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) first articulated the rights of minorities: Moreover, Article 1 of ICCPR as well as Article 1 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) recognizes the right of self determination of “peoples”. The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) condemns such practices as racial segregation, theories of superiority, racial violence and organizations that promote racial hatred, among others. The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide is another milestone and seeks to safeguard the very existence of minorities.

Other human rights instruments dealing with the rights of minorities take the form of UN Declarations such as: the UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination based on Religion or Belief (1981) and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992).

The 1992 Declaration on the Rights of Minorities is a disappointment. The intention was to work towards the drafting and adoption of a legally-binding and enforceable treaty such as exists regarding the rights of women, children etc. But the two Super Powers and the former colonizing countries resisted the idea of a treaty. Moreover, minority groups resisted the definition of the concept of minority in any such treaty, justifiably claiming that the right of self-definition was itself a key minority right. So, instead, agreement could only be reached on a “soft law” Declaration rather than a treaty. The preamble sets out the objective of the Declaration which is to contribute to political and social stability and increased cooperation among States by recognising and protecting the existence of minorities. Rights under the nine-article UN Declaration on Minorities include: the rights to enjoy own culture, profess and practice own religion, use own language, participate effectively in the life of the country, establish and maintain own associations, and maintain free and peaceful

cross-frontier contacts with other members of the group. In particular the Declaration instructs states to create conditions where minorities live without discrimination.

A Working Group on Minorities (WGM) was created in 1995, specifically to promote the UN Declaration on the Rights of Minorities. However, it was poorly attended by States and UN agencies and its mandate was very limited. In 2005, the UN Human Rights Commission created an Indigenous Expert on Minority Issues (IEMI) a landmark event, as elaborated below. The IEMI, is able to engage States and directly address minority issues (a position with more “teeth”). The mandate of the IEMI is different to the WGM but the two mechanisms complement each other. The WGM provides a forum where minorities can make statements about their situation and can discuss issues directly with government representatives. The IEMI can receive written information from minorities and can take up specific situations with governments on their behalf. The IEMI can also conduct country visits to meet with government representatives and minorities.

Due to the reform process within the UN, the WGM became obsolete. In its place, the Forum on Minority Issues was established in 2007, through a resolution put forward by the Government of Austria. This Forum maintains the participation of minorities and NGOs in Geneva. The new Forum on Minority Issues provides thematic contributions and expertise to the work of the IEMI, and identifies and analyzes best practices, challenges, opportunities and initiatives for the further implementation of the Minorities Declaration. The Forum is open to States, UN bodies and agencies, national human rights institutions (which were poorly represented in the WGM), academia, and NGOs. Strengths include the direct connection with the Human Rights Council (HRC). The IEMI guides and prepares the work of the Forum, and reports to the HRC on the Forum’s recommendations to the HRC. For practical measures and plans of action. There is a strong connection between the mandate of the IEMI and the Forum, and the involvement of the IEMI gives the Forum some “teeth”.

Gay McDougal, the UN Independent Expert on Minority Issues (IEMI) has identified 4 pillars of minority rights: Protection of minority existence and survival; Protection of rights to enjoy collective

cultural identity and reject forced assimilation; Enforcement of the right to non-discrimination; and Protection of minorities political participation in processes of the state as a whole. McDougal further identifies as the 2 main issues underling her work as IEMI: the intersection between endemic poverty and discrimination and the lack of effective and meaningful participation in decision-making.

All four of the minority communities profiled above are (or have been) Islamic. One cannot help conclude that Samuel Huntington’s accursed “clash of civilizations” thesis is proving to be a vile, self-fulfilling prophesy of doom for the non-Christian minority peoples of the world.

There are many roles that human rights NGOs and concerned academics, intellectuals and researchers can play in support of the rights of minorities:

- Participating in and facilitating participation of affected groups in human rights standard-setting at the international level and in human rights law-making at the national level.
- Documentation and analysis through a human rights lens, of the situations faced by indigenous peoples and minorities.
- Advocacy, awareness raising about the situation, applicable rights, duties and remedies both among affected people and the public at large.
- Design and implementation of programs of human rights-based development to attack poverty and marginalization.
- Monitoring of implementation of policies and programs and of enforcement of laws.
- Evaluation of the impacts of policies, programs and laws.
- Assisting in securing enforcement, accountability and redress.
- Advocating reform of laws and policies in light of the above.

The struggle for realization of the rights of minorities is indeed a long one. The first steps have already been taken. But we have promises to keep, and indeed miles to go before we sleep.

Dr. Clarence J. Dias
President,
International Center for Law in Developmental
New York

“All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others”

from George Orwell's Animal Farm.

*Don't laugh at me, don't call me names
Don't get your pleasure from my pain
In God's eyes we're all the same
Someday we'll all have perfect wings
Don't laugh at me.*

By Mark Wills

“There are none so blind as they who will not see”

attributed to John Heywood, 1546.



AMAN/ARF EMERGENCY RELIEF PROGRAMS

In September 2014, the Indian part of Kashmir region witnessed disastrous floods, killing at least 200 and displacing more than 50,000 people. Upon request from Islamic Relief and Research Trust Kashmir (IRRT) for immediate assistance, Asian Resource Foundation with the financial support of German-based organization Muslimehelfen conducted an emergency relief program in the affected areas by providing essential goods to 1800 affected families between November 4th to 15th. Each beneficiary family received a relief kit containing rice, edible oil, sugar, salt, lentils, and candles.



ARF Nepal with the financial support of Muslimehelfen distributed warm clothes to slum dwellers and poor Muslims in Kathmandu on November 17th. In the first phase, a total of 125 families, 50 from slum areas and 75 from the Muslim community, received winter caps, sweaters, and blankets. The founder of Muslimhelfen; Mr. Ahmad Von Denffer inaugurated the program by handing over the packages of winter clothes to the families and expressed his happiness to be able to support the program. The second phase of distribution will take place in two areas of Dhading district in mid-December of 2014 which will support another 125 deserving families.



Events at AMAN/ARF

A week long course titled “Peace Studies and Conflict Transformation” was held in Hanoi between 24th—29th November, 2014 and was co-hosted by the Vietnamese Academy of Social Sciences (VASS) and ARF/AMAN. A total number of 35 participants (20 female and 15 male) from 12 different countries in Asia and other regions attended the event and made it a memorable one. They were introduced to the different concepts, components and factors involved in peace-building and conflict transformation.



Two working groups consisting of participants and scholars developed and presented a curriculum for a short course on Peace Studies and Conflict Transformation that can be integrated for both a major and a minor into the relevant disciplines of the selected universities in Southeast Asia. In the concluding session, Prof. Nguyen Xuan Thang, President of VASS and Mr. Mohammad Abdus Sabur, Secretary General of ARF/AMAN congratulated participants and expressed commitment for further follow-up towards the promotion of peace studies courses.

The AMANA magazine was initiated in 2005 following suggestions made at the first round of the Asian Muslim Action Network (AMAN) 'Peace Studies & Conflict Transformation' course. In Arabic, Amana means trust and embodies the primary objective of the publication in highlighting peace initiatives, peace collaboration, progressive Muslim action, and inter-faith cooperation and understanding. To ensure a wide distribution range and to connect with grass-roots communities, AMANA is printed in English, Bahasa Indonesia and Thai.

AMAN supports holistic development through awareness building with an overall aim of mobilizing and sharing resources in order to help marginalized groups in Asia. AMAN aims to build understanding and solidarity among Muslims and other faith communities towards people's empowerment, human rights, justice and peace. With over 1500 members, the network of AMAN spans Asia and is coordinated from Bangkok, Thailand.

Publications: AMANA Magazine and AMANA news online

Focus: Islam and peace; inter-faith partnerships; development initiatives; human rights; gender and peace.

Further information about AMANA magazine is available at www.aman-asia.org

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