

**Praying for 31 Countries
Around the World
Where Religious Persecution
is High**



A resource produced by the International Affairs Committee

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What is prayer and why do we pray for those persecuted for their faith?

Prayer is deeply rooted in Christian life and practice. The Scriptures don't only tell us the story of salvation; they also overflow with prayers written out of the depths of human response to God's work and presence, and to the daily pains, joys, doubts, and gratitudes that humans experience. Prayer is praise, thanksgiving, lament, rejoicing, asking, receiving and listening. It is response-to and relationship-with God. *Living Faith* reminds us,

*Life in Christ involves prayer,
The seeking of God's will and blessing
On all of life.
Prayer is openness to the presence of God.
In words, or the absence of words,
Prayer is the focusing of our lives toward God.
As we commune with God through Jesus Christ,
The Holy Spirit enables us to express our deepest longings,
And we experience the sustaining power of God's presence.¹*

Prayer is thus an important part of Christian life and spiritual practice. The centrality of prayer to healthy Christian spiritual life demonstrates why it is important, among one's prayers, to pray for people in difficult circumstances including Christians who are persecuted for their faith and for the very prayers they make. Sharing in a life of communal prayer, we lend our voices to those suffering for their faith, even while we as a church take additional meaningful action to aid them through avenues such as advocacy and the sharing of resources.

It is of course not just Christians who pray. Other religions have prayer as part of their practice as well and *Living Faith* also reminds us,

*Some whom we encounter belong to other religions
And already have a faith.
Their lives often give evidence of devotion
And reverence for life.
We recognize that truth and goodness in them
Are the work of God's Spirit, the author of all truth.²*

¹ *Living Faith*, 8.1.4

² *Living Faith*, 9.2.1

And

*Justice involves protecting the rights of others.
It protests against everything that destroys human dignity.³*

Recognizing the work of God's Spirit in the truth and goodness of those whose religion differs from ours, as well as in those Christians persecuted for their faith, we can see that to be unable to practice one's religion in safety is an injustice that destroys human dignity. We pray therefore for all those who face violence for their faith; that their rights will be upheld and their dignity restored.

How to use this resource:

Although in some senses a prayer resource such as this can be timeless, in other ways it is sharply situated in the time in which it was produced. Contexts in which religious persecution is fostered develop and change over time. Recent events in Sri Lanka and New Zealand—the April 2019 Easter Sunday bombings of three churches and three hotels and the March 2019 Friday prayers mass-shootings at two mosques in Christchurch—show how fragile peace can be, and how vital it is to support each other's ability to worship and live in safety.

Both tragedies also show the complexities behind the hate that drives violent action. The New Zealand shooter targeted Muslims but aligned himself with the white supremacy movement rather than a solely religious cause; there were therefore cultural and racial elements to that attack, in addition to the religious ones. Likewise, while three Christian churches were targeted in Sri Lanka this Easter, hotels frequented by people of other nationalities were also bombed; the hotels have no religious connections and so many of the victims appear to have been targeted for reasons other than religion, alongside those who were at Easter services. The result in both countries, however, was still incredible loss of human life and inexpressible suffering for so many families now grieving their lost and wounded loved ones. Our prayers, and the actions for just peace that we are moved to, must take this pain and these complexities into account. We are called to be good neighbours to those who lie in pain (Luke 10:29–37.)

It is for reasons such as these that this resource has been put together. The issue of religious persecution rightly touches a deep emotional and spiritual nerve. Lives are at stake, and there has been an increase in extremism from a variety of sources in the last decade,⁴ leading to more violent incidents and more headline-grabbing news. As we will see in some of the research below, even the ability to pinpoint when violence is directed at a person or group due solely to their faith, or whether there are other motivating factors such as ethnicity, class, or gender is difficult. We must remember too that since humans are all image bearers of the Creator God, no one person's or groups' pain is worth more or less than another's. It is vital, therefore, when seeking information on topics like religious persecution, to draw on sources that work very hard to be non-partisan and that avoid polarizing language. How we speak and the kind of words we use matter; there are clear links between inflammatory language and increased violence.⁵ Polarizing religions and people against each other, will only lead to more persecution, more violence, more suffering. We must instead be moved by a spirit of love.

³ *Living Faith*, 8.4.3

⁴ <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/04/03/world/white-extremist-terrorism-christchurch.html> This article, which includes several graphs and information about retaliatory attacks based at least in part on religion, gives ideas of some specific numbers of one kind of extremism.

⁵ See for example this report at: <https://www.cfr.org/background/hate-speech-social-media-global-comparisons>

What has become clear is that persecution of any faith—especially violent persecution—endangers people of all faiths, and of no faith. This prayer resource therefore invites prayer for people in a variety of countries who are persecuted at least in part for their religious beliefs. This includes but is not exclusively Christians. The list of 31 countries to focus prayer on can be repeated each month, and we encourage you to make your own list as well. We have provided a prayer below to use each day while focusing on the place listed. The prayer provided is the same for each country or region, to remind us of the reality that the right to practice one's religion in safety should exist no matter the geographical or political context. After the list of the names of countries to focus on, and the daily prayer that can be offered for each of them, there is information in the final section of this resource regarding each country to help you learn more and focus your prayer. You can consult that section as you pray each day.

Following the country-by-country prayer list, there are some additional prayers to use in personal or liturgical settings that address the issue of religious persecution more generally. There is also one that acknowledges our church's and Christian tradition's complicity in persecuting those with faiths different from our own, including the Canadian church's history of contributing to the persecution of Indigenous people for Indigenous spiritual practices. Even here in Canada, there are those who face violence in their places of worship, as the January 29, 2017 attack on the Centre Culturel Islamique de Québec in Quebec City starkly reminds us. As we pray for other places in the world, we also need to remember to pray for what people of faith experience within our own borders and examine our hearts and actions as representatives of Christ.

The final section, as mentioned above, offers additional resources to learn more about the specific nature and current context of religious persecution experienced in each of the countries or regions. It, and this resource generally, draw their framework from a recent report on religious restriction released by the Pew Research Centre. This report, titled *Global Uptick in Government Restrictions on Religions in 2016*⁶ (released in June of 2018 drawing on the most recent data that was available while doing the study) used data from around the world to score countries in two ways:

- a. Government Restrictions, which it defines as “laws, policies and actions by officials that restrict religious beliefs and practices;” and
- b. Social Hostilities: defined as “acts of religious hostility by private individuals, organizations or groups in society.” This happens when countries declare religious freedom a constitutional right, but their governments are unable or unwilling to prevent social violence or discrimination.

The choice of which countries to include in this resource was based on the order they appear in those two sections of the report as follows:

- Although it is not scored in the Pew report due to lack of available data, North Korea is listed first given its international reputation as the worst repressor of rights
- Countries 2-5 are the first four countries that appear in the top twenty-five of both the report's index of government restrictions and its index of social hostilities
- Countries 6-18 are those next listed “very high” on the government restrictions index that were not already listed

⁶ The full Pew report can be found at: <https://www.pewforum.org/2018/06/21/global-uptick-in-government-restrictions-on-religion-in-2016/>

- Countries 19-31 are those next listed “very high” or “high” on the social hostilities index that were not already listed; Israel and the Palestinian Territories were combined since, in a resource of this nature, it is impossible to consider the one without the other

For context, Canada was listed on the Pew report as being in the “low” category for government restrictions on religion, but was ranked “moderate” in the social hostilities category. Additionally, the data those scores were based on is from 2016 and there has been a sharp rise of incidents of religiously-framed social hostility in Canada since 2016. According to Statistics Canada, “There were 842 hate crimes targeting religious groups in 2017, up 83% from the previous year.”⁷ Statistics Canada noted that the greatest increase in this group was hate crimes against Muslims, although those against Jews and Catholics also rose compared to 2016.

Given that the Pew report already placed Canada in the “moderate” risk category for social hostility towards religious groups in 2016 and the very next year saw an 83% increase in our instances of hate crimes targeting religious groups, it is likely that we are now rated in a higher category. We must therefore acknowledge and address the hostilities in our own nation, while also praying for others.

A note on sources

As will be seen in the section to follow, much of the contextual information is drawn from a few specific sources; in particular, the US State Department’s annual report on International Religious Freedom and the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, which are two different reports. These reports have been cited with frequency here because they attempt to examine religious persecution as such globally, whereas many groups either don’t look explicitly at *religious* persecution, or do so for only one faith. Various United Nations reports are also cited, as well as work by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch; these groups are not primarily looking for persecution of a specifically religious nature, but can often set religious persecution in the wider background in which it takes place. News stories are also occasionally cited, though an attempt was made to rely primarily on reports that look at a wide range of data. In an effort to keep this resource as useful and as impartial as possible, a decision was made to only use material from sources that were not focused solely on one religion.

It must also be said that even the reports specifically examining religious persecution are noting with increasing frequency and emphasis that other tensions, such as ethnic identity, are often difficult if not impossible to separate out from religious identity. This presents challenges when making the call as to whether a group is under persecution for its religious practices or for its ethnic, social-economic, or geo-political identity.

⁷ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/181129/dq181129a-eng.htm>

Thirty-one Moments of Prayer

Sometimes a situation may seem endlessly complex and beyond repair, and it can be difficult to know what even to pray for. While words are important, and we should work to gain greater understanding of the specific situations we pray for, the Bible teaches us that God knows our hearts and our thoughts (Psalm 38:9; Psalm 139:1-4; Luke 5:22). For that reason, even if we don't know exactly what is needed to make a situation better or feel overwhelmed by conflicting voices and perspectives, we can focus our thoughts and desires on a place and a theme or topic, like peace, healing, a change of heart or safety. God understands even our unspoken prayers. (Romans 8:26-27).

1. North Korea
2. Russia
3. Egypt
4. Syria
5. Iraq
6. China
7. Iran
8. Indonesia
9. Malaysia
10. Maldives
11. Turkmenistan
12. Algeria
13. Uzbekistan
14. Saudi Arabia
15. Kazakhstan
16. Tajikistan
17. Eritrea
18. Morocco
19. India
20. Nigeria
21. Israel and the Palestinian Territories
22. Bangladesh
23. Afghanistan
24. Central African Republic
25. Pakistan
26. Ukraine
27. Germany
28. Kenya
29. Libya
30. Somalia
31. United Kingdom

Lord, we do not know how to pray as we ought, but we know you search our hearts and that your Spirit intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words. Your creations, humans beloved by you, are suffering. In [name of country], religious practice is restricted by government or social pressures. Help all people to remember the importance of the right to practice one's religion safely. Please move all our hearts to reject violence and to practice love for all our neighbours. You made us in your image; as you are the Prince of Peace, please help us make peace, and bring an end to religious persecution everywhere.

*Myanmar (Burma) is not listed here, but it fell just a few countries below those who are listed in 2016. Additionally, the violence there against the Rohingya has significantly increased since the 2016 Pew report began, and it has been an ongoing focus of the International Affairs Committee. Prayers to end religious persecution in Myanmar would also therefore be timely. For more information, see the International Affairs Committee's 2018 and 2019 General Assembly reports.

Additional prayers and liturgical resources for prayers to end religious persecution

Below are some prayers to help form our thoughts and prayers as we remember those who suffer under political and religious persecution.

Prayers for Persecuted Christians

We pray for those suffering because of their Christian faith; that the Holy Spirit will guide and protect them and nurture courage and faith, giving them the grace to forgive those who persecute them.

We pray also for those who follow your Son in bearing their cross, that they may, in every trial, glory in the name of Christ.

For Christians living in [name of place], that they may be given courage, hope, and perseverance.

Prayer for Christians Fleeing Persecution

For our sisters and brothers who, like your Son our lord, had to flee persecution from dangerous political powers, we pray for safety, strength and guidance. Let those who flee persecution and war in [name of place] find safety and protection, and the ability to rebuild their lives in dignity and contentment.

Prayer for Those Assisting Refugees

For those who provide assistance to refugees and people suffering persecution and violence, we pray that they may be safe and see the face of Christ in the most vulnerable people in your world. We pray also for guidance for those who help refugees. We recognize that people who have experienced trauma often have pressing physical and mental health needs. We pray that those assisting refugees and people suffering persecution and violence find the necessary resources to help address and care for the trauma that the people they help have faced.

Prayer for Those Who are Persecutors

We pray for those who persecute Christians and other religious minorities, that Love and mercy will illuminate their hearts, that they will come to see the common humanity of all peoples, and that they will cease committing acts of hatred.

Prayer for World Leaders

We pray for government leaders around the world, that they may recognize the grave responsibility that comes with power, and form and keep just laws that protect the persecuted and work for an end to violence and war.

We pray also recognizing we have at times limited the religious freedom of others and have failed to protect others from religious persecution.

Prayer of Confession for Having Persecuted or Failed to Help Others

God of mercy and of grace,
we confess that we have not protected others when they have faced religious persecution.
We confess the fault of our nation in not opening our doors to refugees
fleeing religious persecution, including the threat of death.
We are often slow to stand with other religious groups
when they are insulted and harassed, their buildings vandalized and desecrated and do not remember
Christian brothers and sisters around the world whose experience is different from our own.
As a nation and as individuals we have limited
the religious practices of the Indigenous peoples of this land.
We have campaigned against religious practices and clothing of other groups,
and ridiculed them.
For these sins we are sorry.
Teach us the ability to treat people with respect even as we remain faithful to you,
the Triune God of Grace. These things we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Prayer for the Safety of Religious Minorities

God of the migrant, the minority, the oppressed, and the outcast, we humbly confess our silence, our ignorance, and our complicity in the plight of religious minorities in Canada and around the world. We pray that people everywhere will respond to the work of your Holy Spirit to build better communities and nations for all people, not just the majority or the powerful. It is in this work that we meet Christ and his reconciling love.

Call and Response Prayer to End Religious Persecution

Lord, we gather together today in worship and love of you, but there are places in the world where doing so is dangerous or illegal. We give thanks for our ability to worship you openly and pray for all those who struggle to do so safely. We pray for an end to Christian persecution, that all who gather in your name to worship find safety and peace.

Hear us, oh Lord, and safeguard your people.

We also know there are people of other faiths who face persecution and violence for their spiritual practice and beliefs. You taught us that all humans are made in your image and that you love the whole world enough to send your own son to redeem it. We pray too for their safety, and an end to the persecution they experience.

Hear us, oh Lord, and safeguard all peoples.

Lord you care for this world and you ask us to be the face and hands of your Son, Jesus Christ, as we care for creation. Move us with a spirit of compassion and empathy; help us to better show love to our neighbours, Christian and non-Christian alike. Help us embody the love you have already shown us.

Hear us, oh Lord, and safeguard our hearts.

God of mercy, love and peace, we pray in your name,

Amen.

Research: a brief summary of context for each country/region

1. **North Korea:** According to Amnesty International, “In 2014, the United Nations Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in North Korea found that the gravity, scale and nature of human rights violations in the country do ‘not have any parallel’ in the modern world. This included the almost complete denial of the rights to freedom of opinion, expression, information and association.”⁸ These denials of rights include a denial of the right to freely practice religion, and Amnesty International notes that the situation remains “dire.” This characterization is echoed by the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom [USCIRF] who stated in their 2018 report, “Freedom of religion or belief does not exist in North Korea. The regime exerts absolute influence over the handful of state-controlled houses of worship permitted to exist, creating a facade of religious life in North Korea. In practice, the North Korean regime treats religion as a threat, particularly faiths associated with the West, such as Christianity, and is known to arrest, torture, imprison, and even execute religious believers.”⁹

We pray for peace in the Korean peninsula; for protection of those who call upon you and for the protection of all people, O God.

2. **Russia:** While the constitution provides for religious freedom and the right to worship and profess one's religion, the Yarovaya Package of laws grants the government significant powers of general surveillance and also significantly limits any religious practice aimed at sharing the beliefs of a religious group with non-members, even in homes. Much of the Yarovaya Package went into effect in July of 2016. USCIRF listed Russia as a Country of Particular Concern in its 2019 report, stating, “The government continued to target ‘nontraditional’ religious minorities with fines, detentions, and criminal charges under the pretext of combating extremism. Russian legislation targets ‘extremism’ without adequately defining the term, enabling the state to prosecute a vast range of nonviolent, nonpolitical religious activity. The Jehovah’s Witnesses, whom the government banned outright in 2017, faced severe persecution by the state... In Russian-occupied Crimea, the Russian authorities continued to kidnap, torture, and imprison Crimean Tatar Muslims at will. Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine, often referred to as the Donbas, continued to expropriate church buildings and intimidate religious communities.”¹⁰

⁸ <https://www.amnesty.ca/news/north-korea-tightened-controls-communications-outside-world-leave-families-devastated>.

⁹ https://www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/Tier1_NORTH%20KOREA.pdf

¹⁰ <https://www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/2019USCIRFAnnualReport.pdf>. See p. 80 of the full report.

We pray for Russia; for protection of those who call upon you and for the protection of all people, O God.

3. **Egypt:** According to a 2017 US state department report on religious freedom in Egypt, “The constitution only provides adherents of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism the right to practice their religion freely and to build houses of worship. The government continued not to recognize and restrict Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons, and Bahais. According to multiple sources, authorities continued to detain and physically mistreat former Muslims. Irrespective of religion, authorities also did not apply equal protection to all citizens and sometimes closed churches, in violation of the law, according to multiple sources.”¹¹ The report also detailed instances of violence aimed at places of worship against Christians and Muslims as well as incidents of anti-Semitic vandalism and speech.

We pray for Egypt; for protection of those who call upon you and for the protection of all people, O God.

4. **Syria:** Syria is facing a massive humanitarian crisis, the scope of which is difficult to comprehend. According to Amnesty International, “the conflict ha[s] caused the deaths of more than 400,000 people and displaced more than 11 million people within and outside Syria.”¹² Among the refugees fleeing the violence are Christian, Druze, Ismaili and other Muslim and non-Muslim minority religious people and families. It has been reported that these minorities sometimes hesitate to register with humanitarian agencies due to concerns for their safety if their religious identity becomes known.¹³ Fears of persecution for Syrians belonging to minority religions thus complicates efforts to get aid to those who need it.

We pray for Syria; for protection of those who call upon you and for the protection of all people, O God.

5. **Iraq:** The collapse of ISIL/ISIS has brought renewed hope for the beleaguered religious minorities in Iraq which include, among others: Chaldean Christians, Presbyterians, and Yazidis. These significantly reduced communities face enormous challenges to rebuild their shattered communities.

We pray for Iraq; for protection of those who call upon you and for the protection of all people, O God.

6. **China:** A variety of religious groups—including house churches, Falun Gong, Tibetan Buddhists, underground Catholics, and Uyghur Muslims—face persecution. Human Rights Watch reported: “Authorities stepped up their persecution of religious communities, including prohibitions on Islam in Xinjiang, suppression of Christians in Henan province, and increasing scrutiny of Hui Muslims in Ningxia.”¹⁴ This characterization of China is echoed by USCIRF, who wrote in their 2019 report, “the Chinese government continued to persecute all faiths in an effort to ‘sinicize’ religious belief, a campaign that attempts not only to diminish and erase the independent practice of religion, but also the cultural and linguistic heritage of religious and ethnic communities, particularly

¹¹ International Religious Freedom Report for 2017 United States Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor

¹² <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/syria/>

¹³ <http://theconversation.com/refugee-crisis-syrias-religious-minorities-must-not-be-overlooked-47448>

¹⁴ <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/china-and-tibet> For more information on China and Tibet, see the International Affairs Committee General Assembly report from 2019.

Tibetan Buddhists and Uighur Muslims. During the summer [of 2018], reports emerged that the government had detained 800,000 to possibly more than two million Uighur and other Muslims in Xinjiang... repression of the underground Catholic Church increased during the latter half of the year. The government also raided or closed down hundreds of Protestant house churches, including Zion Church, Rongguili Church, and Early Rain Covenant Church. Meanwhile, more than 900 Falun Gong practitioners were arrested during the year simply for practicing their beliefs or distributing literature about the Falun Gong.”¹⁵

We pray for China; for protection of those who call upon you and for the protection of all people, O God.

7. **Iran:** Iran places many restrictions on religious minorities including Baha’is, Christians, Jews, and Sunni Muslims. According to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom’s annual report for 2019, “In 2018, religious freedom conditions in Iran trended in a negative direction relative to 2017, with the Iranian government heightening its systematic targeting of Muslims (particularly Sunni Muslims and Sufis), Baha’is, and Christians. The government arbitrarily detained, harassed, and imprisoned Baha’is based on their religion and continued its long-term practice of egregious economic and educational persecution of the community. Hundreds of Sufis were arrested and scores were sent to solitary confinement and beaten in prison. Christians faced a dramatic uptick in arrests from previous years, and Muslim converts to Christianity continued to face severe persecution.”¹⁶ The report also noted instances of government officials using anti-Semitic speech.

We pray for Iran; for protection of those who call upon you and for the protection of all people, O God.

8. **Indonesia:** In Nov. 2018 the government launched a new app for reporting “misguided” religious groups in Indonesia. “*Smart Pakem*,” free for download from the Google Play store, allows users to report groups practicing religions not officially recognized by the state.¹⁷ Human Rights Watch notes, “Indonesia’s 1945 constitution explicitly guarantees freedom of religion, as does the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Indonesia is a party. However, the Indonesian government has long enacted, and in recent years strengthened, legislation and regulations that have subjected minority religions to official discrimination.”¹⁸

We pray for Indonesia; for protection of those who call upon you and for the protection of all people, O God.

9. **Malaysia:** United Nations Special Rapporteur Karima Bennouna recently authored some “Preliminary Observations” following her 2017 visit to Malaysia to report on cultural rights, which explicitly named religious rights among them. She noted that despite encouraging rhetoric coming from the government, a tendency toward fundamentalism “has reportedly had deleterious consequences for the cultural rights of religious minorities, for indigenous peoples, for women, for human rights defenders, including women human rights defenders, for LGBT persons, for artists and cultural experts, and many others in society, and most especially for the cultural rights and the freedom of religion of Muslims and people of Muslim heritage. In other words the freedom of religion

¹⁵ <https://www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/2019USCIRFAnnualReport.pdf>. See p. 34 of the full report.

¹⁶ <https://www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/2019USCIRFAnnualReport.pdf>, see p. 50 of the full report.

¹⁷ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/indonesia-app-smartphone-report-misguided-religious-beliefs-human-rights-groups-a8655191.html>

¹⁸ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/08/31/chance-urge-religious-freedom-indonesia>

or belief of Muslims themselves is now at stake in the struggle against fundamentalism in Malaysia.”¹⁹ She also noted that women, both Muslim and non-Muslim, are under increasing pressure to wear a veil.

We pray for Malaysia; for protection of those who call upon you and for the protection of all people, O God.

10. **Maldives:** The law prohibits citizens of the Maldives from practicing any religion other than Islam—specifically Sunni teachings of Islam—and the Constitution precludes non-Muslims from voting, obtaining citizenship, and holding public positions. According to a 2017 US state department report on religious freedom in Maldives, “Propagation of any religion other than Islam is a criminal offense, punishable by two to five years in jail or house arrest. Proselytizing to change denominations within Islam is also illegal and carries the same penalty...The law prohibits the establishment of places of worship for non-Islamic religious groups.”²⁰

We pray for Maldives; for protection of those who call upon you and for the protection of all people, O God.

11. **Turkmenistan:** The US Commission on International Religious Freedom noted in 2018 that “Turkmenistan is widely considered the most closed of the former Soviet states, and this is reflected in the government’s severe repression of religious freedom, which continued unabated in 2017. The government is deeply suspicious of all independent religious activity and maintains a large surveillance apparatus that monitors believers at home and abroad. Turkmen law requires religious groups to register under intrusive criteria, strictly controls registered groups’ activities, and bans and punishes religious activities by unregistered groups. Police raids, fines, and detentions of registered and unregistered religious groups continued in 2017. Persons accused of ‘criminal’ religious offenses may be tried in ‘closed-regime’ courts in which even the sentence meted out remains secret”²¹ Religious freedom remains therefore severely restricted.

We pray for Turkmenistan; for protection of those who call upon you and for the protection of all people, O God.

12. **Algeria:** Although the Algerian constitution grants freedom of conscience and religion, organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have documented ways in which the government also restricts the freedom of religion through stringent laws and bureaucracy. These restrictions have especially impacted the Ahmadiyya, a Muslim group who have faced arrest and trial for practicing their faith.²² There are also reports that other religious groups have had difficulty obtaining permission to import religious texts or obtain visas for foreign religious workers such as clergy.²³

¹⁹ Karima Bennouna, “Preliminary Observations by the United Nations Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights Karima Bennouna at the end of her visit to Malaysia.” Accessible at:

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22121&LangID=E>

²⁰ United States Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor: International Religious Freedom Report for 2017: Maldives. Accessible at <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/281272.pdf>

²¹ United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, “Turkmenistan,” 2018. Accessible at: https://www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/Tier1_TURKMENISTAN.pdf

²² <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/09/04/algeria-stop-persecuting-religious-minority>; and <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/algeria/report-algeria/>

²³ International Religious Freedom Report for 2017 United States Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor: Algeria. Accessible at: <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/281220.pdf>

We pray for Algeria; for protection of those who call upon you and for the protection of all people, O God.

13. **Uzbekistan:** According to a report by Ahmed Shaheed, UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Uzbekistan guarantees religious freedom in its constitution, and there is evidence that some religious freedoms are respected. He noted, however, that the government continues to restrict religious speech, censor religious literature, and place bureaucratic difficulties on religious groups through a mandatory registration process. Raids of unregistered religious group meetings and search and seizure of outlawed religious materials by law enforcement officers can occur. Such raids can result in fines and lengthy prison sentences.²⁴

We pray for Uzbekistan; for protection of those who call upon you and for the protection of all people, O God.

14. **Saudi Arabia:** Saudi Arabia has very limited religious freedom, but there have been some promising developments in the past year. USCIRF reports, “In 2018, while Saudi Arabia remained a country of particular concern, religious freedom conditions trended positive in certain areas, including: Saudi senior officials no longer stated that Islam can be the only religion on the Arabian Peninsula; senior leadership met with several Christian leaders, including the head of the Anglican Church and a group of American evangelical leaders, pledging to promote interfaith dialogue and the flourishing of different faith traditions as part of the kingdom’s domestic reforms.” The report also noted, however, that significant oppression of beliefs other than the official state religion of Islam continues, adding several pages later, “The government monitors leaders of non-Muslim communities.... In September 2018, the Saudi government detained a Catholic priest alongside multiple attendees at a festive gathering prior to his departure from the country. In October 2018, 17 Filipina women in Riyadh were arrested for attending a Halloween-themed party.”²⁵ According to a 2018 report by Human Rights Watch, “Saudi Arabia does not tolerate public worship by adherents of religions other than Islam and systematically discriminates against Muslim religious minorities, notably Twelver Shia and Ismailis, including in public education, the justice system, religious freedom, and employment.”²⁶ Despite some positive developments, then, those whose religious beliefs and practices differ from the government’s interpretation of Islam continue to be vulnerable to discrimination, harassment, and detention.

We pray for Saudi Arabia; for protection of those who call upon you and for the protection of all people, O God.

15. **Kazakhstan:** According to a 2018 report by the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, “the Kazakh government continued to commit serious violations of religious freedom in 2017. During the year, 20 individuals were sentenced to prison terms for the peaceful expression of religious beliefs, including a Jehovah’s Witness and members of the Tabligh Jamaat Islamic missionary movement...The country’s restrictive 2011 religion law bans unregistered

²⁴ Ahmed Shaheed, “Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief on his mission to Uzbekistan” Accessible at: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G18/048/54/PDF/G1804854.pdf?OpenElement>

²⁵ United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, “Saudi Arabia,” 2019. Accessible at: <https://www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/2019USCIRFAnnualReport.pdf>. See pages 90 and 93 of the full report for the two quotes.

²⁶ <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2018/country-chapters/saudi-arabia>

religious activity and is enforced through police raids, detentions, fines, and the closing of religious institutions. In December 2016, amendments to this law increased penalties and state controls of religious literature and foreign religious travel, and expanded the definitions of ‘missionary activity’ and ‘religious teaching’ to penalize a broader range of expression... Throughout the year, dozens of Muslims and Christians were fined or detained for religious observance or for the possession of religious literature.”²⁷ As of March 2019 Nursultan Nazarbayev, who has been president for decades, resigned his position. What changes that will entail for the country are yet to be seen.

We pray for Kazakhstan; for protection of those who call upon you and for the protection of all people, O God.

16. **Tajikistan:** Tajikistan, formerly part of the Soviet Union, has been noted by several organizations as having a record of violating freedom of religion and other human rights. Forum 18 reports that it has “a ban on all exercise of freedom of religion or belief without state permission; severe limitations on the numbers of mosques permitted and activities allowed inside those mosques; arbitrary official actions, including the arrests of Jehovah's Witnesses using police agent provocateurs; bans on the Jehovah's Witnesses and some Islamic and Protestant movements... forcing imams in state-controlled mosques (the only sort permitted) to preach state-dictated sermons; forcible closure of all madrassahs (Islamic religious schools); a ban on all public exercise of freedom of religion or belief, apart from funerals, by people under the age of 18; and state censorship of and bans on some religious literature and websites.”²⁸

We pray for Tajikistan; for protection of those who call upon you and for the protection of all people, O God.

17. **Eritrea:** Eritrea, a country in northeast Africa that borders Ethiopia, recognizes only four religious groups: the Coptic Orthodox Christian Church, the Roman Catholic Church, Sunni Islam, and the Evangelical Church of Eritrea, which has Lutheran affiliations. All other religious groups are prohibited from operating without government registration, which is very difficult to receive. Pentecostals and Jehovah's Witnesses are reported to face especially harsh repression. According to a 2018 report by the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, “Systematic, ongoing, egregious religious freedom violations include torture or other ill treatment of religious prisoners, arbitrary arrests and detentions without charges, a prolonged ban on public religious activities of unregistered religious groups, forced conversions, and interference in the internal affairs of recognized religious groups... Security forces arrested followers of these [unregistered] faiths for participating in clandestine prayer meetings and religious ceremonies. In addition, authorities conducted door-to-door searches and arrested individuals identified as Pentecostal or Evangelical solely for their religious identity. Since 1994, Jehovah's Witnesses have been denied Eritrean citizenship and barred from obtaining government-issued identity and travel documents, government jobs, and business licenses.”²⁹

We pray for Eritrea; for protection of those who call upon you and for the protection of all people, O God.

²⁷ https://www.uscirtf.gov/sites/default/files/Tier2_KAZAKHSTAN.pdf

²⁸ http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2138 See also a more recent report by the same group: http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2455

²⁹ https://www.uscirtf.gov/sites/default/files/Tier1_ERITREA.pdf

18. **Morocco:** While the constitution guarantees freedom of worship, several religious minorities face social hostility and government restrictions, including police harassment. Many religious minorities reportedly do not meet regularly due to fear of government surveillance and social persecution.³⁰ The US State Department's 2017 International Religious Freedom Report cited restrictions placed on those of the Bahai faith as well.³¹

We pray for Morocco; for protection of those who call upon you and for the protection of all people, O God.

19. **India:** Religiously motivated killings, assaults, riots, discrimination, vandalism, and actions have been reported in India recently. In the last few years there have been several violent incidents by so-called “cow protection” groups against mostly Muslim victims, including killings, mob violence, assaults, and intimidation. The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom cited these incidents in its most recent (April 2019) report, and added in summary “Over the last decade, conditions for religious minorities in India have deteriorated.... Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, and lower-caste Hindus... face challenges ranging from acts of violence or intimidation, to the loss of political power, increasing feelings of disenfranchisement, and limits on access to education, housing, and employment. While there is a system of affirmative action for education, housing, and employment that is constitutionally mandated to assist historically disenfranchised groups, especially lower-caste Hindus, some have called its efficacy and fairness of implementation into question.”³²

We pray for India; for protection of those who call upon you and for the protection of all people, O God.

20. **Nigeria:** Both Christians and Muslims experience violent attacks based on their religious identity in Nigeria. Boko Haram and related organizations carry out attacks, committing mass killings, kidnappings, and targeting civilians. There have also been attacks by gunmen on Christian churches. In response, suspected Christian militias have targeted Muslim populations as well, and there were reports in 2018 of mosques being raided and Muslims killed for their religious identity.³³ The situation is very complex, however, as reported in the 2019 report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom: “During USCIRF’s visits to Nigeria in 2018, civil society representatives and government officials offered diverse and overlapping reasons for the burgeoning and complex intercommunal violence: religious, ethnic, and tribal identity; clashes between farmer and herder communities; land and water disputes; and longstanding regional, local, and ethnic divisions. Given the myriad ways that religious, ethnic, and tribal identities are intertwined, it can be difficult to determine the basis or catalyst for violence: violence stemming from disputes over land or water, for example, can become immersed in and exacerbate religious difference. Similarly, clashes between farmer and herder communities can also take place across—or be perceived to be due to—religious and ethnic divides”³⁴ This is another situation in which religious persecution and religiously motivated violence is intertwined with other social issues, which also need to be addressed.

³⁰ <https://www.refworld.org/docid/519dd4a665.html>

³¹ <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/281242.pdf>

³² <https://www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/2019USCIRFAnnualReport.pdf>, p. 175 of the full report.

³³ <https://www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/2019USCIRFAnnualReport.pdf>, see p. 61-62 of the full report.

³⁴ <https://www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/2019USCIRFAnnualReport.pdf>, see p. 60 of the full report.

We pray for peace in Nigeria; for protection of those who call upon you and for the protection of all people, O God.

21. **Palestinian Territories and Israel:** The situation in the Palestinian Territories and Israel is complex in any case, but particularly so when speaking of religious persecution. As with several of the states already mentioned, it is often difficult to tell where the motivation for violence aimed at a person or group comes from—religious conflict? Ethnic tensions? Political considerations? What is clear no matter how one understands the situation is that there has been a great deal of loss of life, and that civilians have been caught in the conflict. The Presbyterian Church in Canada supports a Two-State solution to this conflict that has religious, ethnic, political, and historical roots. Acknowledging the state of Israel’s legitimate need for safe and sovereign borders as well as a growing humanitarian crisis in the Palestinian Territories, there is an ongoing need for people of different religions, and in this case particularly the Abrahamic religions, to continue working together in support of lasting peace.³⁵

We pray for peace in Palestine and Israel; for protection of those who call upon you and for the protection of all people, O God.

22. **Bangladesh:** The situation in Bangladesh has been complicated by recent and ongoing events in neighbouring Myanmar (Burma), where the Rohingya, a predominantly Muslim minority group, have faced intense persecution amounting to genocide. The violence the Rohingya are experiencing there has led many to flee to Bangladesh, which no longer wants to accept them and has been trying to pressure them to return to Myanmar, where they continue to face intense persecution.³⁶ Within Bangladesh, Islam is the state religion, however, its government supports religious freedom for all religions. Despite this, social hostilities have sometimes led to violence, land seizures and arson, particularly against Buddhist and Hindu minorities, as well as sometimes Christian groups. There is some difficulty in determining whether these attacks are religiously or ethnically motivated, since for some of those groups religion tends to fall around ethnic lines.³⁷

We pray for Bangladesh; for protection of those who call upon you and for the protection of all people, O God.

23. **Afghanistan:** The Afghanistan constitution lists Islam as the state religion, however it makes provisions for those of other faiths to practice their religions, so long as they do not proselytize among Muslim people. Violence has, however, been an ongoing issue, including violence aimed at places of worship. The United States Department of State reported recently that “The UN Assistance Missions to Afghanistan (UNAMA) documented 499 civilian casualties (202 deaths and 297 injured) from 37 attacks against places of worship, religious leaders, and worshippers during the course of the year. This represented a 32-percent increase in civilian casualties from such attacks, double the number of deaths and three times as many attacks as in 2016.”³⁸ Many of these attacks have been against Shia mosques, but the report also noted that some people, specifically Christians and Ahmadi Muslims, said they had to worship in private to avoid harassment.

³⁵ For more information on the context and conflict in Israel and Palestine, please see the International Affairs Committee General Assembly Reports in both 2018 and 2019.

³⁶ For more information on this situation, see the International Affairs Committee General Assembly reports of 2018 and 2019.

³⁷ <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2017/sca/281018.htm>

³⁸ <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/281260.pdf>

We pray for Afghanistan; for protection of those who call upon you and for the protection of all people, O God.

24. **Central African Republic:** Fighting between militant groups that are predominantly Muslim on the one hand and predominantly Christian on the other has displaced thousands over the course of the last five years in the Central African Republic. Tensions among religions remained high, though it is unclear how much of the conflict has religious roots and how much of it is over control of land and resources. During the peak of the fighting, there were reports from Amnesty International and USCIRF of forced conversions of Muslims to Christianity³⁹ and of groups claiming to be Christian burning people at the stake whom they accused of witchcraft.⁴⁰ The USCIRF reported that in the last several years, “sectarian conflict heightened already hostile interreligious relations and rhetoric, displaced more than one million people, killed thousands, and led to the destruction of 417 out of 436 mosques in the country. In December 2014, the UN Commission of Inquiry on the Central African Republic (COI) issued a report that found a ‘pattern of ethnic cleansing committed by the anti-balaka in the areas in which Muslims had been living,’ and UN officials warned of the risk of genocide. In some cases, Muslims were forced to convert to Christianity or hide their religious identity to be safe from anti-balaka attacks.”⁴¹ In February of 2019, however, a peace deal was brokered between the two armed groups; there are hopes that it will hold and begin to heal the rift between the warring groups.⁴²

We pray for peace in the Central African Republic; for protection of those who call upon you and for the protection of all people, O God.

25. **Pakistan:** The constitution of Pakistan protects religious freedom, though in practice this can be difficult to uphold. The majority of people in the country identify as Muslim, but there is discrimination against Ahmadi Muslims and other faiths face harassment as well. Charges of blasphemy have at times inspired mob violence, however according to the most recent report by USCIRF (United States Commission on International Religious Freedom) in April of 2019, there have been some promising developments, including arrests and prosecution for mob violence related to accusations of blasphemy. Blasphemy laws still exist, however, and the report notes the penalties under them are very high; death or life imprisonment. The report noted that “While Muslims represent the greatest number of individuals charged or sentenced, religious minority communities fall victim to a disproportionately higher rate of blasphemy allegations and arrests. USCIRF is aware of at least 40 individuals currently sentenced to death or serving life sentences for blasphemy in Pakistan, including two Christians.”⁴³ The report also adds on a more hopeful note that in December of 2018, “an independent ‘people’s commission for the protection of minorities’ rights’ was formed including leading members of the Christian, Sikh, and Hindu communities, as well as retired justices of high courts and human rights lawyers.”⁴⁴

³⁹ <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/central-african-republic-unprotected-muslims-forced-abandon-religion>

⁴⁰ This story is reported by Reuters as well as Christianity Today: see <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-centralafrica-witchcraft/witch-burning-rebels-stoke-central-african-republic-violence-idUSKBN0TF03920151126> and <https://www.christiantoday.com/article/rebels-in-central-african-republic-accused-of-burning-witches-in-public-ceremonies/71759.htm>

⁴¹ <https://www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/2019USCIRFAnnualReport.pdf>. See p. 29 of the full report.

⁴² <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/03/1035331>

⁴³ <https://www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/2019USCIRFAnnualReport.pdf>, see p. 75 of the full report.

⁴⁴ <https://www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/2019USCIRFAnnualReport.pdf>, see p. 74 of the full report.

We pray for Pakistan; for protection of those who call upon you and for the protection of all people, O God.

26. **Ukraine:** The US State department, in their 2017 report on religious freedom, noted several issues in Ukraine. The majority of people in Ukraine identify as Christians (predominantly Orthodox) with additional small communities of people who identify as Jewish, Muslim, non-religious, Buddhist, and Hindu. There have been tensions between Christian communities reported, as well as Russian suppression of Muslim worship in Crimea. Additionally, anti-Semitism remains a significant problem in Ukraine, with recent examples such as “the cities of Kyiv and Lviv honor[ing] World War II nationalist leaders who collaborated with Nazis, ...and the city of Vinnytsya erect[ing] a monument to a leader of the 1918-1921 Ukrainian People’s Republic who did not intervene to stop anti-Jewish pogroms in which anti-Semites, including some members of his military forces, killed tens of thousands of Jews.”⁴⁵ In addition to actions such as these and occasional reports of anti-Semitic violence, the report cited cases of vandalism at Synagogues, Holocaust memorials and Jewish cemeteries, as well as at some Christian monuments and Jehovah’s Witness Kingdom Halls.⁴⁶

We pray for peace in Ukraine; for protection of those who call upon you and for the protection of all people, O God.

27. **Germany:** Germany’s constitution protects the freedom of religion, but social pressures there surrounding immigration and refugees fleeing violence, as well as the continued presence of an active Far-Right, have led at times to increasing conflict. The US State department reported in 2017 that, “There were reports of multiple anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim, and anti-Christian incidents. These included assaults, verbal attacks, threats, discrimination, and vandalism.”⁴⁷ Germany is also part of a trend in Europe toward increased anti-Semitism⁴⁸ that many link to Far-Right groups and political parties; According to German police reports, there were 1,646 anti-Semitic crimes reported in 2018, which is an increase of 10% over the previous year and marks a decade high as well. Even more stark was the increase in anti-Semitic attacks specifically involving violence: that number increased by 60% in 2018.⁴⁹ In response, Germany has created a national commissioner to combat anti-Semitism.

We pray for Germany; for protection of those who call upon you and for the protection of all people, O God.

28. **Kenya:** Kenya’s population is predominantly Christian, though it also has a significant Muslim minority community. The country has been an ongoing site of conflict, with reports of government discrimination and violence against Muslims, including extra-judicial killings, as well as violence against Christians, largely perpetrated by a Muslim extremist group al-Shabaab that operates out of neighbouring Somalia. These attacks have led some in the region to identify all Muslims with this extremist group. The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom reported in 2017, “In November 2016, the nongovernmental organization HAKI Africa released a report documenting 57 extrajudicial killings and 24 enforced disappearances of coastal

⁴⁵ <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/281214.pdf>, p. 1.

⁴⁶ <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/281214.pdf>, p. 2.

⁴⁷ <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/281154.pdf>, p. 1.

⁴⁸ Jon Henley, “Anti-Semitism rising sharply across Europe, latest figures show” February 2019, accessible at: <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2019/feb/15/antisemitism-rising-sharply-across-europe-latest-figures-show>

⁴⁹ The numbers from the police report are quoted in a February 2019 BBC article: “Anti-Semitism: Germany sees ‘10% increase in 2018’” accessible at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-47223692>

Muslims between 2012 and November 2016. The same month, the KNCHR [Kenya National Commission on Human Rights] initiated an investigation into reports of security abuses along the coast.”⁵⁰ Tension remains between the Christian and Muslim communities in Kenya, though there are efforts to improve interfaith dialogue and pursue peace. A recent example of this was a Christian-Muslim interfaith dialogue event held at the university of Garissa in April of 2018.⁵¹ The site of the dialogue was particularly significant given that the university had been the site of an attack by al-Shabaab three years prior, who killed 148 people there, reportedly targeting mainly Christian students.⁵²

We pray for Kenya; for protection of those who call upon you and for the protection of all people, O God.

29. **Libya:** Libya continues to see massive displacement and human rights abuses, among them ones linked with religious persecution, though the treatment of refugees attempting to pass through the country has also been an area of significant international concern.⁵³ Human Rights Watch reports, “Since 2011, militias and forces affiliated with several interim authorities, as well as ISIS fighters, have attacked religious minorities, including Sufis, Ibadis, and Christians, and destroyed religious sites in Libya with impunity. On November 28, 2017, unidentified assailants set fire to Zawiyat Sheikh Radiya, a historic Sufi mosque in Tripoli, heavily damaging it. This attack follows the destruction by unidentified assailants in October 2017 of Sidi Abu Gharara, another historic Sufi mosque in Tripoli.”⁵⁴

We pray for Libya; for protection of those who call upon you and for the protection of all people, O God.

30. **Somalia:** Following decades of political unrest and several famines that led to significant food insecurity, Somalia remains a divided nation, with different areas of the country under the control of different groups. Some of Somalia’s regions are controlled by the extremist militant group al-Shabaab, which imposes its beliefs on Muslims who differ from them and on non-Muslims alike. The US State Department’s 2017 report on religious freedom notes that in Somalia, “According to humanitarian groups, al-Shabaab continued to harass secular and faith-based humanitarian aid organizations, threatening the lives of their personnel and accusing them of seeking to convert Somalis to Christianity. Fear of reprisals from al-Shabaab often prevented religious groups from operating freely. Al-Shabaab reportedly threatened to close mosques in areas it controlled if the mosques’ teachings did not conform to the group’s interpretation of Islam.”⁵⁵ The report added that the group had also arrested or kidnapped parents, Imams, and other teachers who did not wish to have their children enrolled in schools al-Shabaab was running.⁵⁶

We pray for peace in Somalia; for protection of those who call upon you and for the protection of all people, O God.

⁵⁰ United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, USCIRF Annual Report 2017 - Tier 3: Other countries/regions monitored - Kenya, 26 April 2017, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/59072f35c.html> [accessed 6 May 2019]

⁵¹ <https://www.iofcafrica.org/en/interfaith-dialogue-report-garissa-university-kenya>

⁵² <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-32169080>

⁵³ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/libya/report-libya/>

⁵⁴ <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/libya>

⁵⁵ <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/281030.pdf>, p. 6

⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 6

31. **United Kingdom:** Following Brexit there has been a rise in anti-immigrant and racist sentiment, which has sometimes taken the guise of anti-Muslim or anti-Semitic sentiment. This is reflected in the report by United Nations Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, who stated in her preliminary findings of her visit to the United Kingdom, “In the days following the EU referendum, the government reported a spike in the number of hate crimes in England and Wales... representing a 29% increase from the previous year and the highest increase in proportion since 2011. Home Office data on hate crimes showed that in the aftermath of the Brexit vote, 78% of recorded hate crimes were racially motivated and 7% religiously motivated. It is also important to draw attention to the increase in anti-Semitic hate speech and violence that accompanied and followed the referendum. In 2017, anti-Semitic incidents reached a record level in the UK, with 1,382 anti-Semitic incidents recorded nationwide by the Community Security Trust. This figure represents a 3% increase compared to 2016 and was the highest annual total that the organisation recorded since it began gathering such data in 1984. The number of violent anti-Semitic assaults increased by 34% compared to the previous year.”⁵⁷

We pray for the United Kingdom; for protection of those who call upon you and for the protection of all people, O God.



⁵⁷ E. Tendayi Achiume, “Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance at the Conclusion of Her Mission to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland” Accessible at: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23073&LangID=E>. See paragraphs 58 and 59.