

Issue Analysis

- Freedom of Religion and Belief - *Sessions 1-8*

Introduction

- Freedom of Religion and Belief is an issue that is not often raised within the context of the Universal Periodic Review.
- A total of 21 States posed advance questions on the issue while 69 States made recommendations.
- Out of 3533 advance questions from session 1 to 8, 98 questions concerned freedom of religion and belief.
- Out of 12385 recommendations in total, 273 focused on freedom of religion and belief.
- In order to facilitate further analysis of this issue, a division has been made between questions and recommendations that concern the general situation of freedom of religion and belief, questions and recommendations that concern the reform of national law, questions and recommendations that concern the United Nations' Special Procedures and question and recommendation that concern conscientious objection. These categories are not mutually exclusive.

Analysis

General situation of freedom of religion and belief

- This category contains all questions and recommendations that relate to the general situation of freedom of religion and belief and any remarks regarding the issue.
- Out of 98 questions posed on freedom of religion and belief, 79 focus of these focused on the general situation of freedom of religion and belief.
- Out of 273 recommendations on freedom of religion and belief, 184 recommendations focused on the general situation of freedom of religion and belief.
- Questions and recommendations include, for example "What measures will the Government undertake to better protect religious minorities?" and "Take concrete actions to deal with the discriminatory practices on the grounds of religion in access to employment and social integration".

Top 4 States posing advance written questions on this issue

1. United Kingdom (17 questions)
2. Denmark and Netherlands (13 questions each)
3. Germany and Greece (4 questions each)

Top 4 States making recommendations on this issue

1. Italy (12 recommendations)
2. Malaysia and Pakistan (8 recommendations each)
3. Canada, Germany and United Kingdom (7 recommendations each)
4. Azerbaijan, Holy See, Jordan, Netherlands, United States (6 recommendations each)

Reform of national law

- This category contains all questions and recommendations that relate to the revision of national law aiming to better protect freedom of religion and belief.
- Out of 98 advance written questions, 13 focused on the reform of national law.
- Out of 273 recommendations on freedom of religion and belief, 55 recommendations focused on the issue of reforming national law.
- Questions and recommendations include, for example, “are there any plans to amend or abrogate the country’s current legislation setting up a registration system for religious groups?” or “adopt a law banning incitement to religious and racial hatred, and to formulate concrete measures to guarantee the political, economic and cultural rights of religious and ethnic minorities”.

States posing advance written questions on this issue

1. United Kingdom (4 questions)
2. Netherlands (3 questions)
3. Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Italy, Greece, Hungary and Norway (1 question each)

Top 3 States making recommendations on this issue

1. Italy (6 recommendations)
2. United States (4 recommendations)
3. Belgium, Canada, Egypt, Netherlands and Poland (3 recommendations each)

United Nations’ Special Procedures

- This category contains all questions and recommendations that relate to the work and invitation to the special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief.
- Out of 98 advance written questions, 6 questions concerned special procedures.
- Out of 273 recommendations on freedom of religion and belief, 18 recommendations focus on special procedures.
- Questions and recommendations include, for example, “we would like to ask the Government how it intends to follow-up to recommendations and suggestions given by Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, regarding individual cases and certain policies that clearly violate freedom of religion or belief” or “approve the request for a visit by the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief”.

States posing advance written questions on this issue

Czech Republic, Germany, Nepal, Netherlands, Slovenia, United Kingdom (1 question each).

States making recommendations on this issue

1. Italy (3 recommendations)
2. France, Spain and United Kingdom (2 recommendations each)
3. Argentina, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, New Zealand, Norway, Slovakia and United States (1 recommendation each)

Conscientious Objection

- This category contains all questions and recommendations that relate to the release of people detained because of conscientious objection or the recognition of conscientious objection under national law.
- Out of 98 advance written questions, only 1 question concerned conscientious objection.
- Out of 273 recommendations on freedom of religion and belief, 16 recommendations focus on conscientious objection.

- Questions and recommendations include, for example, “Reports indicate continued cases of politically motivated prisoners, which is not acceptable. What steps will the government take to ensure freedom of thought, conscience and religion?” or “Proceed shortly to the progressive and unconditional release of persons detained for political and conscience reasons, starting with those in a precarious state of health”.

States posing advance written questions on this issue

Denmark (1 question)

States making recommendations on this issue

1. Slovenia (8 recommendations)
2. Austria, Czech Republic, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Holy See, Italy, Norway, United Kingdom, United States (1 recommendation each).