

Eritrea: UN 'failing' Eritrea's detained Christians

World Watch Online (16.03.2018) – <http://bit.ly/2FLMm0T> – Eritrea's human rights record was again in the spotlight at the UN Human Rights Council earlier this week. Kate Gilmore, Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, said in her opening remarks that over 100 people were arrested in Eritrea in 2017 for practising religions not officially recognised by the state.

A monitoring group for the UN, United Nations Watch, said "thousands" of Christians are also facing detention as "religious freedom continue[s] to be denied in Eritrea". The group also asked why the report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea, Sheila B. Keetharuth, "failed to closely assess this situation".

Christian Solidarity Worldwide, a religious freedom and human rights advocate, mentioned the arrest of dissidents and their family members and noted that the Commission of Inquiry had found that "Eritrea had committed crimes against humanity".

The Special Rapporteur did highlight the detention this month of hundreds of perceived opponents, some as young as 13, following the death, in custody, of a 93-year-old school director who defied government orders, as Reuters reported.

Haji Musa Mohamednur was the director of a private Islamic school in the Eritrean capital, Asmara. The government orders

that he disobeyed included a ban on the veil and stopping of religious teachings.

His arrest in October led to student protests on the streets of Asmara – a rare sight in the strictly governed East African nation.

The UN Human Rights Council heard that the Eritrean government's claims of improvement in the human rights situation were unfounded.

Background

Eritrea is 6th on Open Doors International's 2018 World Watch List of the 50 countries in which it is most difficult to live as a Christian.

In 2002, the government introduced a law prohibiting Christian practice outside of the Orthodox, Catholic and Evangelical Lutheran denominations, as well as Sunni Islam.

But even the sanctioned Catholic Church has faced issues because of its objection to its clergy being forced to become conscripts in the indefinite and compulsory military service imposed in Eritrea.

Dubbed the “North Korea of Africa”, the Eritrean regime is authoritarian and intolerant towards any form of unregistered organisation, dissent, or free expression. There is no safe place in the country – as is confirmed by the large number of Eritrean refugees in Europe and elsewhere.

Although there are no reliable statistics on religious affiliation in the country, sources estimate that the country is half Christian and half Sunni Muslim.

Arrests of Christians escalated in 2017. A new wave of arrests that began in May saw the number of Evangelical Christian prisoners rise to more than 200. Evangelical and Pentecostal Christians are at particular risk, although the Eritrean Orthodox Patriarch, Abune Antonios, has been under house arrest since 2007 after he refused to comply with government attempts to interfere with church affairs.

In July the European Parliament passed a resolution condemning “systematic, widespread and gross human rights violations” in Eritrea. This followed a report by a UN commission that the country’s “crimes against humanity” should be investigated by the International Criminal Court.

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Algeria government criticised over heavy fines for transporting Bibles

World Watch Monitor (16.03.2018) – <http://bit.ly/2GHbmUE> – The Algerian government has once again been criticised for alleged discrimination against the country's Christian minority, this time by handing large fines to two brothers for carrying over 50 Bibles in their car.

Prosecutors claimed the Bibles were to be used for proselytism, though the brothers said they were for church use only.

The Protestant Church of Algeria (known by its French acronym, EPA) issued a statement to the press denouncing the “intimidation” of Nouredine and Belabbes Khalil. This follows the recent closure of several of the denomination's churches.

The EPA is a federation of 45 Protestant churches, mostly in Algeria's northern coastal region, officially recognised by the government in 1974.

The two men were each fined 100,000 dinar (US\$900) on 8 March by a court in Tiaret, about 300 kilometres southwest of the capital, Algiers.

The brothers' case goes back to March 2015, when their car was pulled over by the police. They were arrested for carrying 56 Bibles, and interrogated about where the books came from and what they were going to do with them.

They said the Bibles were for their church community, which Nouredine leads, so the police released them and returned the books. However, the case was later referred to a prosecutor and the legal action against them commenced.

In December 2017, they were each sentenced to two years in prison and a 50,000-dinar fine (\$450). But at their appeal hearing on 8 March, the judge overturned the jail sentences, instead giving them suspended sentences of three months each. However, their fines were doubled.

World Watch Monitor understands that the men were convicted under Algeria's 2006 law regulating non-Muslim worship, which forbids the printing, storing and distribution of materials intended to "shake the faith" of a Muslim.

There have been several similar cases in recent years that have been frozen. There are concerns that these cases will now be revived.

The EPA has assigned a group of lawyers to help the two men make a further appeal against the 8 March verdict.

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Algeria: Sentencing of Pastor Adds to Uptick in Persecution in Algeria

Rights advocates fear coordinated campaign against Christianity



(photo credit: Wikipedia)

Morning Star News (12.03.2018) – <http://bit.ly/2GvN4gg> – In the latest of a rash of persecution incidents in Algeria, a judge on Thursday (March 8) sentenced a pastor to a fine and a suspended prison sentence under a law that prohibits causing Muslims to doubt their religion, sources said.

In Frenda, Tiaret Province, pastor Nordine B. was ordered to pay a fine of 100,000 dinars (US\$868) and received a three-month suspended prison sentence, the pastor confirmed to Morning Star News in an email.

Prosecutors had sought a six-month prison sentence and a fine of 50,000 dinars (US\$434), another Algerian pastor confirmed to Morning Star News in an email. His name is withheld for security reasons.

“The pastor of the church of Tiaret was convicted of proselytism,” the pastor said. “He will appeal, so the verdict is not final.”

Algerian News outlet *Algerie Part* last week reported a Christian leader as saying the charge against Pastor Nordine was ridiculous, as the only evidence police presented was the fact that he was carrying Christian books.

The charge was based on Algeria’s controversial Law 03/2006, commonly known as Law 06/03, according to *Algerie Part*. The prosecutor’s requested prison sentence and fine, like the judge’s actual prison sentence and fine, was less than that stipulated by the 2006 law, which calls for a prison term of two to five years and a fine of 500,000 to 1 million dinars (US\$4,343 to US\$8,687) for anyone who “incites, constrains, or utilizes means of seduction tending to convert a Muslim to another religion, or using for this purpose the institutions of education, health, social, cultural, or educational institutions, or other establishment, or financial advantage; or makes, stores or distributes printed documents or films or other audiovisual medium or means intended to undermine the faith of a Muslim.”

Christian leaders say the charge was unconstitutional, citing the Algerian constitution’s Article 42, which guarantees freedom of belief, opinion and worship.

“The situation for Christians here is very critical,” the unnamed pastor in Algeria told *Morning Star News* by email. “We

ask, why this relentlessness of the authorities on us?"

Rash of Persecution

The case follows several instances of harassment of churches and Christians in the past three months that has raised concerns of a government campaign against Christianity, according to advocacy group Middle East Concern (MEC).

In Oran Province in northwest Algeria, the unnamed church pastor told Morning Star News that three churches have been closed. On the pretext that they didn't have state approval, police sealed shut a church in Oran city and a church in nearby El Ayaida on Feb. 27, he said, adding that another area church in Ain el-Turk was closed on Nov. 9.

"Officials gave us a period of three months to regularize our situation, but they did not respect this deadline," the pastor told Morning Star News. "The same day I received the forms to file to register as an association, the police were ordered to seal the two places of worship in Oran city center and El Ayaida."

Authorities later came to a site where members of the Oran city center church were worshipping and stopped the service, he said.

“We filed a letter of appeal at the level of provincial security services, and we informed them that the church registration file is ready,” he said. “It is expected that the judge will give the order for a general meeting, but so far there has been no response.”

A Christian-owned bookshop in Oran city also was forcibly closed in November, and police visited a church training center in Boudjemaa, in Kabylie Region, and stopped activities, MEC reported.

“The affected churches are all affiliated with the legally recognized Protestant Church of Algeria [l’Église Protestante d’Algérie, or EPA),” MEC reported. “EPA questions the motives behind the inspection visits and believes that the accusations leading to the church closures have been unfounded.”

The World Evangelical Alliance’s Religious Liberty Commission said in a press statement that Algerian authorities in November formed a committee from various agencies to inspect churches for compliance with safety regulations, but that it is also questioning whether churches have permits for religious activities.

“The committee has accordingly ordered several churches, two Bible schools, and a Christian-owned bookshop to close down,” the Feb. 26 statement read, adding that the restrictions have also led to an increase in arrests of Christians.

“We call on the government of Algeria to ensure that the

religious freedom of Christians is safeguarded in accordance with international law," said Godfrey Yogarajah, deputy secretary general of the WEA. "We also call on the government, in keeping with the country's constitution, to take all steps necessary to guarantee the freedom of worship for all religious groups in the country."

Arrests

In December three Christians from Tizi Ouzou were arrested in Chlef, 200 kilometers (124 miles) northwest of Algiers, where they were to meet colleagues at a café, MEC reported.

"Police entered the café, found they were in possession of Christian literature, and took them to the police station, where they were investigated at length by the national gendarmerie," MEC reported. "A local newspaper known for its hostility to Christians described the incident as a 'foiled evangelism attempt,' falsely accusing the Christians of working under the cover of humanitarian activities and of alluring young Muslims to convert by means of financial and travel inducements."

The three visitors were released but could face proselytism charges, MEC said. That same third week of December, two churches in Kabylie Region's Bejaia Province received a visit from officials from the municipality, the ministry of religious affairs, the fire brigade, the national gendarmerie and the intelligence department, according to MEC.

The officials told church leaders the visits were inspections for safety regulations. The two buildings are used by eight congregations.

In the southern Algerian town of Ouargla, another church received an order from the provincial governor to cease all religious activities following a building inspection on Dec. 14, MEC reported. Officials said the church lacked authorization to use the building for worship and failed to comply with safety requirements. They told church leaders to obtain permission from the ministry of religious affairs.

The officials said that worship activities at the church, which has been active for 10 years, can resume only three months after obtaining permission, according to MEC.

Algeria's population of 35.4 million people is more than 97 percent Muslim and .28 percent Christian.

Deportation

In December Algeria also deported a French Christian without explanation. Louis Martinez of the French Reformed Church had left Algeria on a trip and was returning on Dec. 13 when authorities stopped him at the Oran airport and deported him, according to MEC.

Martinez and his wife had lived in Algeria for several years and had just been issued a new residency permit valid for 10 years, according to MEC.

Manager of a private French-language school, Martinez was known as a close friend of a local church.

“The authorities gave no reason for his deportation,” MEC reported. “His wife was subsequently able to settle their family and business affairs in Algeria and has recently also left the country. Algerian church leaders note that this deportation is consistent with a wider pattern of denial of visas for church visitors, which seems to be part of a policy whereby the Algerian authorities are restricting the ability of Algerian churches to partner with outside entities.”

Algeria ranked 42nd on Christian support organization Open Doors’ 2018 World Watch List of the countries where it is most difficult to be a Christian.

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Rwanda bans Kigali mosques from using loudspeakers



(photo credit: Agence France-Presse)

BBC News (15.03.2018) – <http://bbc.in/2FHdPgn> – Rwanda has banned mosques in the capital, Kigali, from using loudspeakers during the call to prayer.

They say the calls, made five times a day, have been disturbing residents of the Nyarugenge district, home to the capital's biggest mosques.

But an official from a Muslim association criticised it,

saying they could instead keep the volume down.

Last month, around 700 churches were closed for not complying with building regulations and noise pollution.

The majority of Rwandans are Christian. Muslims make up around 5% of the population.

The government says the Muslim community has complied with the ban.

“I have found that they have begun to respect it and it has not stopped their followers from going to pray according to their praying time,” Havuguziga Charles, a local official from Nyarugenge told the BBC’s Great Lakes service.

Most of them were small Pentecostal churches, and one mosque was also closed.

The government says the reason is that some preachers “deceive their congregation with misleading sermons”, AFP reports.

But some preachers have accused the government of trying to control their message to congregants in a country accused by human rights groups of stifling free speech.

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Combating violence against women: all EU countries must ratify the Istanbul Convention

MEPs called on the 11 member states that haven't ratified the Istanbul Convention to do so, in a plenary debate with Commissioner Ansip on Monday evening.

- The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women entered into force in 2014
- To date, 11 member states still have not ratified the Istanbul Convention
- One in three women in the EU has experienced physical and/or sexual violence

European Parliament Press Release (13.03.2018) – <http://bit.ly/2p8Tr0n> - To date, the 11 member states that still haven't ratified the [Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence](#), known as the Istanbul Convention, are: Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Slovakia and the United Kingdom.

During the debate, a vast majority of MEPs regretted the fact

that these countries (including Bulgaria, which is currently holding the Council Presidency) fail to consider the Convention as the best available instrument when it comes to fighting violence against women. They stressed that reluctance to ratify the text was often based on misconceptions and misleading arguments regarding how the word “gender” is used in the Convention. They urged the EU Commission and the Council to take tangible action to help all member states to ratify the text as quickly as possible.

Some MEPs expressed fierce opposition to what they consider “the ideological baggage” of the text and its definition of gender. They rejected the idea that the EU has any competence on the issue and called for respecting “the internal order of every society”.

Commissioner Andrus Ansip reiterated that the Convention was about preventing violence against women, without any other hidden purpose, and hoped that member states that still have doubts about fully implementing the Convention will consider its fundamental purpose: supporting female victims of violence.

Context

The Istanbul Convention, the most comprehensive international treaty on fighting violence against women, was adopted by the Council of Europe in 2011. It entered into force in August 2014 and was signed by the EU in June 2017.

According to the European Commission, one in three women in the EU has been a victim of physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15, over half of women have experienced sexual harassment and one in 20 has been raped.

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[After Bulgaria, Slovakia too fails to ratify the Istanbul Convention](#)

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Male feminists inside Uganda's police strike out at killing of women

By Thomas Lewton

Thomson Reuters Foundation (05.03.2018) – <http://tmsnrt.rs/2p9cTLo> – Balancing a heavy clay pot on his head with a baby tied to his back, policeman Francis Ogweng caused a scene as he marched down the busy highway towards Uganda’s capital, Kampala.

With traffic backed up to the horizon, crowds of men stared and laughed as the baby girl swaddled in white cloth slipped precariously down Ogweng’s back, pulling his khaki uniform into disarray.

“We want to put ourselves in the shoes of women,” Ogweng, an assistant superintendent in the Uganda Police Force (UPF), told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. “Is it difficult to carry water? Is it difficult to carry a baby?”

Judging by the sweat dripping down his face, it is.

Onlookers were surprised to see a senior officer marching to stop violence against women, in a force that opponents of Uganda’s long-serving President Yoweri Museveni accuse of spending more time suppressing dissent than tackling crime.

Police often break up opposition rallies in the east African nation with teargas and beatings, rights groups say they torture suspects to illicit confessions, and surveys often rank the force as Uganda’s most corrupt institution.

“Their image has been tainted,” said Regina Bafaki, head of Action for Development, a local women’s rights group.

“They have actually been more violators than protectors of citizen’s rights.”

But a spate of unsolved murders of young women, with more than 20 corpses found beside roadsides south of the capital since May, is putting rare public pressure on the police.

They have charged more than a dozen suspects with the women’s murders, listing possible motives range from domestic rows through sexual abuse to ritual murder linked to human sacrifice.

Battering of women

Ogweng was not alone, flanked by three policemen carrying bundles of firewood, a 50-strong police brass band and other officers carrying placards that read: “Peace in the home. Peace in the nation. Prevent Gender Based Violence”.

“Men can also carry water, men can carry babies ... it does no harm at all, it doesn’t make a man less of a man,” said Ogweng, who describes himself as a feminist – a rarity in a country where women often kneel to show deference to men.

About half of Ugandans believe that domestic violence is justified under certain circumstances, such as when women

neglect children or burn food, government data shows.

“There are those who still believe that battering of women, beating of women, is something normal,” said Asan Kasingye, assistant inspector general, another unlikely ally in Uganda’s fight for gender equality.

“We must invest our resources, our training, our recruitment ... into fighting against gender based violence,” he said, seated in his top floor office at the police headquarters.

“It must percolate, it must be known by everybody. So it preoccupies us.”

Stripped naked

The police demonstration calling for an end of violence against women went down well with locals around Entebbe, where about 20 women were raped and murdered in 2017.

“This government prides itself for bringing security ... but at the same time when these ladies were being murdered, the government didn’t even talk about it,” said Anatoli Ndyabagyera, whose fiancée Rose Nakimuli was killed in July.

The murders illustrate a broader problem in Uganda, where government data shows more than one in three women suffer

physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner, although few report it to the police.

“We have in our society a dangerous attitude of men thinking they can dispense with women and they can get away with it,” said Ndyabagyera. “They look at women and tend to think of them as items of ownership.”

Four in 10 girls wed before they turn 18, even though Uganda has banned child marriage, according to the United Nations children’s fund (UNICEF), and few go beyond primary school.

Efforts to pass a bill seeking to ban traditional practices, like dowry and the inheritance of widows by their husbands’ male relatives, and to grant rights to women in divorce have floundered for years.

Women wearing miniskirts were stripped by mobs of men following the 2014 Anti Pornography Act that banned “indecent” dressing and the police in 2015 stripped female opposition leader Zaina Fatuma naked in the street.

“There are (officers) who are badly behaved,” said Ogweng, who works in the child and family protection department.

“But there are those who are good, and there are many.”

Given the influential role of the police in Ugandan society, Ogweng believes he can help to change people's perceptions about what it means to be a man.

"People are so rooted in the culture where some things are only done by women and some things are done by men," he said.

"If a man, a police officer, can carry a baby, can carry a pot, then other men can do it ... Men even called me afterwards and said: 'You have opened my eyes' ... So I think people are beginning to understand."

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El Salvador woman freed after

15 years in jail for abortion

A 34-year-old woman in El Salvador has been freed after spending 15 years in jail for having an abortion.

BBC (14.03.2018) – <http://bbc.in/2pcD0oZ> – Maira Verónica Figueroa Marroquín was released after her 30-year sentence for aggravated murder was reduced.

Abortion is banned in El Salvador, a predominantly Roman Catholic nation, in any circumstances.

Ms Figueroa always maintained her innocence. She said she suffered a stillbirth in a house where she was working as a maid in 2003.

She was taken to hospital, arrested and eventually sentenced for inducing an abortion.

Her parents, as well as journalists and activists, were outside the prison in Ilopango, near the capital San Salvador, to welcome her.

“I am happy to be with my family,” she said.

“I want to study law to understand what happened to me and

help other women," she added.

"I'm going to start again and make up for lost time."

Ms Figueroa is the second woman this year to have her sentence for abortion reduced by the Supreme Court.

Teodora Vásquez, 35, had her sentenced commuted a month ago.

She spent 10 years in jail after her baby was found dead and she was sentenced for murder.

Complete ban on abortions

El Salvador is one of a handful of countries in the world where abortions are completely banned and carry heavy sentences.

The punishment is up to eight years in jail but in many cases in which the foetus or newborn has died, the charge is changed to one of aggravated homicide, which carries a minimum sentence of 30 years.

While El Salvador is not alone in Latin America in having a total ban on abortions, the country is particularly strict in the way it enforces it.

Doctors have to inform the authorities if they think a woman has tried to end her pregnancy. If they fail to report such cases, they too could face long sentences in jail.

Human rights groups say this results in a criminalisation of miscarriages and medical emergencies, with more than 100 convicted of abortion-related crimes in El Salvador since 2000.

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Will Morocco's new law protect women from violence?

Legislation criminalises violence against women, but some claim law falls short, leaving domestic abuse victims at risk

By Ahmed El Amraoui

Al Jazeera (08.03.2018) – <http://bit.ly/2oUtlWv> – A new law in Morocco criminalising violence towards women has divided opinion, with some observers applauding the legislation as progress while critics claim some women would still be left at risk.

Until recently, women were vulnerable to various types of violence in private and public spheres, including rape, sexual harassment and domestic abuse.

Much of this abuse had gone unreported, with such incidents considered private matters and not criminal.

In a bill approved by parliament on February 14 after years of debate among political parties, civil and women's rights groups, the new law defines violence against women as "any act based on gender discrimination that entails physical, psychological, sexual, or economic harm to a woman. It also criminalises cyber harassment and forced marriage".

The new law imposes tougher penalties on perpetrators, including prison terms ranging from one month to five years and fines from \$200 to \$1,000.

The law, however, does not explicitly outlaw marital rape or spousal violence and does not provide a precise definition of domestic violence.

Domestic violence

Bassima Hakkaoui, minister of Family, Solidarity, Equality and Social Development, praised the bill as defining “all kinds of violence against women, offers preventive and protection measures and increases penalties for people who commit violent acts against women.”

Human Rights Watch said the law includes positive provisions, but leaves women at risk of being abused in a marriage.

“The law allows for protection orders that prohibit an accused person from contacting, approaching, or communicating with the victim,” the rights group said. “But these can only be issued during a criminal prosecution or after a criminal conviction. Moreover, the orders can be cancelled if spouses reconcile which will only add more pressure on women to drop such orders.”

In 2009, in a survey of 8,300 women, 62.8 percent said they had been subject to psychological, physical, sexual or economical violence, according to High Planning Commission (HCP), an independent government statistical institution.

Miloud Kaouass, professor of Islamic studies at Ibn Tofail University in the city of Kenitra, applauded the law, but stressed the importance of raising awareness for such a move to be effective.

“The law is good but we need to enhance the importance of moral values and manners among our youths both in school and at home. As long as we get away from ethics, morality and

manners, violence and harassment against women would never stop.

“Teaching our youth Islamic values will also help. Islam considers even looks with some kind of sexual attraction as harassment,” Kaouass told Al Jazeera.

Kaouass claimed it would be difficult for the new law to address claims of violence by married women against husbands, saying loopholes in the legislation could lead to false accusations.

“A relationship between a husband and wife is supposed to be based on love and consent. In the case of a married couple, it is difficult to differentiate if the relationship was with or without consent,” he said.

Hayat Ndichi, a member of the Aspiration Feminine NGO, said the law lacks clarity, which in turn would not deter molestation or limit violence.

“The main problem of the new law is the way it defines abuses. Articles of the law lack clarity and are not as precise as international norms. This means opening the door for many legal loopholes and interpretations,” she told Al Jazeera, adding conjugal rape had been ignored.

However, she praised the bill for getting tough on perpetrators and including cybercrimes.

'I didn't know what to do. I was so afraid'

Fatima Zahra, a 17-year-old journalism student, said proving violence against women could be challenging.

"If you don't have evidence that someone did something bad to you, you can't prove it and police can't prove it as well. So how the law would be implemented?" she said.

"When a man harasses you, he knows you can do nothing about it. Because you will be afraid of those people who are around who will think that you are the reason because you attracted him.

"The problem is always you. This is why there are many places where I can't wear whatever I want, especially if I am alone," she told Al Jazeera.

Sarah, a 22-year-old university student, remembers with bitterness one of many incidents where harassment went beyond words.

"I don't know from where some men get the nerve to ... start touching you.

"I remember once, I was in my first year of high school and I

got into a taxi, which is supposed to be a safe place. He started to feel my leg with his hand. I didn't know what to do. I was so afraid," she told Al Jazeera.

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Further reading:

[Morocco: New Violence Against Women Law](#)
[Violence against Women: 16 Reasons to Amend Morocco's 103-13 Bill](#)

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Netherlands: Anti-Semitic vandalism in Holland rises 40% to highest level since

2007

JTA (10.03.2018) – <http://bit.ly/2tFggyJ> – The number of incidents involving anti-Semitic vandalism recorded in the Netherlands last year increased by 40 percent, to a 10-year high of 28 cases.

The increase in vandalism was part of a small overall rise in anti-Semitic incidents in 2017 over 2016, the Center for Information and Documentation on Israel, or CIDI, wrote in its annual incidents report, which the group published on 10 March (<http://bit.ly/2FISLtl>). CIDI recorded 113 incidents in 2017 compared to 109 in 2016.

The data was published amid unprecedented developments in public debate on anti-Semitism in the Netherlands. This month, almost all of the political parties contending in the municipal elections in Amsterdam signed a document vowing tougher action against anti-Semitism.

The move followed a Palestinian man's smashing of windows in December of a kosher restaurant in Amsterdam. Holding a Palestinian flag, he then broke in and stole an Israeli one before being arrested.

Last week, the rightist leader of the Party for Freedom, Geert Wilders, visited the restaurant. The Forum for Democracy party produced for the first time in the history of Dutch politics an ad campaign focused exclusively on anti-Semitism ahead of the March 21 municipal elections.

Four incidents recorded by CIDI in 2017 involved physical violence against people.

In one case, two Israelis were stabbed in an elevator on July 18 in a suburb of Amsterdam. A witness later testified that the assault was anti-Semitic. Two 18-year-old men were sentenced to prison for the assault. The victims were not in

the Netherlands during the trial and therefore the witness' testimony was not substantiated.

Another incident, dated 26 June, involved a Jew of Syrian descent who was assaulted on Amsterdam's Dam Square for wearing a Star of David pendant. He had been assaulted earlier this year at a fast-food eatery, where several men broke his arm, he said.

In its recommendations, CIDI urged the judiciary to impose heavier sentences on offenders to increase deterrence. It also recommended the Dutch government and judiciary adopt the European Parliament's definition of anti-Semitism. It features examples of demonization of Israel. In recent years, it was adopted by the United Kingdom and Romania, among other countries.

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France: Decrease of racist, anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim

incidents in 2017

HRWF (13.03.2018) – After a continuous increase from 2008 to 2016, the number of vandalism incidents targeting Christian and Muslim graves and places of worship decreased in 2017 but violent acts against Jews were on the rise and vandalism cases against Jewish sites increased by 22% in comparison with 2016, according to the Ministry of the Interior.

The global statistics in 2017 are clear: 950 racist, anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim incidents in 2017 v. 1128 in 2016 (-16%).

The number of anti-Muslim incidents (121) dramatically decreased by 34.5%.

The number of racist incidents (518) dropped by 14.8%.

The number of anti-Semitic incidents (311) diminished by 7.2%.

However, the number of acts of violence against Jews has dramatically increased: 97 in 2017 v. 77 in 2016.

Concerning acts of vandalism against religious sites and graves, Christian sites were less targeted: 878 in 2017 v. 949 in 2016, and Muslim sites were also less targeted: 72 in 2017 v. 85 in 2016.

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