

France expels controversial Salafist preacher to Algeria

France24 (19.04.2018) – <https://bit.ly/2F7IvpU> – Controversial Salafist preacher, Imam El Hadi Douidi, who was based in the southern French city of Marseille, was expelled to Algeria Friday morning following a lengthy legal process, according to a French media report.

The 63-year-old preacher – who was born in Algeria and does not have French citizenship – was expelled on Friday, the AFP reported quoting an unnamed French interior ministry source.

The expulsion followed a deportation order issued by the French interior ministry on Tuesday.

But Douidi's expulsion application was suspended pending a ruling by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), which finally ruled in favour of the deportation on Thursday.

The ruling followed an appeal by the Salafist cleric's lawyer, Nabil Boudi, who argued that his client would be tortured or suffer "inhuman or degrading treatment" if he was returned to Algeria.

The court granted the French government 72 hours "to gather the additional information necessary to make an informed decision". Douidi was held in an administrative detention center pending the court's final ruling.

Sermons targeting women, Jews, Shiites

The imam of the as-Sounna mosque, in the heart of Marseille, was one of the most high profile cases in the French government's effort to combat radicalisation.

The new de-radicalisation plan announced by French President Emmanuel Macron's government includes increased surveillance

of Muslim clerics accused of hate speech and incitement to violence.

The as-Sounna mosque was closed in December following allegations that Doudi was provoking discrimination, hatred and violence toward an individual or group.

A confidential government investigative report, seen by the New York Times, cited numerous sermons by Doudi, where he preached that Jews are “unclean, the brothers of monkeys and pigs”. Women, the preacher stressed, could not leave their homes without authorisation, and an apostate “needs to be eliminated by the death penalty to protect Muslims”.

In its expulsion application, the French Interior Ministry cited the radical imam’s “deliberate incitement to discrimination, hatred or violence against a particular person or group of persons”, notably women, Jews, Shiites and people committing adultery.

Radical clerics under scrutiny

Following a spate of deadly terrorist incidents since the 2015 Charlie Hebdo attacks, France has tightened its anti-terror laws while attempting to tackle the spread of Islamist extremism particularly in French prisons, schools, mosques and Islamic centres.

Between 2012 and 2015, the French Interior Ministry expelled 40 Muslim clerics while another 52 people – including clerics – were expelled over the past 28 months, according to the New York Times.

In 2017, 20 radicalised foreign nationals were expelled from French territory, according to French Interior Minister Gérard Collomb.

Last month, France expelled Mohammed Tlaghi, a substitute imam at a mosque in Torcy, an eastern Parisian suburb, due to

radical sermons, under an expulsion order issued on March 2.

The as-Sounna mosque, where Doudi preached, has been closed since December 11, 2017, when the Marseille police department issued a six-month closure order, which was ratified by France's top administrative court earlier this year.

(FRANCE 24 with AFP)

FRANCE: An Algerian imam faces deportation

HRWF (15.04.2018) – The French government is trying to expel El Hadi Doudi, an imam preaching a fundamentalist form of Islam contrary to human rights. On 8 March, a Commission composed of administrative and judicial magistrates opened the way to the deportation of the controversial imam after it identified cases of hate speech in the numerous sermons of the imam. Jews are “unclean, the brothers of monkeys and pigs,” he said. Adulterers “must be punished by stoning to death or decapitation,” while women “must not leave the home without authorization.” The apostate “needs to be eliminated by the death penalty, to protect Muslims.” Most damning, the Commission report said, Imam Doudi “explicitly” justified jihad.



El Hadi

Doudi, an imam who preaches a fundamentalist form of Islam, at a courthouse in Marseille, France, in February. The French government is trying to expel him. Credit Anne-Christine Poujoulat/Agence France-Presse – Getty Images

Imam Doudi, 63 was born in Algeria and is not a French citizen. As he is very active on internet, his influence extends not only in France but also throughout Europe. His lawyer said he is the only imam authorized to issue fatwas. Over 37 years, he has often criticized Jews, women and the modern world, yet former governments have long tolerated his hard-line sermons. President Macron is adopting a tougher line, especially about hate speech.

However, France had never been lax in its fight against extremism and terrorism. From 2012 to 2015, the then Interior Ministry kicked out 40 Muslim clerics, and another 52 people, including clerics, were also deported over the last 28 months.

“It’s not just the terrorist organizations, the armies of Daesh, the imams of hate and death that we are fighting,” Mr. Macron said, referring to the Islamic State, in a speech last

week honoring Lt. Col. Arnaud Beltrame, a police officer who died in terrorist attack at a supermarket in southern France after swapping himself with a hostage.

“What we are fighting is also this subterranean Islamism, which advances through social networks, which accomplishes its task invisibly, which works silently on the weak and the unstable, betraying even those it claims to represent, who, on our very soil, indoctrinate through proximity and daily corrupt,” Mr. Macron said.

The expulsion of Imam Doudi was recommended by the Marseille authorities under a French law regarding “deliberate acts tending to provoke discrimination, hatred and violence toward an individual or a group.”

Marseille – France’s second-largest city, one-fifth Muslim – is not especially radicalized. Other cities in the south of France, like Nice, have had higher numbers of young people leave to fight in Syria, and greater proportion of Muslim residents on the government’s terrorism watchlist. However, almost all of the fines in Marseille for wearing a face-covering, head-to-toe veil – which is illegal in France – have been imposed in the vicinity of Imam Doudi’s mosque, the police say. The authorities are growing increasingly concerned about the potential for radicalization – especially since two young women were killed in a knife attack at the city’s main train station in October.

The Sounna mosque where Imam Doudi preached, on the Boulevard National in the Third Arrondissement of Marseille, was closed by officials in December on the grounds that his sermons could “provoke acts of terrorism.” Five members of Imam Doudi’s flock left to fight jihad in Syria, according to the police.

His sermons are “exactly contrary to the values of the Republic,” said Marseille’s prefect of police, Olivier de Mazières, a terrorism specialist who has led the case against

the cleric.

IRAN: 'Returnees' from Al Mustafa Int'l University for foreigners pose a danger to human and state security abroad

HRWF (19.02.2018) – Foreign forms of controversial Islamic teachings introduced in various ways in Muslim majority countries threaten their traditional culture of tolerance and the peaceful relations between their various religious communities.

Iran attracts and trains foreign Shia theologians to export its theocratic model and Sharia practices which are incompatible with UN human rights standards.

Salafists and Wahhabis backed by Saudi Arabia and other states of the Arabic Peninsula are increasingly disturbing the homegrown peaceful Islam in Indonesia, the Maldives, and other countries in Central Asia.

The implantation of their Islamic universities and other educational institutions in such countries, in addition to the granting of scholarships for foreign education of imams and young students in theology, are part of their diversified strategies to export forms of Islam that are alien to local Islam, challenge the secular nature of some states and the separation of state and religion.

'Returnees' from universities such as Al Mustafa University in Iran pose a real danger to human and state security in their respective countries of origin.

Sentencing 'returnees' to prison terms, as it is the case in Azerbaijan or Kazakhstan, because they have been educated abroad in 'suspicious universities' is a violation of human rights. However it is the right of a state to protect its population against radicalization and foreign ideologies that promote segregation between Muslims and non-Muslims as well as between men and women, discrimination on such a basis, physical punishments, degrading and inhumane treatments, as it is the case in Iran, Pakistan or Saudi Arabia.

Hassan Dai's study entitled by "Iran's global network of Islamic schools public" published by the Iranian American Forum in 2016 highlights the extent of the strategy used by Tehran to export its theocratic system. In his paper, the author addresses the following issues:

- Foreign clerics in Iran and the creation of Al Mustafa
- Al Mustafa's network: Africa – Al Mustafa School in Congo
- Tuition and support for students and their families
- Number of students and graduates
- Al Mustafa's goal: export of Revolution
- Shiism
- Promoting hatred against Israel
- Al Mustafa, a recruiting pool of Quds force

Human Rights Without Frontiers is presenting below several excerpts from this paper that is available at <http://iranian-americans.com/irans-export-of-islamic-fundamentalism-al-mustafa-global-training-centers-2/>.

Summary

In February 1979 Ayatollah Khomeini and a group of clergymen attached to him, seized the power in Iran. From the onset, Khomeini's regime utilized all the means and tools in its

disposal to establish and fortify its brand of fundamentalism in Iran and export it throughout the Islamic world.

For the past 37 years, the Iranian regime has pursued a two-faceted strategy to export its revolution; in one hand, it has created and supported radical armed groups across the Middle East, on top of them the Lebanese Hezbollah. On the other hand, various “Cultural” and “religious” organizations were created in Iran to disseminate the regime’s ideology in the Islamic world.

Al Mustafa international university founded in 2007 is one of the most important among these organizations. Funded and controlled by the Iranian regime, Al Mustafa trains foreign Shia clerics, scholars and missionaries. Its main campuses are in Iran and has more than one hundred seminaries, Islamic schools and religious centers around the world. The Iran’s Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei is the highest authority of Al Mustafa University.

Al Mustafa has currently over 40.000 students, half of them studying in University campuses in Iran. There are nearly 10.000 female students and 3500 teaching staff.

Since 2007, nearly 30.000 clerics and Islamic scholars have graduated from Al Mustafa branches, a good portion of them have been hired by the university as teaching staff or missionaries sent to different countries around the globe.

Al Mustafa’s vast global network and its growing army of clerics and missionaries is a formidable tool to generate grassroots support in foreign countries for the Iranian regime’s ideology, its foreign policy, its position in the Islamic world and its quest to dominate the Middle East. Al Mustafa is also a recruiting pool for the Revolutionary Guards’ Quds Force or other Iranian Institutions responsible for terrorism or military activities abroad.

Number of students and graduates

Al Mustafa does not report the exact number of its students in Iran or in foreign branches. However, by examining Al Mustafa's current and old website available in web archives, news reports or the declarations by the University's executives, we reach the approximate numbers of 40.000 current students of which 10.000 are women. Half of Al Mustafa's students are in Iran campuses. The University has had 30.000 graduates and employs 3500 teaching staff.

For example, Alireza Aarafi, Al Mustafa's President declared in August 2014 that 40.000 people study at the University. In February 2016, the head of "Information Science" department at Shiraz University gave an interview and detailed the number of foreign clerics studying in Iran and declared that 20.000 foreigners study at Al Mustafa campuses in Iran. In a speech on February 2015, President of Al Mustafa declared that 30.000 students had graduated since 2007.

Al-Mustafa has a distinct department for its female students called "Bent-ol-Hoda High Education Institution" with campuses in Ghom, Isfahan and Mashhad. According to an August 2013 report 9000 female students were studying in Al Mustafa, of which 6500 students in foreign branches. According to Hojatoleslam Safouraei, president of Bent-ol-Hoda, the new campus under construction in Ghom will open in the summer of 2016 with a capacity for 2000 female students.

Al Mustafa's goal: export of Revolution

Al Mustafa's vast global network and its growing army of clerics and missionaries is a formidable tool for the Iranian regime to export its brand of Islam and generate grassroots support for the Iranian regime's ideology and assist its quest to dominate the Islamic world.

In his speech to Al Mustafa students and staff on October 25, 2010 in Qom, the Supreme Leader explained the Iranian mandate to spread "pure Islamic thoughts" and liberate the Islamic

nation from the jug of global arrogance led by the United States. He emphasized the role that Al Mustafa plays in carrying out this mission: (English translation by Khamenei's official website)

“The first lesson that the Islamic Revolution and the auspicious Islamic Republic taught us was that we should think beyond our borders and turn our attention to the vast arena of the Islamic Ummah. Our magnanimous Imam taught us that our attention should be focused on the great Islamic Ummah. Although Iran was extremely frustrated under the pressure of tyranny and colonialism during the rule of Shah, was being crushed by the pressure, and it needed to be saved but, the essential pressure and historical aggression was focused on the Islamic Ummah.

For several centuries, the great Islamic Ummah, which has been in one of the most strategic locations in the world, was suffering from weakness, defeat, backwardness, colonialism and material and scientific poverty due to the interference of superpowers, greed of powerful governments and belligerence of the arrogant powers. The attention of our Islamic Revolution was focused on the Islamic world. Its attention was focused on helping the Islamic Ummah get rid of the arrogant powers' hand of oppression and aggression. We learned this from our Imam, and this has been the clear path of the Islamic Republic up until now. Part of the great work is what you are doing. You have gathered here from nearly one hundred countries in order to become familiar with the pure teachings of Islam.”

On February 8, 2016, Al Mustafa's vice President declared: “Export of revolution has always been one of the most important goals for the Islamic Republic. Al Mustafa plays a role in preparing the ground and attain this goal. Al Mustafa has used the Islamic soft power in the region and prepare the ground for Iran's hard power (military) to be present in the Middle East and successfully oppose the global arrogance.”

Similarly, the dean of language and culture department at Al Mustafa has also declared that “our goal is the export of revolution.” In February 2015, the Supreme Leader’s representative in Isfahan emphasized that “Al Mustafa has taken effective steps for the export of our revolution.”

Al Mustafa, a recruiting pool for Quds force

Since the start of civil war in Syria and the Iranian military intervention to save the Bashar Assad regime, there have been numerous reports about Al Mustafa’s students killed in Syria funerals held in Iran for them. In March 2016, one of Al Mustafa’s directors declared that “some of the fighters deployed to Syria are the University’s students and clerics.”

Alireza Tavassoli, the chief commander of Fatemiyon, the Afghanis division of revolutionary guards fighting in Syria who was killed in 2014, was one of Al Mustafa’s clerics.

The Iranian revolutionary Guards employs different tactics to recruit new members or fighters for Syrian war. Each year, hundreds of thousands of very young Iranian students are organized in tours labeled as “Caravans of light” (Rahian -e- Noor) and sent to the old Iran-Iraq war battle field where the martyrs are venerated and the cult of martyrdom is promoted. The preachers remind the visitors that the war with Iraq was in fact part of the fight against global arrogance, a fight that continues today. The visitors are told that the martyrs are alive and watching them and asking them to join this holy war against the US and its surrogates.

Iranian regime uses the same tactic to recruit among Al Mustafa students or graduates. Each year thousands of Al Mustafa students from Iran campuses or branches outside Iran are sent to these battle field. This is a report on 700 Al Mustafa students visiting the battle fields and, another report about a 250 students and families. In this report by Iranian press, an Argentinian graduate of Al Mustafa who is

teaching at the University branches, is taking a group of Latin American students to the battle fields to “venerate the Martyrs of war between Islam and global arrogance”.

As a result of Al Mustafa’s ideological teaching and financial incentives provided to the students, a good part of Al Mustafa clerics gradually become unconditional supporters of Iranian regime. It is not surprising that many of them are sent to Syria and other places to assist the Quds force. Al Mustafa students in Iran are also ordered to participate in state-organized rallies such as the protest against Charlie Hebdo magazine for drawing Muhammad cartoon or the rally against Bahrain government.

Believers of all faiths and atheists in prison: 24 countries of particular concern

HRWF Int’l (10.01.2018) – *Human Rights Without Frontiers Int’l* has released its 2017 database of believers and non-believers who have been imprisoned for exercising their freedom of religion or belief.

Twenty-four countries in all were identified by *Human Rights Without Frontiers Int’l* for depriving believers and unbelievers of their freedom in 2017: **Algeria, Azerbaijan, China, Egypt, Eritrea, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mauritania, Nepal, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Korea, Sudan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Vietnam and Yemen.**

“In 2017, we documented over 2200 individual cases of illegal imprisonment of believers and non-believers and we carried out campaigns to get their release, some with success,” according to Fautré, director of *Human Rights Without Frontiers Int’l*.

Among all denominations, Christians of all faiths were in jail in the highest number of countries: Protestants in 13 countries, Catholics and Orthodox in 2 countries.

However, members of a dozen other religious or belief communities are known to have been in jail in 2017: Jehovah’s Witnesses in 6 countries; Sunnis in 4 countries; Shias, Said Nursi and Tabligh Jamaat followers in 3 countries; Ahmadis, Baha’is, Buddhists and Sufis in 2 countries; Atheists in Egypt, Falun Gong practitioners in China, and Scientologists in Russia.

“Prison terms are usually imposed on peaceful and law-abiding members of religious or belief groups on the basis of laws restricting their freedom to change religion, share one’s beliefs, and practice their right to freedom of association, worship and assembly. Additionally, they may be imprisoned simply because of their religious identity”, Fautré said.

According to the database, **China, Iran and South Korea** recorded the largest number of freedom of religion or belief prisoners.

In **China**, Falun Gong practitioners, whose movement was banned in 1999, are massively put in prison, a number of Catholic priests and bishops have also been missing, since their arrests many years ago for being faithful to the Pope instead of swearing allegiance to the Communist Party.

Evangelical and Pentecostal Protestants belonging to the mushrooming network of house churches, and Uyghur Muslims and Tibetan Buddhists, both of which are systematically suspected of separatism, are also particular targets of the regime.

In **Iran**, the Baha'is, whose movement is considered a heresy of Islam, make up the highest number of prisoners. They are followed by home-grown Evangelical and Pentecostal Christians who extensively carry out missionary activities among their fellow citizens despite the risk of imprisonment and execution. Baluchi and Kurdish Sunnis as well as Sufis are also particularly targeted.

In **South Korea**, over 300 young objectors to military service were still serving 18-month prison terms at the end of 2017. Since the Korean War, more than 19,200 Jehovah's Witnesses have reportedly been sentenced to a combined total of over 37,200 years in prison for refusing to perform military service. Eritrea, Singapore and Tajikistan are other countries which still imprison conscientious objectors.

"Our best wish for 2018 is that the EU converts its words into action and fully uses the EU Guidelines on Freedom of Religion or Belief to help release many FoRB prisoners of conscience," Fautré hopes.

The lists of prisoners per country can be consulted at:
<http://hrwf.eu/forb-intro/forb-and-blasphemy-prisoners-list/>

() Human Rights Without Frontiers Int'l has been monitoring freedom of religion or belief as a non-religious organization since 1989. In 2017 it covered in its daily newsletter more than 70 countries where there were incidents related to freedom of religion or belief, intolerance and discrimination. See its news database at <http://hrwf.eu/newsletters/forb/>*

For further information, contact

Email: international.secretariat.brussels@hrwf.net or
w.fautre@hrwf.net

Website: <http://www.hrwf.eu>

KYRGYZSTAN: Church set on fire

World Watch Monitor (08.01.2018) – <http://bit.ly/2qM9hCB> – A Baptist community in eastern Kyrgyzstan fears for its safety after unknown attackers set its church building on fire.

The damage to the church has forced its 40 Kyrgyz and Russian members to start searching for a new place of worship, while wondering if there will be a further attack.

The church was in Kajisay, a small town in the Issyk-Kul region that borders China.

When local radio and TV stations broadcast news of the arson attack it caused a “great public outcry”, sources told World Watch Monitor.

An investigating police officer said the attack was “organised by those who don’t like your church and Christianity in the midst of a Muslim country”.

“We don’t believe that the police will find and punish those who burned our church,” one of its members said.

Instead of pursuing the arsonists, local Christians said police have asked questions about who funded the church building, how many Kyrgyz are members, and why, as ethnic Muslims, they do not go to the local mosque.

World Watch Monitor reported an attack on a Christian community in August last year when, according to local sources, Islamic radicals sprayed “We will kill you” across the church’s walls. The source added at the time that “police and the authorities will stay away from this case because they

do not want to help Christians”, who make up only six per cent of the population.

GERMANY: Far-right German MP slammed for anti-Muslim tweet

Aljazeera (02.01.2018) – <http://bit.ly/2EKlcUm> – A far-right German politician has been condemned for an anti-Arab and anti-Muslim Tweet, which briefly saw her suspended from the platform.

The Alternative for Germany (AfD) MP Beatrix von Storch said Cologne police were appeasing “barbaric, gang-raping, Muslim hordes” when they tweeted out a New Year’s Day message in Arabic.

Under newly introduced German hate laws, social media platforms must respond quickly to remove hate speech or face fines of up to 50 million euros (\$60m).

Von Storch was condemned for the tweet by some social media users, but far-right activists rallied around her, accusing Twitter and the German authorities of censorship.

Once considered part of the eurosceptic right, the AfD has transformed into a hard-right, anti-Islam party in recent years.

That change occurred in the aftermath of the ongoing European refugee crisis, which saw more than a million people, mainly from Syria and Iraq, either claim refuge in Germany or transit through the state to other European nations.

In 2016, the party published a manifesto declaring Islam as

“not welcome” in Germany.

Bernd Lucke, one of the party’s founders, resigned in 2016, condemning it as “Islamophobic and xenophobic”.

Rallies against the AfD regularly draw thousands of Germans, but that hasn’t stopped the party’s electoral success.

In September 2017, it became the first far-right party since the Nazis to enter the German parliament, after picking up 12.6 percent of the vote, which equalled 94 seats.

About anti-Muslim ideologies, anti-Muslim state policies and inter-Muslim hostilities

By Willy Fautré

HRWF (04.01.2017) – Surveys highlight that in non-Muslim majority countries Muslims often face hostility, stigmatization and discrimination from state and non-state actors. Furthermore, in Muslim-majority countries, the majority Muslim denomination is often responsible for persecution and discrimination against minority Muslim denominations.

Various ideologies underpin global or specific anti-Muslim state policies and social attitudes, including

- a nationalist ideology closely linked to a dominant religion in Myanmar, leading to pogroms, mass killings, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing;
- the Communist ideology enforcing atheism in China, leading to severe restrictions of religious freedom,

- arrests and imprisonment;
- religiously motivated anti-Muslim ideologies among the Christian right Evangelicals in the United States and in some European Christian majority countries
 - populist, extreme-right, fascist or neo-nazi ideologies, such as in Europe and North America
 - competing and conflicting theologies inside Islam, each having a different political and social governance agenda, as in Iraq or Syria..

Inter-Muslim hostilities – stemming from theological disputes and struggles for power among various violent Islamist groups – produce innumerable victims of suicide bombings, terrorist attacks, regional conflicts and wars. No global statistics are available on the number of fatalities per religion, but according to [a 2011 report](#) from the U.S. government's National Counter-Terrorism Center (NCTC), Muslims suffered between 82 and 97% of terrorism-related fatalities during the previous five years.

Terrorist and jihadist groups such as ISIS, Al-Qaeda, the Talibans, al-Shaabab and Boko Haram have killed and continue to kill dozens of Muslims every day. Their goal is to impose a totalitarian form of governance inspired by their vision and interpretation of Islam. According to the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) at the University of Maryland (United States), between 2004 and 2013, roughly half of all terrorist attacks and 60% of fatalities due to terrorist attacks took place in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan – all of which have a majority Muslim population.

Sunni communities are oppressed in Iran, a Shia majority country, while the Sunni community in Bahrain oppresses the local Shia minority, and Saudi Arabia, a Wahhabi majority country, persecutes its Shia minority.

When a state opts to recognize one form of Islam, dissidents and reformers may be deemed heretical and persecuted, as is

the case in Saudi Arabia and Iran. Moreover, other currents of Islam (such as Sufis, Tablighi Jamaat and Said Nursi) may be banned, even though the groups are nonviolent and pose no problem to the security and the territorial integrity of the state. Their members may be arrested and imprisoned, as is the case in Azerbaijan, Russia, Tajikistan or Uzbekistan.

This list offers a snapshot of anti-Muslim and inter-Muslim persecution around the world.

ABOUT ANTI-CHRISTIAN IDEOLOGIES AND ANTI-CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION

By Willy Fautré

HRWF (02.01.2017) – According to a recent Pew Center Research report, Christians, who numbered 2.3 billion in the world in 2015, were harassed by governments or social groups in a total of 128 countries – more countries than any other religious group.

Christians of all faiths around the world are currently victims of state repression, discrimination and/or (violent) social hostility for being Christians and/or practicing their fundamental right to religious freedom: freedom to have and to keep their religion; freedom of expression about issues related to religion, freedom of association, worship and assembly; freedom to have missionary activities and to convert. Various ideologies are underpinning anti-Christian state policies and social attitudes. They lead to diverse violations of human rights and religious freedom committed

- in the name of various forms of Communist ideologies enforcing atheism, such as in China, Eritrea, Laos, North Korea, Vietnam...
- in the name of Islam in Muslim majority countries where it is the official religion of the state or the primary source of the Constitution and the legislation, such as in Afghanistan, Algeria, Bangladesh, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Maldives, Mauritania, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Yemen ...
- in the name of Islam in Muslim majority countries where there is no official state religion, such as Indonesia, Nigeria, Syria, Turkey...
- in the name of Hinduism, including in (nominally) secular state, such as in India and in Nepal
- in the name of secularism, *laïcité*, anarchist ideologies or Islam in liberal democracies where anti-Christian social hostility is expressed through hate speech, acts of vandalism of places of worship and community buildings, physical attacks, etc. which are often under-reported or ignored by public powers and the media.

State repression against Christians can include the death penalty (Pakistan), various forms of physical punishment (Saudi Arabia), prison terms (China), exorbitant fines (Central Asia) and discriminatory restrictions to their rights.

Social hostility by individuals or collectively organized non-state actors can include a wide range of religiously or ideologically motivated acts: discrimination, insults, hate speech and hate crimes, derogatory statements by public officials, acts of vandalism targeting places of worship and community buildings, physical attacks, torture, killings, extra-judicial executions, communal violence, pogroms, ethnic cleansing, crimes against humanity and genocide.

This is a picture of anti-Christian persecution around the world.

Sufi sites in Libya under attack

Al Monitor (28.12.2017) – <http://bit.ly/2CbZLhs> – Attacks on Sufi Islamic sites in Libya have left the religious group feeling targeted, as instability in parts of the fragile nation continues following the 2011 revolution that deposed longtime autocrat Moammar Gadhafi. Sufis often come under criticism from hard-line Salafi Muslims, who oppose their interpretation of Islam for supposedly not comporting with “true” Islam.

“Successive interim authorities since the 2011 uprising and across Libya have [failed to protect](#) Libya’s Sufi religious sites from attacks and destruction by extremist militias,” Eric Goldstein, deputy Middle East and North Africa director at Human Rights Watch, noted in an HRW press release on Dec. 7. “The unpunished attacks on Sufi mosques are endangering one of Libya’s historic minority communities.”

Tarek Megerisi, a Libyan political analyst and researcher, told Al-Monitor, “Libya’s Sufi community has been under siege ever since the end of the revolution, mainly from Salafi groups who have correspondingly risen in prominence since the revolution.” He noted that Salafi preachers took over a number of mosques in Libya in the immediate aftermath of the revolution and later, as Gen. Khalifa Hifter’s Libyan National Army made gains in Benghazi.

“Salafi militias have destroyed ancient Sufi mosques, which contain shrines, libraries and which are generally considered landmarks of Libya’s Sufi community,” Megerisi said. “Given that Salafi militias are continuing to grow in power across the country, and the constituency of Salafists in Libya is also steadily climbing, the persecution of Libya’s Salafists seems likely to worsen in the near-term future.”

Sufis have become an [easy target](#) for hard-line Muslim militias. Dozens of Sufi religious sites – “including mosques, shrines, tombs, and libraries containing ancient scriptures” – have been destroyed since 2011, according to HRW. Followers of Sufism have also been [kidnapped and killed](#), but their killers have gone unpunished.

Some 20 adherents of Sufism [went missing](#) in eastern Libya in August. The daily Al-Wasat reported in September that the missing were victims of kidnapping.

The latest attack on Sufis, which took place on Nov. 28, occurred the day before a feast to celebrate the Prophet Muhammad's birthday. In that episode, unidentified attackers torched the [Zawiyat Sheikha Radiya Mosque](#) in Tripoli. No casualties were reported.

Sufism is a religious practice, tradition, or approach to Islam that varies by region, as opposed to being a branch or sect with universal practices.

"Over the decades, Sunnis in the Maghreb region never even noticed that Sufism was seen as separate [from mainstream Islam]," Jalel Harchaoui, a doctoral candidate in geopolitics at Paris 8 University and a frequent commentator on Libyan affairs, told Al-Monitor. "The distinction came into view recently, mostly as a result of the spread of Salafi groups."

He added, "The latter being ultra-conservative and eager to judge other Muslims, see the [stylistic tradition of Sufism](#) as a perversion of 'true' Islam. The [Sufis'] celebration of Prophet Muhammad's birth, for instance, has long been a perfectly innocuous holiday across the Maghreb. However, Salafists – whether they are of the rigorist or jihadi kind – designate the tradition as a sinful departure from 'true' monotheism."

Libya's minorities came under increasing threat from Salafists in recent years, as Libya became a hub for jihadists seeking to join the Islamic State (IS) in 2015 after the extremist group faced numerous military defeats in Syria and Iraq. That year, IS took over the [city of Sirte](#). A bombing campaign by the US-led coalition eventually pushed its fighters out of the city in December 2016. They have since moved to desert valleys and inland hills to the southeast of Tripoli.

IS is not the only group posing a threat to Sufis. In fact, the security apparatus of the United Nations-backed Government of National Accord is a prime suspect in some of the attacks against them. The Special Deterrence Force (SDF) – a radical Islamist military police unit under the Interior Ministry that nonetheless acts independently – is led by Abd al-Rauf Kara, a man described by Daily Beast contributor Jamie Dettmer as an "[Islamic fanatic](#)."

"He quickly took it upon himself after Gaddafi's toppling to hunt down former regime

security officials and to police an unruly Tripoli according to ultra-orthodox interpretations of Islamic principles,” Dettmer wrote in 2015. “His Nawasi Battalion [later refashioned as the SDF] became notorious for targeting alleged alcohol traders and drinkers and drug dealers as well as gays and also single women unaccompanied by male relatives or husbands, even those frequenting the more up-market coffee houses in affluent districts of Tripoli.”

The current government has not denounced any of the attacks on Sufi sites, which some locals believe the SDF to have been behind. In October in Tripoli, a Sufi mosque was attacked in the Ghararat neighborhood during a clash between the SDF and [armed militias](#) that had been accused of drug trafficking.

“A religious scholar with ties to the Sufi community in Tripoli said it was the SDF, which had gained control of the neighborhood, that intentionally damaged the 16th-century Sidi Abu Gharara Sufi mosque,” HRW reported. The SDF released a statement denying that they had attacked the mosque, saying they would deal with those responsible

“It is very possible that Abd al-Rauf Kara’s group is responsible,” Harchaoui said, “but nobody has any proof backing such an accusation.”

See as well: New waves of attacks against Sufi sites (Human Rights Watch, 7 December 2017)

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/12/07/libya-new-wave-attacks-against-sufi-sites>

Egypt: Teenager’s murder ‘aimed to intimidate Copts

ahead of Christmas', says his pastor

The body of 14-year-old Ishak Nashaat Birwan was found on Wednesday (20 December), 11 days after he disappeared, in a canal near where he lived in Izziyah, a large Christian village near Manfalout in Asyut.

Samir Fekry, Ishak's cousin, told World Watch Monitor that the body was taken to the morgue at the public hospital in Manfalout for a post-mortem.

"Ishak's body had facial deformities, it had no eyes and there were signs of torture on different parts of his body," he said.

Fekry said Ishak's family went to the police the day after his disappearance but "none of them did anything to help us investigate the matter".

People told us later that on 9 December, three young men asked Ishak for a lift in his tuk-tuk, Fekry said. "Ishak then disappeared and there was no word from him," he added. "We tried to call him many times but his mobile phone was turned off. We searched for him everywhere in our village and the villages nearby, but we couldn't find him."

Ishak's body was released from the morgue after a day and his funeral at Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Izziyah village was attended by large crowds of people.

The church's pastor, Rev. Adel Rafaat, told World Watch Monitor: "Ishak was a very good young man, he was one of our church members. He was loved by all of us and he loved everybody. He always had a smile.

"Ishak was targeted and killed because of his faith, because

he is Christian. They wanted to spoil the joy of our coming Christmas. Extremists chose a young man from our village specifically because our village is a big Christian village and their aim was to turn Christmas joy of the villagers to sadness.”

Fekry expressed frustration with the authorities for not taking more action to find his cousin. He said: “Ishak had no enemies ... After kidnapping him, none of the kidnappers contacted us demanding any ransom for his return. So why he was killed? Was it because he is a Christian? We demand the government find the killer and the cause of the killing and how he disappeared for 10 days until he was found dead.”