

ALGERIA: Religious minorities under oppression

HRWF contribution to the Annual report on Algeria's progress under the partnership priorities under the ENP

HRWF (15.02.2017) – Human Rights Without Frontiers would like to bring to the attention of

- MEPs of the Sub-Committee on Human Rights and of the EU Delegation for Relations with Maghreb countries
- the European External Action Service
- the European Council

the violations of the right to freedom of religion or belief in Algeria.

Additionally, we'd like to highlight recent events regarding the persecution of members of the Ahmadiyya faith across Algeria.

Although Algeria has signed and ratified the ICCPR, and lawfully provides freedom of creed and opinion, freedom of expression, association and meeting, Algeria firmly instils Islam as the state religion, leaving other religious groups' rights unprotected.

As emphasised in previous Universal Periodic Review submissions for Algeria, there have been countless occasions where minority religious groups have been mistreated and discriminated against. Anti-proselytism laws, registration of religious organisation requirements, and blasphemy laws are frequently used to violate the freedoms of minority religious groups. The Ahmadiyya[1] Muslim faith, a reformist movement

within Islam that is often seen to have a progressive agenda, is one such group that has been subject to severe persecution by the Algerian state.

In January 2017, many followers of the Ahmadiyya faith were arrested during multiple police crackdowns in Algeria. While their names have not been released, we know that two individuals were arrested and sentenced to three years in prison in Sidi Bel Abbas, three individuals were arrested in Tipasa, seven in Algiers, and another seven in Oran. Their sentences are not yet known. [2]

Unfortunately, there has been a pattern of such arrests of Ahmadis over the past year. In November 2016, six Ahmadis were arrested and their belongings seized when they were found performing prayers. In September 2016, twenty Ahmadis were arrested during prayers under the pretext of 'public security'; subsequently, the Imam was fined and sentenced to eight months in prison, and the others were handed fines and three months in prison. Additionally, in June 2016, the Research Division of the National Police (SRGN) shut down the community's main headquarters in the city of Bilda and arrested six people. Soon after, the National President of the Ahmadiyya Community in Algeria was also arrested alongside two other individuals. Overall, nine individuals were charged with endangering state security and undermining social integrity.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim faith has been systematically repressed in Pakistan for decades. A 1974 amendment to the Pakistani Constitution declared that the Ahmadis cannot be considered Muslim. An ordinance passed in 1984 made it illegal for Ahmadis to 'pose' as Muslims, prohibiting them from using Islamic greetings in public places or calling their places of worship 'mosques.' To obtain a passport, Ahmadis must declare that their founder is a false prophet. The 1986 blasphemy law has likewise become a tool of repression of the Ahmadiyya community. Anyone convicted of defiling the name of Prophet Muhammed is subject to the death penalty. Life imprisonment

can be imposed on anyone found guilty of insulting the Quran.

It is apparent that the rights of the Ahmadiyya Community are not being respected in Algeria. We call for Algeria to respect the rights of all religious movements in the country, and to release those who have been unlawfully imprisoned because of their faith.

[1] For more information on the Ahmadiyya faith, see HRWF FoRB Annual Report 2015: Ahmadis.

[2] For a list of current FoRB prisoners in Algeria, see HRWF Prisoner's List: Algeria.

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