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ICC releases report on religious freedom decline

[International Christian Concern \(09.11.2023\)](#) – ICC has [released a report](#) outlining the declining state of religious freedom in Nepal. Through a combination of legally repressive laws and social norms that sideline minority communities, Nepal is a difficult place to live for those outside of the Hindu faith.

Christians and other religious minorities face the combined threat of social attack and legal ostracization in a system that fails to treat them as equal members of society.

In August and September 2023, a series of attacks against Christian pastors and churches swept through the country, deepening rifts between religious groups and creating questions about how the government responds to violence against minorities.

Nepal's General Code contains strict prohibitions against proselytization, an act punishable by up to six years imprisonment and deportation in the case of a foreigner. The National Penal Code of 2017 similarly criminalizes the sharing of one's faith, and the Nepalese Constitution says that "no person shall ... convert a person of one religion to another religion" or "disturb the religion of other people."

Despite the social and legal pressure against them, religious and civil society organizations in Nepal actively work with friendly government officials to advance religious freedom in the country. In June 2023, a coalition of Nepalese Christian societies organized a large interfaith gathering in Kathmandu composed of representatives from the Hindu, Buddhist, Kirat, and Christian faiths, among others.

The seminar gathered hundreds of civil society actors and government officials to discuss the importance of interfaith tolerance and religious freedom in the country, with various government officials speaking to the need for continued engagement to protect the rights of religious minority communities.

The U.S. and others in the international community must remember their situation while considering how to support Nepal's young democracy as China and India move away from democratic norms toward authoritarianism.

To read the full report, [click here.](#)