



Human Rights Violations based on Religious Belief



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Introduction

Religious belief freedom right is one of the basic pillars within the set of principles of individual and public freedoms and rights that an individual or a group must enjoy without being subjected to violations or abuse in the practice of religious belief rituals. This practice occurs through the practice of religious rites, celebrations, education and education. The right to believe includes changing one's religion or not professing any religion. Islam and with it the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights guarantee.

Groups distinct in size, ethnicity, race, culture, and religion arise as a result of social, political, and sometimes economic arrangements, and from among these groups are minorities of various classifications. Religious minorities in general raise debates about recognition and equal rights and political representation. Religious minorities are the most problematic groups and crises within most societies, especially those that contain a large religious group in the census, as opposed to a small religious group or groups (as in the Arab world and Egypt).

Although all religions in the world adopt the values of tolerance and peaceful coexistence out of belief in our common humanity, in some societies in some countries, religious minorities are subjected to deliberate violations and deprivation of some privileges and gains. This contradicts all international covenants and religious rules that call for tolerance and freedom of conversion.

Forms of religious persecution against all religions come in the form of verbal abuse, physical violence and even murder in 185 countries around the world, and some countries link holding high political positions to belonging to a particular religion. The same thing has reached the persecution of non-religious people, and the lack of recognition of them in some countries.

The report in dealing with violations of the rights of religious minorities: the recognition of the rights of religious minorities in Islam, liberal political thought, and international law. As well as displaying a map of violations in some countries, and presenting some cases that occurred in Egypt and the current efforts of the state to address them. Finally, on how to approach the protection of religious freedom from a defensive legal and a politicized perspective.

First: Recognition of Religious Minorities

Few people of religions other than the religion of the society/state may in some countries be subjected to violations, sometimes ending in civil wars. Therefore, the state and its institutions bear the task of absorbing the discussions and controversies that occur as a result of the religious plurality of the members of society and its religious groups. To clarify how religious minorities can be dealt with and to develop policies to stop the violations directed against them. To answer some questions such as: How does society accept religious pluralism? How can a person see who is different from me religiously? It is necessary to present the Islamic perspective, the different opinions in liberal political thought, and after that the most important rules of international law in recognizing the rights of religious minorities.

1- Religious Minorities in Islamic Prospective:

Distinctions between religious nations arise as a reason to the prescribed sacred and spiritual writings, which have a prominent role in intolerance. The idea of divine choice found in all religions (in Judaism that the Jews are God's chosen people, in Christianity that God was embodied in his only Son to save humanity, and in Islam that Muslims are the best nation brought out to people), usually invested in political and social conflict. In the same context, there are religious rules and orders that stipulate respecting others and not violating their rights.

The term religious minority was not known in Islamic rules or in Islamic civilization in terms of use, but the meaning is found where "dhimmis" is not new to the Islamic tradition. The jurists differ on the definition of the religious minority, and we find three opinions on this, which are:

- The first sees religious minorities as a group of people who adhere to Christianity, Judaism, or Zoroastrianism who live in an Islamic community. Which is agreed upon by the owners of the Hanafi and Shafi'i doctrine.
- The second defines it as a group of people who profess a religion other than Islam, except for the Arab idolaters and the apostate. In addition

to these minorities, idolaters from the non-Arabs, and the owners of this saying are the Zaydis.

- The third sees religious minorities are any group that adheres to other than Islam and lives in an Islamic society. The owners of this opinion are the Malikis, Al-Awza'i, and the jurists of Shams.

Perhaps there is a difference in the definition of religious minorities, but there is agreement that Islam denies discrimination and discrimination between people on the basis of race, color or language, and recognizes equality in origin and rights. Imam Al-Ghazali says: "Humans in the five continents are one family that emerged from one origin, and there is no place for excellence on the basis of creation." This corresponds to the first verse of Surat An-Nisa: "(1) O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women. And fear Allāh, through whom[156] you ask one another,[157] and the wombs.[158] Indeed Allāh is ever,[159] over you, an Observe."

The basis for differentiation is piety and the degree of belief in God and righteous deeds. This is as stated in Surat Al-Hujurat: "(13) O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allāh is the most righteous[1521] of you. Indeed, Allāh is Knowing and Aware."

Equality in Islam was not the result of external factors or the development of historical and social stages, but rather it is at the origin of the creed (monotheism) that erased from the understanding of its adherents the system of classes and segregation. In general, Islam upholds freedom and tolerance, recognizes others and approves them of their religion, as the Almighty says in Surat Al-Kafirun: "(6) For you is your religion, and for me is my religion."

Islam respects the religious minorities that live under its rule, because the plurality of beliefs and religions is one of the laws of God on earth. Islam preceded the countries of the world in establishing their rights fourteen centuries ago. And had God Almighty willed to make people one nation, He would have done that, as in the Almighty's saying: "(99) And had your

Lord willed, those on earth would have believed - all of them entirely. Then, [O Muḥammad], would you compel the people in order that they become believers?"

Consequently, it is obligatory for the Muslim to call to Islam as God commanded him, and this is accomplished by diligence in following the convincing, peaceful and soft method, as stated in Surat An-Nahl: "(125) Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best. Indeed, your Lord is most knowing of who has strayed from His way, and He is most knowing of who is [rightly] guided." This is not by coercion and compulsion to enter religion, as extremist and terrorist groups affiliated with Muslims and motivated by political goals do.

The rights of non-Muslim religious minorities are guaranteed and enshrined in the Noble Qur'an and Sunnah. With the growth of non-Muslim minorities, society in its majority is keen to protect the rights of these people to confirm the tolerant spirit of Muslims and their acceptance of those who oppose them in the faith. The relationship between the Muslim majority and the non-Muslim minority in the Arab countries proves evidence of the culture of tolerance that dominates Muslims towards the partners of the homeland and destiny.

2- Religious Minorities in Liberal Political Thought

Contrary to the literal interpretation of the nation-state, which means the one-nation state, it faces a problem in dealing with minorities of different classifications, such as what Nazi Germany did with other races and religions. Based on the inevitability of diversity in society, this prompted some countries to adopt slogans such as "the melting pot" of ethnic, religious, linguistic, cultural, social and intellectual differences as a philosophical basis for assimilation and integration."

The recognition of the rights of religious minorities in liberal political thought is within a set of issues related to the policies of multiculturalism in which cultural and ethnic differentiation in social, political and economic arrangements can be accommodated from a collective side, and the question of the importance of social characteristics of human identity from an individual side. This multiculturalism may sometimes require political

recognition in the form of parliamentary legislation, such as a demand for guaranteed political representation, or recognition of a group's distinct ethnic or cultural identity (the right of recognition).

The directed policy of minorities, explicitly or implicitly, is concerned with manipulating inherited socio-cultural distinctions, and working to establish and perpetuate the distinction between the majority and minorities, and to consider the relationship between them as an inevitable antagonistic relationship, which requires the alliance of minorities or their protection from the majority and the preservation of their rights.

Minority rights, in the context of minority policy, are not intended for those descended from them to obtain the same rights as those obtained from the supposed majority. Generalizing the principle of citizenship and legal equality, but rather guaranteeing special conditions for minorities, as blocs or as groups. The human rights equality of individuals does not go through the concept of minority rights or the protection of minorities, and is not included in minority policy.

Liberal thinker Kukathas sees the counsel of liberalism as resisting the quest for recognition whereby the liberal state should leave people free to pursue their goals and projects alone or in groups, including the project of living according to a set of cultural norms. The state is only obligated to provide the conditions of peace and order necessary for any such projects, but it is not concerned with the success or failure of them. Some ethnic and cultural identities may fade and others flourish, but that is not the right work for politics.

Kukathas claims that the state should be neutral with regard to its cultural character, and this put a sharp criticism to him. The state cannot be "totally neutral", because the institutions of each state must have a certain historical and cultural character (a certain language, educational curricula, a set of public holidays, rules about ownership.) These shortcomings are detrimental to the interests of those who do not share these rules or practices. Governments always fail to be completely neutral with all segments of society, especially cultural minorities.

Kamilka argues that the basic principle of the concept of liberal justice is that while the state should leave its citizens alone to bear the consequences of their free choices, it is obligated to provide the conditions necessary for the exercise of free choice on fair terms. Since

cultural identity is usually an important part of a person's identity, people must be allowed to express and preserve it. This is the "context of choice" argument for protecting cultural identities.

For Kamilka in terms of justice towards minorities in the presence of a communal culture or a national minority, the state provides its members with the full range of human activities (social, educational, religious, recreational, economic.) These cultures tend to be regionally focused and based on a common language. A country that includes more than one societal culture is a "pluri-national" state. When a minority possesses a distinct culture, it is entitled to rights of self-government and may also be entitled to secede from the political union to allow it to perpetuate its cultural identity.

Kamilka expects the assimilation of immigrants into the dominant culture, and considers it fair provided that they have the option to remain in their original culture. For example, if a group of Americans moved to Sweden, they would not have the right to be provided by the Swedish government with institutions of self-government or education in English.

Another current believes to face this situation, secularism is considered by many to be a serious option to solve the problems of religious minorities, especially in countries that know religious diversity. Despite the criticisms leveled at secularism, it extracts sanctity from conflicts and wars. At the same time, it is considered a means of imposing intellectual consensus and achieving equality between different religious groups.

3- Freedom of Belief and Religion in International Law and the Egyptian legislatives

Freedom of belief exists and is a major component in international and national legislation. Legal texts and charters affirm the protection of freedom of religious belief, the first of which was: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948. Especially, Article (18) which states:

"Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance."

• **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 1966 (Article 18):**

1. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.

2. No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice.

3. Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

4. The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions.

- The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights 1979 stated in Article 8 that "Freedom of conscience, the profession and free practice of religion shall be guaranteed. No one may, subject to law and order, be submitted to measures restricting the exercise of these freedoms."

- The 1981 declaration issued on the elimination of all forms of intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief, included 8 articles, affirming the right of every person to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and the observance of his religious rites openly or secretly, and the freedom to change his religion, and the prohibition of any measure limiting this freedom, or being subjected to any harm or discrimination because of his or her beliefs.

On the national level, Egypt has signed and abides by a number of international covenants and treaties on freedom of belief. The Egyptian constitution guarantees freedom of belief for all heavenly or non-heavenly religions and other beliefs. Article 53 of the 2014 Egyptian constitution affirms:

"Citizens are equal before the law, possess equal rights and public duties, and may not be discriminated against on the basis of religion, belief, sex, origin, race, color, language, disability, social class, political or geographical affiliation, or for any other reason. Discrimination and incitement to hate are crimes punishable by law. The state shall take all necessary measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination, and the law shall regulate the establishment of an independent commission for this purpose."

Article 64 of the 2014 constitution stipulates that: "*Freedom of belief is absolute. The freedom of practicing religious rituals and establishing places of worship for the followers of revealed religions is a right organized by law.*"

Rulings of the Court of Cassation and the Constitutional Court established the principle of freedom of belief. The rulings of the Court of Cassation have been repeated that a person has the right to change his religion, sect, or cult according to what the Court of Cassation has done, he is absolutely free to achieve the principle of freedom of belief as long as he has the capacity to perform.

The Constitutional Court in one of its ruling states: that the belief freedom -in its origin- means that the person is not forced to accept any creed he does not believe in, repudiate, declare, or exaggerate it to another by denying, unrespecting, or abridging it. Rather, religions tolerate and respect each other.

Second: Discrimination and Violation Monitoring Map based on Religion (Worldly- National):

Any fanatic, persecution, or conflictual situation can fall based on religion and joined religious groups. Therefore, public and world seduction among different religions and different sects within the same religion. Historical studies referred that the twentieth century, which was the century of religious conflict in the modern era, witnessed many cases of individual and group cases of religious persecution. The Holocaust was the best evident of that.

Despite the peaceful developments that the world witnessed and the end of long periods of war between the armies of the world, a wave of violations against people or groups who are religiously different from that dominant belief in society has emerged in some countries, especially in European countries where populism is widespread. Muslim minorities or of Arab origin in many countries of the world are subjected to acts of violence and persecution by governments, religious sects or individuals, and hatred against Muslims is still prevalent in America, Europe and China.

1- Prominent Violations of Belief Freedom in the World

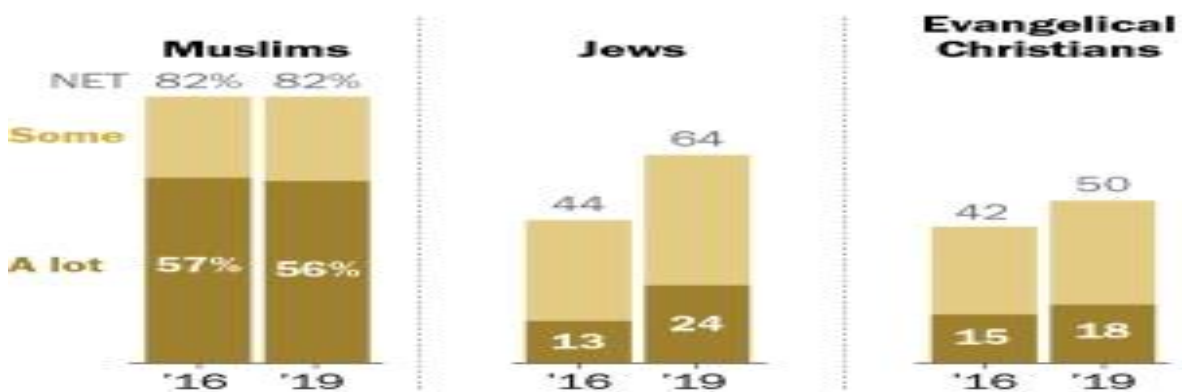
- The United States

Freedom of belief as a human right, means the right of the human to embrace a particular religion or religious belief, and the right to manifest one's religion and practice the rituals of that religion. Although the United States of America issued the "International Religious Freedom Act of 1998", the actual reality is far from that, as attacks on religious minorities are widespread. Religious persecution is widespread, as well as the politicization of acts of violence claiming that they are "religious motives", and the best evidence is that former US President Donald Trump issued a 2015 decision banning Muslims from traveling to America.

According to a study to measure public opinion on the exposure of religious minorities to discrimination in American society conducted by the Pew Research Center, it is clear that an increase in the rate of crimes against Muslims in the United States. The percentage of crimes against Muslims constituted more than 14% of the total hate crimes, which are mostly motivated by belief, and the rate of hate crimes against Muslims is more than 100 crimes per year, and this number has doubled since 2015.

Most Americans say Muslims subject to discrimination

% who say there is _____ of discrimination against each group in our society



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted March 20-25, 2019. PEW RESEARCH CENTER

(Exposure to violence and discrimination in American society on the basis of belief)

Source: Pew Research Center <https://www.pewresearch.org>

(82%) of Muslims are subjected to many cases of discrimination, including suspicious treatment, or discrimination by airport security or giving them offensive names, but Muslims are not the only group persecuted on religious grounds but there are Jews and evangelical Christians. The Pew Research Report also indicates that (64%) of Jews face at least some discrimination in the United States, and (32%) of evangelical Christians experience discrimination and injustice.

Also, (63%) believe that being a Muslim, harms someone's chances of advancement in American society. Compared to (15%) who say being Jewish or evangelical harms a person's chances of advancement in American society.

- **China and Burma**

The Chinese government has committed many crimes against humanity against Uyghur Muslims. Since 2017, the Chinese government has committed grave violations against Muslims living in Xinjiang and has used the most severe forms of violence and intimidation to eradicate their Islamic religious beliefs. China has detained more than a million Muslims, enforced them to labor in factories affiliated with the Chinese government, and prohibited Muslims from practicing their religious rites, praying in mosques, and teaching the Islamic religion.

Muslims living in Xinjiang are subjected to the most rigorous surveillance in the world. Amnesty International has warned against the use of Swedish technology in mass surveillance and persecution of Muslim minorities in China.

Muslims in Burma are also exposed to the most severe types of abuse the government and extremist Buddhist groups. Since 2012 until now, human rights violations against Burmese Muslims have increased significantly. Muslims have been subjected to an organized campaign of genocide, and entire neighborhoods and villages of Muslims have been burned under the sight of the Buddhist Maga police. Also, more than 14,500 Rohingya Muslims have fled to Bangladesh to escape persecution.

- **European Countries**

Many European societies witness exclusions of people belonging to certain groups. Recently, regardless of its different political systems and religious sects, the phenomenon of insulting the Islam has increased, and it has become a comprehensive campaign by the majority of European countries, such as throwing Quran papers or using them in toilets, and insulting cartoons of the prophet Muhammed. 82% of European governments-imposed restrictions on Muslims in 39 out of 45 countries, and social hostility to Muslims in Europe reached 71%.

- **France:** The country has abandoned the rule of law to address security issues and its actions are causing a decline in freedom of belief. The abuse began through the events of the veil crisis, in which the French government banned Muslim students from wearing the veil in schools, violating the so-called values of freedom, justice and equality.

Since 2015, a significant increase in attacks against Arabs and Muslims has been observed. As 230 attacks were recorded between killing, burning, beating and expulsion, and the scene of burning the Qur'an and mosques has become a frequent scene in many French streets and regions. The principle of freedom of expression 2020 was exploited as a tool to claim that Muslims group should be disciplined.

- **Germany:** Germany witnessed widespread protests against Islam and immigrants, specifically in 2015, organized under the "Pegida" movement, where about 100,000 people participated in demonstrations against Islam and immigrants. Demonstrating one's affiliation with Islam publicly in Germany leads to discrimination, even if a woman of foreign origin strives to ensure that German standards are adopted.

- **Britain:** There were 734 hate crimes recorded between 2013 and 2019, including 23 attacks, 13 violent attacks, 56 attacks on mosques, and hundreds of online abuses.

- **Scotland:** Hate crimes occurred in Scotland immediately after the Paris attacks, 3 of which came as a direct response to those attacks.

- **The Netherlands:** Many mosques and Islamic facilities were attacked by some extremists. Dutch politician Geert Wilders also pledged to close mosques and prevent Muslim immigration, if he wins the elections.

- **Switzerland:** The European Court of Human Rights refused to wear a veil teacher while performing her professional duties. The court held that a teacher who wears a "strong external symbol" may have a kind of

missionary effect on young children, in this case aged between 4 and 8 years.

- **Russia**

According to several human rights reports, Russia has become "one of the worst violators of belief freedom." Although the Russian constitution allows freedom of religion, there is a law, passed in 2015, states that government officials may prohibit the activity of any religious association for violating public order or engaging in "extremist activity." The law defines Christianity, Islam, Judaism and Buddhism as the country's four "traditional" religions and recognizes the special role of the Russian Orthodox Church.

In a statistic study, seventy percent of Russians are Orthodox, of whom only about five percent go to church regularly. Seven percent of the people are Muslim and about 2 percent are Protestant—mostly Baptists and racists.

Several sects and religious minorities have been fined for so-called "illegal missionary activities," that is, activities that are not licensed or state-sanctioned after the Yarovaya-Ozerov Act, which severely restricted missionary activities in Russia.

A poll conducted by the independent Levada Center in December 2017 showed that nearly 10 percent of the population had negative views of Jews. About 15 percent of the population had negative views of Muslims.

Accordingly, since 2017 Jehovah's Witnesses have been banned in Russia as an extremist organization, and leaders and members of Jehovah's Witnesses communities have been fined and criminally punished for converting to their faith. In 2019, 18 criminal sentences were issued against Jehovah's Witnesses, this number increased to 25 in 2020, and 13 people were sentenced to prison terms. In all, more than 400 converts were prosecuted. Less than a year ago new criminal cases began, which means authorities will continue to prosecute Jehovah's Witnesses. In addition, human rights' monitors regularly report on cases of violence against detained followers of Jehovah's Witnesses.

In the first six months of 2020, more than 40 people were punished for violating the anti-proselytizing law. According to a new report from Forum 18 (a Norway-based religious freedom news service), government

shutdowns and pandemic stay-at-home orders have not slowed the multiple crackdowns. years on unauthorized religious activities.

Also in the same period, Muslims were more prosecuted for illegal missionary activities than Protestants (they are the usual targets of the state.) Most of the cases were against Muslims belonging to Muslim communities that do not recognize the jurisdiction of the spiritual administration of Muslims in the Crimea (A central administrative body for Muslims in Crimea under the Russian authorities.) This means that their trial is part of a broader policy to bolster pressure on religious minorities who are considered disloyal to the Russian government.

According to Forum 18 during 2020, local police fined dozens of Muslim men for teaching Arabic grammar. In addition to a Roman Catholic sect was fined performing a Latin Mass and Pentecostal worship in his home, and dozens of Baptists distributing religious literature.

- **India**

India is one of the most diverse countries in the world in which the heavenly and non-heavenly religions and religious sects and minorities abound. India is a multi-religious democracy, and the majority of its population is Hindu. According to 2011 census, 79.80% of India's population is Hindu, 14.23% Muslim, 2.30% Christian, 1.72% Sikh, 0.70% Buddhist, and 0.37% Jain. India's constitution defines the country as secular and protects freedom of religion or belief. However, there are concerns that religious and other minorities suffer persecution and discrimination, and that conditions have deteriorated in recent years.

Human rights organizations have criticized the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government since 2014 for not doing enough to protect minorities. Hate crimes, social boycotts, assaults and forced conversion have risen dramatically, according to the report "Constitutional and Legal Challenges Facing India's Religious Minorities" written by Iqtidar Karamat Cheema, Director of the Institute for Leadership and Community Development in Birmingham, England.

Human Rights Watch observed in its 2019 report on India that "the government has failed to properly implement Supreme Court directives to prevent and investigate mob attacks, often led by BJP supporters, on religious minorities and other vulnerable communities."

Several human rights violations are alleged to have occurred in India in recent years after the introduction of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the abolition of constitutional self-government in Jammu and Kashmir. Incidents like this have heightened concern about the protection of certain groups in the country, including religious minorities.

And in 2020, more than 40 people were killed when Hindu-Muslim clashes erupted over the controversial modified Citizenship Act. Amnesty International said Muslims bore the brunt. Videos emerged on social media from the Khajuria Khas district in north-east Delhi, where police were seen interacting with a crowd and throwing stones. A shop owner claimed that the police allowed him and other Hindus to throw stones at Muslims on the road.

Incidents of violence against the Dalit community have been reported in India for several years. A 2016 study showed that Dalit Muslims who are descended from lower-caste Hindus and have converted to Islam in an attempt to escape the oppression of the caste system, still face Hindu and Muslim prejudice. In 2020, protests began following the gang rape and subsequent death of a 19-year-old girl in Uttar Pradesh. This was one of several reported incidents of violence against members of the Dalit community.

According to a new report from Persecution Relief Campaigns Group, hate crimes against Christians in India, including murders, rapes and arson, rose by 40% in the first half of 2020. The report indicated that the "concern" spike had occurred despite the three-month national shutdown. There were 2,067 crimes inspired by religious intolerance against Christians in India. In April 2020, the US Committee on International Religious Freedom asked the US State Department to designate India a "country of special interest" due to attacks on religious minorities.

2- Violations of belief freedom in Egypt

Egyptian society is divided religiously into Muslim and Coptic in general, but some Egyptian sects fall under the name of religious minorities such as: Baha'is, Copts of Jehovah's Witnesses, Morons, Shiite Muslims in addition to some non-religious and others. This puts some burden on the shoulders of the Egyptian state apparatus in giving every sect its rights

within the framework of its constitutional and international obligations regarding human rights and freedom of religious belief.

However, the definition of religious minorities in Egypt is mixed with some groups with a political and extremist orientation. It is no longer possible to simplify the religious and sectarian scene according to traditional classifications; Sunni and Shiite, Salafi, Shiite, Ekhwany, liberal, tabligh or independent, Azhari and non-Azhar, and other synonyms. That within each religious current there is a great disparity that cannot be ignored in any way. Which seems clearer in the context of positions related to political and public affairs, but extends to include jurisprudential positions related to new issues, even some of the old ones. As is the case with women's issues, music and photography, up to the restoration of some of the old differences in relation to issues of jurisprudence and belief, and where each group sees that it is closer to the Qur'an and Sunnah, or the correct Ausul of the others.

There are people who falsely and slanderously invoke religion to create misconceptions, spread the flames of division and spread fear and hatred. This is what happened during the Muslim Brotherhood's rule (2012-2013), when Egypt suffered a setback in human rights in general, and freedom of belief in particular. The Brotherhood group turned religion from spreading peace to violence, targeting religious minorities, and resorting to excessive violence to defend its presence.

These groups have exploited the media, especially social media, to incite hatred that has reached the point of violence and bloodshed. These extremist groups are still spreading their poison through social media.

These issues have occupied a large part of the public debate, especially in light of the President of the Republic's Abdel Fattah El-Sisi repeated talk about renewing religious discourse and guaranteeing freedom of belief for all. El-Sisi stressed that Egypt's main goal is to preserve the essence of religion, raise religious awareness, and combat extremist threats among young people.

The government took certain practical steps to combat intolerance, negative stereotypes, stigmatization, discrimination and incitement to violence based on religion or belief.

- **The following table shows some of the violations that religious minorities have been subjected to in Egypt:**

Date	victims of violence	Place	Details of the incident (violations)
2009-2012	Baha'is	Al-Shorania village in Sohag	Burning five homes owned by Baha'is after the assailants threw stones and stormed them and stole some of their contents. Then the assailants threw fireballs and Molotov cocktails at those houses while chanting religious slogans. Divorce their wives of other religions, not to print any posters calling for and promote the Baha'i religion and belief, and expel all Baha'is from the Shoraniya village in Sohag.
June 2013	Copts	Minya	The burning of the St. George Church, the ancient Ala'zraa Monastery, the residence of the bishop, and a service building, the looting and theft of more than 20 homes, the killing of a Copt, the destruction of the house of Reverend Angelos, and the burning of the Reform Church in the village of Delga in Deir-Mawas.
June 2013	Copts	Assuit	Burning the Church of Mar Yohana, the Baptist, the Adventist Church, and the Apostolic Church, and looting the homes and properties of the Copts in the streets of Goltah and Gomhria. Terrorist elements committed crimes, including the St. George Coptic Orthodox Church, the structure of St. Therese Church, the attack on the Angel Church, and the siege of the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Abu-Teeg.
June 2013	Copts	Fayyum	Burning the Church of the Ala'zraa in Al-Manzala, Youssef Al-Siddiq, storming and looting the contents of the Evangelical Church, and burning the Friends of the Bible Society.
June 2013	Copts	Giza	burning the Archangel Michael Church in Kerdasa, and the storming and looting of the contents of the Atfih Diocese and the Holy Apostles Monastery. Surrounding the Church of the Virgin in Saf.
May 2013	Shiite	Sharqia	Gathering in front of a number of Shiite homes in the village of Harbaet in Sharqia, and stopping the practice of Shiite rituals in Shiite homes.
June 2013	Muslims and Copts	Cairo	Atonement of the opposition (Sheikh Mohamed Abdel Maqsood) during Morsi's discourse at Cairo Stadium in June 2013, and he described those who will come out on June 30 as enemies of religion.
May 2012	Shiite	Tanta	Storming the house of Emad Qandil in the village of Al-Rajdia in Tanta, claiming that his house had been converted into a Husseinia.

June 2013	Shiite	Giza	Attack a group of Shiite citizens during a limited festive gathering in a house in the village of Zawiya Abu Musalm, and killing a number of Shiites, most notably Sheikh Hassan Shehata, and the mutilation of his body.
2017	Baha'is and Jehovah's Witnesses	Beni-Suef	Confiscation and prohibition of the import and sale of Baha'i and Jehovah's Witnesses publications.
2017	Copts	Minya	Incidents of sectarian violence in the case of Souad Thabet
2011-2019	Non-religious	-	Non-religious people face many restrictions from employers and housing on non-religious working or residing with them. Expulsion from work and accommodation without discussion. Some assumed pseudonyms, others were injured because of their religious beliefs.

- **The Egyptian state's efforts to confront violence based on belief**

Freedom of belief is one of the freedoms that represents one of the pillars of a democratic state, and it means that every individual has the right to embrace a religion or belief and to express and practice this religion or belief as he wants, so that belief becomes a personal matter that no one has to do with anyone. Every person embraces what he wants as long as it does not harm freedoms others and does not transgress them.

President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, since he came to power in 2014, has paid special attention to the issue of "renewing religious discourse", and has begun to take a broader step towards a civil state that recognizes all rights and freedoms, including absolute freedom of belief. In this comes the importance of changing the educational curricula to conform to the United Nations Declaration on Minorities, which states that "education programs include knowledge of the history, culture and customs of the minorities in the country."

The government has taken many initiatives in this regard, including the distribution of pamphlets and brochures, changes in the education system, new classrooms, and the use of the authority and expertise of Al-Azhar and other Islamic institutions to promote tolerance and moderation, and a culture of dialogue. Al-Azhar also announced in 2018 the formation

of a unit in its center for electronic fatwas focused on “confronting atheism” and preventing young people from “falling into infidelity.”

According to 2016 law to legalize unlicensed churches and facilitate the construction of new churches, the government reported that it had issued 814 licenses to existing but previously unlicensed churches and related support buildings, bringing the total to 1,412 churches. Copts began to assume some leadership positions in the state, and in 2018, Dr. Manal Awad Mikhail was appointed as governor of Damietta.

No one can deny the Egyptian state's efforts to achieve equality and promote constructive cooperation, moderation and renunciation of violence, hatred and extremism. The government also did not prevent Baha'is, Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses from private, non-public worship.

President El-Sisi put freedom of religion and belief “in its right size” within the human rights scene, after freedom of religion and belief for many years was a neglected right that is being overlooked:

“All of us was born inherited Muslim and non-Muslim by the ID (we inherited the religion we follow). Any body knows that we are supposed to paraphrase our understanding to the belief we follow? We were kids and don't know, but we grow up, have you thought or afraid to think your belief is right or not? Are you ready to walk in search of this path until reaching the truth? Many words must be said...”

Third: Belief Freedom between Defending and Politicizing

Respecting and defending freedom of belief is among the human rights that are always in a position of impartial and transparent defense, or for hidden purposes motivated to achieve a goal or objectives. This difference may be highlighted or rarely concluded in global human movements, as the confusion between the sincerity of good intentions and teleological fraud is the characteristic that lies in international relations.

1- Defending Belief Freedom

International law pays attention to the rights of minorities, including religious minorities. In the 1945 United Nations Declaration after the end

of the war, Clause C of Article 55 stipulated: "It is common in the world to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to sex, language or religion, and no distinction between men and women, and with actual observance of those rights and freedoms." In 1947, the United Nations Subcommittee on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities was established.

The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights did not explicitly address the issue of minorities, with the exception of what was mentioned in Article 2 of the discussion of rights and equality, regardless of language, religion, race and political beliefs. Among the resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly on December 18, 1992, a declaration regarding minorities was issued, and the first article of it stipulated: ""States shall, each within its own territory, protect the existence of minorities, their national or ethnic identity, and their cultural, religious and linguistic identity, and create the conditions to strengthen this identity."

Some international and regional organizations and bodies are preoccupied with qualitative and quantitative defense of freedom of religion and belief, and religious and sectarian minorities are gaining more attention. Steps to promote this right must be based on international principles, be consistent with local contexts, and integrated with reform efforts to achieve equality and freedom.

Heading these organizations is the United Nations, which working all its bodies to monitor, condemn and put an end to violations and try to implement the rules of protection for freedom of religion and belief and for religious and sectarian minorities to obtain their rights guaranteed to them by international law and international human rights charters. The Human Rights Council in particular at the United Nations periodically holds sessions to discuss the human rights situation, including discussing issues of religious minorities based on reports prepared by states, UN missions and monitoring bodies in this regard.

In order to allocate and closely follow up all issues related to freedoms and human rights; the United Nations appoints the relevant rapporteurs on a specific issue. The Special Rapporteur for freedom of religion or belief was appointed pursuant to Commission on Human Rights Resolution No. 20/86. He is an independent expert tasked with identifying obstacles to the enjoyment of the right to freedom of belief, and the necessary means

to avoid them. Prior to 2000 he was called the Special Rapporteur on religious intolerance.

The tasks of the rapporteur are to prepare reports on countries and make visits to countries either at their request or pursuant to a decision of the Human Rights Council, and he sends letters to countries to provide clarifications regarding the measures taken in the field of protecting the rights of freedom of belief.

That position is currently occupied by the Maldivian diplomat Ahmed Shahid. He stated in last March 2021 at the United Nations that: *"Islamophobia constructs fictional structures around Muslims that are used to justify state-sponsored discrimination, hostility, and violence against Muslims with dire consequences for the enjoyment of human rights, including freedom of religion or belief."* The UN expert said: *"I strongly encourage states to take all necessary measures to combat direct and indirect forms of discrimination against Muslims and to prohibit any advocacy of religious hatred that constitutes incitement to violence."*

What can be deduced from these statements is that Muslim minorities are subjected to discrimination and hostility in Western societies, whether they are locals, immigrants or refugees, which requires international efforts to stop these waves of violence either.

2- Politicization of Defending Religious Minorities

Human rights have become one of the circles of continuous interest and evaluation in political relations, and the defense of human rights files are one of the ethical areas that states are committed to in their relations with their citizens and subjects, and even in their relations with other states. Thus, the issues of freedom of belief and the protection of religious minorities concern many countries and their foreign policies.

The moral standards in the relations of the major countries with each other are not what some think, they are accompanied by political conditionality and interference in the affairs of developing countries under the pretext of continuing support and development. At the same time, major countries criticize some racist behavior and reduce human rights to citizens without nationals. And not only that, states employ and finance some human rights organizations to achieve some political gains and cause international embarrassment for the countries in which they operate.

With regard to the freedom of religious minorities, some major countries use the principle of protecting some religious minorities and sects in their relations with developing countries and try to increase their influence in light of limiting the roles of their countries. For example, the United States of America under the Trump administration decided to ban immigration from some Arab and Muslim countries, including Christians. At the same time, it promised to help them achieve political empowerment and obtain their rights in their societies. The United States may impose sanctions on states or political officials in reference to the "Magnitsky Human Rights Protection Bill" that has been in operated globally since 2016.

In the background of the January revolution, Egypt faced threats from the international community to cut off various aid and assistance due to the protection of the rights of religious minorities, especially Copts, Jews, and uncommon Muslim sects.

When major countries sing about supporting democracy in developing countries from the point of empowering religious minorities, they create chaos - intentionally or unintentionally - because religious extremism in these countries is considered the most aggravating issue, especially in the case of the spread of different sects within a single religion.

It may lead to violent confrontations, as a result of which the state disintegrates into sectarian and ethnic mini-states, or weaken states. Instead of the melting of religious minorities within the crucible of the nation-state, the major powers are strengthening them and demanding independence. The Middle East is not far from that. Lebanon, Iraq, and Syria spread images of religious and ethnic fanaticism, and any external interference increases internal strife.

Conclusion

Human societies have suffered from antiquity to the present time, the scourge of conflicts and wars between the owners of various religions, as well as within the same religion between the contradictory sects. Cultural pluralism emphasizes the distribution of facts in the religious experience of mankind, and that salvation cannot be monopolized only by the advocates of religions, but by listening and deep dialogue among all

religious spectrums to block the way for advocates that one religion enjoys full rights, and the rest of the religions do not have absolute rights.

Perhaps there is a difference in the definition of religious minorities in Islam, but there is agreement that Islam denies discrimination and discrimination between people on the basis of race, color or language, and recognizes equality in origin and rights. Despite this, Muslim minorities in many countries of the world are exposed to acts of violence and persecution by governments, ruling religious sects, or individuals, especially in Europe, America and China.

The human right to freedom of religion and belief has been documented in many United Nations resolutions and international treaties, and freedom of belief as a human right, means the human right to profess a particular religion or religious belief, and the right to manifest one's religion and practice the rites of this religion whatever it is in all visual and audio forms. It is a clear and settled issue on a theoretical level. This is confirmed by all divine and positive laws. Where it made the belief of individual and collective idiosyncrasies, its goal is to nourish the soul and elevate it away from material and political influences, which represents with it the highest human rights.

The Brotherhood's rule witnessed a setback for freedom of religion and belief, and many groups, most notably Copts and Shiites, were subjected to violations and acts of violence; because of their religious beliefs. This is being avoided in the current period due to President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi's special interest in the issue of "renewing religious discourse" and putting "freedom of religion and belief" in its proper size within the human rights scene, after the freedom of religion and belief for many years was a neglected right that has been overlooked.

Finally, despite the international mechanisms in the United Nations and other organizations to protect religious minorities and freedom of belief, it is a historical entry point for the political influence of some major countries that adopt the values of human rights, support for democracy and the fragmentation of national unity.

Recommendations

- The need to develop institutional frameworks to confront forms of discrimination through the formation of the “Commission to Combat Discrimination,” which was indicated as one of the necessary measures that the state must take in Article 53 of the Constitution, bearing in mind that the law regulating its work includes appropriate powers in order to be able to identify cases of discrimination. Prove it and work to confront it.
- The human rights and political circles should pay more attention to the issue of respect for freedom of religion and belief. Efforts to promote freedom of religion and belief must be part of broader strategies for democratic transformation, development and peacebuilding, implementing ongoing preventive awareness campaigns for youth and organizing several anti-discrimination workshops based on belief.
- Conduct comprehensive, impartial and independent investigations into all religious and belief-based attacks, provide persons found responsible for acts of killing or persecution, initiate reparations for victims of the aforementioned belief-based violence and compensate those affected, including financial compensation, and ensure the return of families who have fled Or, out of fear of reprisals, they fled to their homes safely.
- Developing and strengthening the role of minority parties and associations in spreading societal awareness of citizenship, acceptance of others, equality before the law, and emphasis on freedom of belief.
- Emphasizing that defaming religions represents a grave affront to human dignity, which in turn leads to restrictions on the exercise of freedom of religion by its followers and incitement to religious hatred and religious violence.
- The necessity of putting pressure on the governments of China and Myanmar to work on the immediate cessation of any coercive measures that do not fully comply with international law and the rules and standards related to human rights, including the rights of minorities.
- Issuing laws and legislation that criminalize hate speech and violent extremism, such as the law on the rejection of hate speech in the UAE, which includes a set of articles that criminalize insulting religions, divine books, places of worship and inciting sectarian and ethnic strife.

Punishment of all those who support and finance extremist and terrorist ideas.