



LEARNING JOURNAL UNIT 3

POLS 1503-01 GLOBALIZATION - AY2024-T3



FEBRUARY 18, 2024

INSTRUCTOR: MICHELE SIDONIE MFATCHEU KWETO



Religion and Human Rights

In this week's reading on human rights, religion was touched on because religious freedom (or the lack of it) has been a major issue relating to Human Rights. Consider some of the following questions and reflect on your country's attitude toward religion, and the aspects surrounding it. The journal entry should be about a page in length. If applicable, be sure to cite any resources you use to support your learning journal. (You don't have to answer all of the questions below, they are for reflection purposes.)

- What are the predominant religions in your country?
- How are minority religions treated?
- What do human rights monitoring groups (for example, Human Rights Watch, Freedom House and Amnesty International) say about your country's religious tolerance?
- Does your country separate religion from government?
- According to your country, what are the worst cases of religious intolerance occurring in the world today?
- What treaties has your government signed or ratified regarding religious intolerance?
- What programs can your country suggest to help build respect for religion around the world?
- How can the UN help stop state-sponsored religious intolerance?
- Should some countries be pressured to change their government if their policies are too restrictive?

PREDOMINANT RELIGIONS

The main religions in Pakistan are Islam, Hinduism, and Christianity. Most people follow Islam. There are also small minorities of Hindus, Christians, and other faiths.

TREATMENT OF MINORITIES

Minority religions face discrimination in Pakistan. It is hard to build temples if you are Hindu. Christians also face harassment and threats. The laws make it hard for minorities to practice their faith freely.

HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS

Human rights groups say Pakistan does not tolerate religious minorities well. Pakistan often restricts religious freedom. Minorities have a hard time feeling safe while worshipping. The treatment of minorities must improve greatly. To say that “Pakistan’s religious minorities are under attack is a self-evident truth. Pakistani laws, especially ones that deal with blasphemy, deny or interfere with practice of minority faiths. Religious minorities are targets of legal as well as social discrimination” (Ispahani, 2017).

RELIGION AND GOVERNMENT

Pakistan does not separate religion from government fully. The constitution is based on Islamic laws. Head of the state like President and Prime Minister must be Muslims. Religious parties have a lot of influence. Speaking against Islamic laws can even be punished. There is little separation between mosque and state.

The evident example of this can be read in this report which states, “In August, the Ministry of the Interior ordered the Punjab provincial government to take action against the Center for Social Justice (CSJ), an NGO, for a report it and other NGOs submitted to the UN Human Rights Council

that described incidents of forced conversion of Christians and misuse of the country's laws against blasphemy in violation of international human rights obligations and the country's own laws. The government considered the NGO report "anti-government propaganda," according to the media" (Pakistan - United States Department of State, 2023).

WORST INTOLERANCE

Pakistan often criticizes India and Israel for religious discrimination. However, Pakistan also restricts minority practices itself through its laws. No country is perfect on these issues. There is room for improvement everywhere. In recent years, "Pakistan has witnessed some of the worst organized violence against religious minorities since the 1947 Partition. Over an eighteen-month period covering 2012 and part of 2013, Shias were subject to 67 attacks, including suicide terrorist bombings during Shia religious observances. In addition, 54 lethal attacks were also perpetrated against Ahmadis, 37 against Christians, 16 against Hindus and 3 against Sikhs during this period. Attackers of religious minorities are seldom prosecuted – and if they are, the courts almost invariably set them free" (Ispahani, 2017).

TREATIES SIGNED

Pakistan has signed UN treaties that protect religious rights. But the policies do not seem to match the treaties. Pakistan must do more to enforce religious tolerance domestically. Signing treaties is not the same as acting.

PROGRAMS FOR RESPECT

We could teach more religious tolerance in schools. Students should learn about all major faiths early. Government officials also need better training. Police must protect minorities more. Overall awareness of the issues could really help.

UN ASSISTANCE

The UN could investigate reports of discrimination and set standards for religious freedom that states must follow. Countries that restrict minority practices should be identified by the UN. If they do not improve after warnings, economic or political sanctions may be needed.

GOVERNMENT PRESSURES

Some countries like Pakistan have policies too restrictive regarding faith practices. But pressure from outside may not help much. The people must push from within for change. If the public demands more religious freedom, the government will have to respond. The solutions should come through democratic means over time. There are no quick fixes.

CONCLUSION

In the end, all people deserve religious freedom no matter what faith they follow. Pakistan has more progress to make on tolerance. But the change must come from within through better laws and public awareness. The international community can assist with accountability and incentives. But lasting change takes time.

Wordcount: 639

REFERENCES:

Ispahani, F. (2017, March 1). Pakistan's Descent into Religious Intolerance. Document - Gale Academic OneFile.

<https://go.gale.com/ps/i.do?p=AONE&u=anon~f8639237&id=GALE|A570439409&v=2.1&it=r&sid=googleScholar&asid=8ec93423>

Pakistan - United States Department of State. (2023, December 7). United States Department of State. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-report-on-international-religious-freedom/pakistan/>