Freedom of Thought 2012

A Global Report on Discrimination Against Humanists, Atheists and the Nonreligious

International Humanist and Ethical Union

Freedom of Thought 2012: A Global Report on Discrimination Against Humanists, Atheists and the Non-religious was created by the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU) with the American Humanist Association, Center for Inquiry, Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science, and the Secular Coalition for America.

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The International Humanist and Ethical Union is the world union of more than 120 Humanist, atheist, rationalist, secular, ethical culture, and freethought organizations from more than 40 countries. Its mission is to represent and support the global Humanist movement, with the ultimate goal of building a Humanist world in which human rights are respected and all can live a life of dignity.

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The cover image features Alber Saber, arrested in Egypt this year over posts allegedly made on Facebook criticizing Islam and professing non-religious beliefs. He is awaiting a sentencing hearing as this report is being published on Human Rights Day, 10 December 2012.

“As a universal human right, freedom of religion or belief has a broad application. However, there seems to be little awareness that this right also provides a normative frame of reference for atheists, humanists and freethinkers and their convictions, practices and organizations. I am therefore delighted that for the first time the Humanist community has produced a global report on discrimination against atheists. I hope it will be given careful consideration by everyone concerned with freedom of religion or belief.”

– Professor Heiner Bielefeldt
United Nations Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Religion or Belief

Introduction

Our thoughts are free

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.

Article 18, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Our thoughts are free,
Who can guess them?
No hunter can trap them,
No scholar can map them,
No one can deny,
Our thoughts are free.

Die Gedanken sind frei! – German folk song

The right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief protects the individual conscience of every human being. This right was first stated by the global community in 1948 in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It was given the force of international law by Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1966. Then in 1981 it was given broader application and detail by the UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief.

Freedom of thought is a fundamental human right that protects the autonomy of the human conscience. It includes the freedom to adopt or change any religion or belief that the individual chooses. The international agreements protecting this right outlaw any limitations whatsoever on the freedom of thought and conscience. There can be no compulsion of thought or belief: you can never be compelled to reveal your thoughts or adherence to a religion or belief, nor forced to adopt, change or recant your religion or beliefs.

The right to freedom of thought also guarantees the right to express your thoughts and to manifest your beliefs in practice and teaching, and in community with others. International law forbids any discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief and urges states to combat all religious intolerance.

Freedom of thought is founded on the inviolable sovereignty of the human conscience. But its power reaches far beyond the confines of the individual mind. It reaches beyond the public impact of communities of believers advancing their religions and philosophies. Ultimately, freedom of conscience shapes international relations and global ethics. By ensuring tolerance of disparate religions and beliefs, freedom of conscience is essential to societies that want to flourish in a world living in peace.

A right for atheists and the non-religious

Only human beings have human rights; not religions or belief systems. But by protecting the right of individuals to manifest their beliefs through observance, worship, rituals and teaching—so long as those manifestations do not violate the rights of others—the right to freedom of religion or belief guarantees the right to organize and practice a religion or philosophy of life. This includes the freedom to argue for those beliefs in public, and to seek to persuade others of the merits of your beliefs, or the flaws of theirs, through debate and criticism.

Just as freedom of religion or belief protects the right of the individual to follow a religion, it also protects the right to reject any religion or belief, to identify as humanist or atheist, and to manifest non-religious convictions through expression, teaching and practice. As the United Nations Human Rights Committee explains (General Comment 22):

1. *The right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (which includes the freedom to hold beliefs) in article 18.1 is far-reaching and profound; it encompasses freedom of thought on all matters, personal conviction and the commitment to religion or belief, whether manifested individually or in community with others….*
2. *Article 18 protects theistic, non-theistic and atheistic beliefs, as well as the right not to profess any religion or belief. The terms 'belief' and 'religion' are to be broadly construed. Article 18 is not limited in its application to traditional religions or to religions and beliefs with institutional characteristics or practices analogous to those of traditional religions.*

Thus, it is not necessary to describe atheism as a religion, or as analogous to religion, to guarantee atheists the same protection as religious believers. On the contrary, atheism and theism are protected equally as manifestations of the fundamental right to freedom of thought and conscience. Religious believers and non-believers are equal in human rights because they are all human, irrespective of their religion or beliefs. Just as a religious adherent's proselytism is protected as a manifestation of belief and conscience, so is the atheist's criticism of religious beliefs and practices. Just as speaking in support of one's religious convictions can be of fundamental meaning and value to the individual, so can speaking out in opposition to religious beliefs and practices or in support of atheist beliefs or humanist practices. After all, as the United Nations says, "religion or belief, for anyone who professes either, is one of the fundamental elements in his conception of life" (UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief).

The right to criticize religion is also protected by Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."

Although atheist speech is protected by both Article 18 and Article 19, there has been a regrettable tendency to defend atheist speech by appeal solely to Article 19 while religious speech is defended by appeal to Article 18. Indeed, when the UN debated whether to outlaw "defamation of religions", some countries tried to frame the debate as a conflict between Articles 18 and 19, between the rights of religion and the right to free speech. Of course, there is no such conflict: religions do not have human rights; individuals have human rights, including the right to speak and the right to manifest their beliefs through religious criticism and persuasion (for a detailed discussion of this debate, see the IHEU policy

paper *Speaking Freely About Religion: Religious Freedom, Defamation and Blasphemy* at: http://www.iheu.org/UN-blasphemy-report)

Article 18 also protects the rights of atheists, humanists and other non-religious people beyond freedom of expression. It protects the right not to reveal your beliefs or religious identification, and the right not to take part in religious ceremonies. It protects the right to have or adopt atheist beliefs or to leave a religion. It also guarantees the right to practice and teach your non-religious beliefs, and even to perform ceremonies—including weddings, funerals and other rites of passage—in accordance with those beliefs.

Atheists (those who do not believe in any god), and humanists (those who embrace a morality that does not appeal to any supernatural source), and others who consider themselves non-religious, are a large and growing population across the world. A detailed survey in 2012 revealed that religious people make up 59% of the world population, while those who identify as "atheist" make up 13%, and an additional 23% identify as "not religious" (while not self-identifying as "atheist"). The report by the Gallup International Association (available at http://www.wingia.com/web/files/news/14/file/14.pdf) is in line with other recent global surveys. It shows that atheism and the non-religious population are growing rapidly—religion dropped by 9% and atheism rose by 3% between 2005 and 2012—and that religion declines in proportion to the rise in education and personal income, which is a trend that looks set to continue.

Yet there has been little study of the rights of atheists and the non-religious around the world. How are the rights of the non-religious being violated? What are the specific threats to atheists' freedom of conscience? This report therefore seeks, for the first time, to survey worldwide legal discrimination against atheists and the non-religious.

Anti-atheist discrimination

This report shows that atheists, humanists and other nonreligious people are discriminated against by governments across the world. There are laws that deny atheists' right to exist, curtail their freedom of belief and expression, revoke their right to citizenship, restrict their right to marry, obstruct their access to public education, prohibit them from holding public office, prevent them from working for the state, criminalize their criticism of religion, and execute them for leaving the religion of their parents.

Some governments outlaw the very existence of atheists. But since, as England's Queen Elizabeth realized back in the 16th century, "we cannot open windows into men's souls", people cannot be prosecuted for their atheist thoughts unless and until they manifest them. Atheists and other freethinkers may manifest their irreligious thoughts by speaking out, or by rejecting religious requirements, or by publicly seeking to identify as non-religious.

Many countries criminalize manifestations of atheist convictions or skeptical thoughts. In prosecuting these "crimes" it may not be necessary to accuse the person of atheism. Many states prosecute people who express their religious doubts or dissent regardless of whether those dissenters identify as atheist. More commonly, secular people experience discrimination when they manifest their conscience by acting against the dictates of the religion of their family, community or country. In some societies,

allegations of religious dissent are manufactured for use against minority belief communities, or vulnerable individuals, or to settle personal vendettas.

A handful of countries criminalize atheism *per se*. In addition, there are several forms of legal measures found across many countries that either criminalize the expression of atheist beliefs or result in systematic discrimination against atheists and those who reject religion. These include laws regulating:

- Apostasy and religious conversion
- Blasphemy and religious criticism
- Compulsory religious registration, usually with a list of permissible religions
- Religious tests for citizenship or participation in civic life
- Religious control of family law
- Religious control of public education.

In many cases these laws intersect with each other, compounding the problems experienced by atheists. For instance, citizens may be required to identify their religion on a government ID card and yet are forbidden from identifying as atheist, humanist or "no religion". If atheists in these countries are open about their lack of religion, they will be prosecuted. If instead they identify with a religion, such as the faith they were raised in, they may be prosecuted for making a false statement on a government document (this is one of the charges made against Alexander Aan in Indonesia this year–as reported below). Even if someone is able to avoid prosecution by denying their true beliefs (which is in itself a violation of conscience) and identifying with a religion they do not support, they may face other negative consequences, such as being forced to submit to that religion in cases of family law.

It should be stressed that all these laws seek to control and regulate religious belief and behavior in ways that can adversely affect all belief groups and believers, whether religious or not. Atheists and humanists–and others who doubt, dissent, or protest religion without identifying with any label or tradition–may be at one end of the spectrum of belief, but they often suffer the same forms of discrimination as other belief groups. Indeed, outspoken freethinkers often serve as the "canary in the coal mine" whose persecution presages a growing intolerance of diversity and debate.

The hidden toll of religious discrimination

This report on *Freedom of Thought 2012* focuses on laws that discriminate against atheists and the non-religious, and on specific cases where those laws have been used to penalize freethinkers. Unfortunately, this focus reveals only the tip of the iceberg of discrimination against atheists, humanists and other non-religious people.

For every case of *de jure* discrimination against atheists, we hear dozens of cases of *de facto* discrimination. Even in countries that offer legal protection against religious discrimination, we hear of anti-atheist bias in employment, in seeking political office, in legal cases, and almost every other area of life. In countries that write religious discrimination into law, the legal bias reinforces the broad range of social discrimination. Except where this social discrimination is codified into law, and cases are brought to our attention, we do not include it in this report.

Yet the forms of systematic discrimination listed in the bullet points above often exert their power without any cases coming to court or reaching public attention. For instance, religious family law (or

“personal status law”) exerts daily power over the lives of billions of people around the world. Consider just a few examples. In Islamic jurisdictions, family law prohibits an atheist man from marrying a Muslim woman. In Israel, secular Jews have long gone abroad to marry, and divorce, because rabbinical family law discriminates against them. In Christian countries, we see problems over the custody of children based on religious discrimination against atheists. And in many countries, the problem is not just that family law is based on exclusively religious rules, but that jurisdiction in all family law cases is handed over to religious authorities instead of the civil authorities.

Even though religious family law is a source of routine discrimination against the non-religious, it is such a huge and opaque area, with so much overlap with social discrimination, that it is not possible to do the problem justice within the scope of this report.

Social media and blasphemy

“Blasphemy” charges grabbed a lot of media attention in 2012. And most of the blasphemy cases involved social media or other user-generated content platforms like YouTube.

The YouTube video of the “Innocence of Muslims” dominated news headlines for weeks. The amateurish video disparaging the life of the Prophet Mohammad was posted on YouTube in June. It gained almost no attention until September when it was publicised by the Egyptian Islamist TV host Sheikh Khalad Abdalla. The resulting riots affected at least 17 countries and led to the deaths of nearly a hundred people.

The controversy led to renewed calls from Islamic states for a global blasphemy law and, in November, resulted in an Egyptian court convicting, in absentia, seven men for “insulting the Islamic religion through participating in producing and offering a movie that insults Islam and its prophet.” For good measure, the Egyptian court also convicted an American Christian pastor, Terry Jones, who likes to court controversy by burning the Quran and posting the video to YouTube. All eight were sentenced to death for blasphemy, but all live outside Egypt and are unlikely to ever be extradited.

But the YouTube controversy has obscured a broader story about “blasphemy” prosecutions: 2012 has seen a sharp rise in prosecution for alleged atheist criticism of religion on social media, especially Facebook and Twitter. Between 2007 and 2011, IHEU saw only three social media blasphemy prosecutions; two of them in Egypt. Whereas in 2012 we have seen more than a dozen people, in ten different countries, charged for “blasphemous” social media statements. As more people are able to share their thoughts with a public audience, it seems that more people are able to take offence at those thoughts (and to provide public proof of them).

The trend of prosecuting “blasphemies” shared through social media is most marked in Muslim-majority countries. For example, in addition to the tragic, but all too familiar, wave of blasphemy prosecutions in Pakistan, this year saw prosecutions for allegedly atheist comments on Facebook and Twitter in Bangladesh, Bahrain, Egypt, Indonesia, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and Turkey. In some of these cases, the governments even threatened to prosecute those who commented on, or “liked”, or re-tweeted, the offending comments. In May, the Pakistan government went so far as to block all access to Twitter in the country because of objections to ‘blasphemous’ content".

It's no surprise that "blasphemous" speech and criticism of Islam on social media are attracting attention in the Muslim world. IHEU has been contacted by an increasing number of freethinkers who are using social media, especially Facebook, to organize humanist and atheist groups in countries where forming such groups in public, or with official recognition, has been prohibited or problematic. There are now Facebook groups of atheists in Afghanistan, Algeria, Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Malaysia, Pakistan, Tunisia, Turkey, and Sudan, as well as more general online ex-Muslim and Arab-language atheist groups.

Pakistan provides a telling example of freethought groups moving online. An IHEU member organization was formed in Pakistan in the 1990s, but its founder, Dr Younus Shaikh, was soon charged with blasphemy and sentenced to death (following an IHEU campaign, Dr Shaikh's conviction was overturned and he fled the country). Today, there is no registered organization in Pakistan able to become an IHEU member. Yet there is a thriving Facebook group for Pakistani atheists with far more participants than the defunct off-line group ever attracted

Social media provide new information and networks for freethinkers in repressive countries and cultures. But old dangers lurk alongside the new opportunities in the social media environment. Alber Saber is a prominent activist for secular democracy in Egypt who reportedly operated the Egyptian Atheists page on Facebook and has been a vocal critic of fundamentalist Islam. He is currently on trial for insulting Islam and now faces up to five years in prison. His countryman, Ayman Yusef Mansur, is already in prison, serving three years hard labour on charges that he offended Islam on Facebook.

The case of Alexander Aan in Indonesia provides perhaps the clearest example of how the new social media freedoms are colliding with the old regimes of religious restrictions. It is forbidden to legally incorporate a group in Indonesia that does not endorse the state-mandated "belief in the one and only God." So atheists in Indonesia organize through Facebook. But when Mr. Aan criticized Islam on Facebook he was arrested. His charges included making a false statement on a government document: a charge based on the conflict between his atheist Facebook posts and his official registration as a Muslim—a registration he had to submit because Indonesians must identify with one of the six officially permitted religions. He is now serving a two-and-a-half year prison sentence.

Social media are playing an important role in opening up previously closed societies. The Arab Spring demonstrated the liberating power of the new freedom of expression. It also showed that we need to protect freedom of inquiry in religious matters just as much as in political issues. Indeed, the fact that religious and political power are so often intertwined is one reason why religious criticism is usually treated as a political threat, and why neither religious nor political authorities can be allowed to be beyond criticism.

The touchstone for human rights and peace

The countries with the worst records on freedom of thought are the countries with the worst records on all human rights. This is no coincidence: when thought is a crime, no other freedom can long survive.

In a changing world order, freedom of conscience is emerging as the touchstone for human rights and peace. It is increasingly recognized that intolerance of religion and belief breeds discrimination,

persecution and conflict. Promoting tolerance and removing discrimination based on religion or belief is therefore essential to peace and to the furtherance of all human rights.

It is natural that freedom of conscience should emerge as the touchstone for peace and human rights: the conscience, and its freedom to reason, is at the foundation of our global human rights order. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was issued in the aftermath of World War II in recognition that, "disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind." And we need look no further than Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to see the centrality of freedom of conscience: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."

Thought and conscience imbue the individual with the dignity and worth that forms the inalienable claim of every person to all human rights. It is also our conscience that recognizes the humanity of others and directs us to respect their human rights.

We must protect and cherish everyone's freedom of conscience if we want a world where all are free and equal in dignity and rights. Such a world begins in our thoughts. And the promise of such a world will only be realized when we are free to use our reason and conscience to act towards one another on the basis of our common humanity.

The liberating power of the freedom of thought is also the promise of the medieval German folk song, *Gedanken Sind Frei*, which became a freethought anthem sung even by prisoners in the Nazi death camps. Its words are worth remembering for prisoners of conscience and all others who are discriminated against for their beliefs and thoughts:

And if tyrants take me
And throw me in prison
My thoughts will burst free,
Like blossoms in season.
Foundations will crumble,
The structure will tumble,
And free men will cry:
Our thoughts are free!

– Matt Cherry
International representative for the International Humanist and Ethical Union
President of the NGO Committee on Freedom of Religion or Belief at the United Nations

Challenges to Freedom of Thought

This report documents major developments with respect to freedom of thought in 60 countries from many different regions. It focuses on current laws that discriminate against atheists, humanists and other nonreligious people and groups. It also highlights recent cases, in the last five years or so, that show the impact of these laws on specific individuals.

The countries are grouped by region and are listed alphabetically within their region. Discrimination within these countries is grouped into two separate categories:
1) Discrimination against non-religious communities through a nation's constitution and/or legal system;
2) Reported cases of discrimination against or oppression of specific persons because of their alleged atheism or disagreement with religion.

Finally, there is a tabulated summary of Discriminatory Laws and cases by country.

It should be noted that this report cannot claim to be exhaustive. Countries that are not detailed in this report are not necessarily without systematic discrimination on freedom of thought. Likewise, the cases listed in this report are examples, not exhaustive lists. In some countries the secrecy of courts, or state control of media, or lack of reporting, make it impossible to produce a complete account of individual cases.

IHEU encourages updates, additions and corrections to this report. Comments and suggestions can be sent to: report@iheu.org

Africa

Botswana

Discriminatory Laws:

The constitution and other laws mandate a secular state and protect freedom of religion or belief. However, there are widespread state privileges for Christianity and routine bias against the nonreligious. Government meetings often begin with a Christian prayer. Even though the constitution prohibits forced religious instruction, forced participation in religious ceremonies, or taking oaths that run counter to an individual's religious beliefs, religious education is part of the curriculum in public schools. This public education emphasizes Christianity but also addresses other religious groups in the country, while excluding humanists and other non-theists. Additionally, the constitution provides that every religious community may establish places for religious instruction at the community's expense.

Cameroon

Discriminatory Laws:

The constitution mandates a secular state, and the constitution and other laws and policies protect freedom of religion or belief. However, there are widespread government privileges for religion, especially Christianity and Islam, and routine bias against the nonreligious.
The government gives an annual subsidy to all private primary and secondary education institutions, including those operated by religious denominations. State-sponsored television station and radio stations broadcast Christian and Islamic religious services on a regular basis, as well as religious ceremonies on national holidays and during national events.

Chad

Discriminatory Laws:

The constitution provides that the country shall be a secular state. However, some policies favor Islam in practice.

A committee composed of members of the High Council for Islamic Affairs (HCIA) and the Directorate of Religious and Traditional Affairs in the Ministry of the Interior (MOI) organized trips to Mecca for the Hajj (pilgrimage during the 12th month of the Islamic calendar) and Umrah (pilgrimage).

The Director of Religious and Traditional Affairs oversees religious matters. The HCIA oversees Islamic religious activities, including the supervision of some Arabic-language schools and higher institutions of learning, and the representation of the country in international Islamic meetings. The HCIA, in

coordination with the president, appoints the grand imam, a spiritual leader for Muslims, who oversees each region's high imam and serves as head of the council. In principle, although not consistently in practice, the grand imam has the authority to restrict proselytizing by Islamic groups, regulate the content of mosque sermons, and exert control over activities of Islamic charities.
Religious leaders are involved in managing the country's wealth. A representative of the religious community sits on the Revenue Management College, the body that oversees use of Chad's oil revenues. The seat rotates between Muslim and Christian leaders every four years.

While the government is legally obligated to treat all religious groups or denominations equally, some non-Muslims allege that Muslims receive preferential status, particularly concerning use of public lands for building places of worship.

Comoros

Discriminatory Laws:

The constitution and other laws and policies protect freedom of religion or belief. However, the constitution also states that citizens will draw governing principles and rules from Islamic tenets. A constitutional referendum passed in May 2009 states "Islam is the state religion". Proselytizing for any religion except Islam is illegal, and foreigners caught proselytizing for religions other than Islam are subject to deportation. Additionally, people who leave Islam, whether for another religion or no religion, may be prosecuted for apostasy.

Djibouti

Discriminatory Laws:

Although the constitution and other laws and policies protect freedom of religion or belief, Islam is the state religion and the president and other government employees, including magistrates, are required to take religious oaths.

More than 99% of the population identifies as Sunni Muslim. Citizens officially are considered Muslims if they do not specifically identify with a faith; there are no figures available on the number of atheists in the country. Muslims are required to marry in an Islamic ceremony. Non-Muslims—who are known to include Roman Catholics, Protestants, Copts, and Bahá'ís—must marry in accordance with the rites of the religion with which they are registered. The government allows civil marriage only for non-Muslim foreign residents; so if there were atheist Djibouti who wanted to marry, they would not be able to do so (unless they hid their atheism and registered with a religion). A non-Muslim man may marry a Muslim woman only after converting to Islam. According to the family code, "impediment to a marriage occurs when a Muslim woman marries a non-Muslim."

The president is required to take a religious oath at inauguration; other government employees are also required to do so, such as magistrates, the presidents of Constitutional Court, Supreme Court, Chamber of Accounts, and the inspector general of state. While there is no penalty established by law, it remains

an official custom written in the Constitution for the president of the country and required by law for others. No legal provision exists for opposite practice.

Equatorial Guinea

Discriminatory Laws:

While the constitution and other laws and policies protect freedom of religion or belief, a 1992 presidential decree regulates the exercise of freedom of religion or belief. This decree provides official preference for the Roman Catholic Church and the Reformed Church of Equatorial Guinea. While the decree does not hinder the practice of other religions or beliefs, its preferential effects can be observed in some circumstances; for example, Catholic masses are a normal part of any major ceremonial function, such as the October 12 National Day and June 5 President's Birthday. In addition, Catholic and Reform church officials are exempt from airport entry and exit taxes.

Eritrea

Discriminatory Laws:

The 1997 constitution protects freedom of religion or belief. However, the government has yet to implement the constitution, and in practice it does not respect freedom of belief. In the past few years, there has been an increase in serious government violations of religious freedom, including mass arrests, torture and death for members of minority belief groups.

In 2002 the government decreed that all religious groups must either register or cease all religious activities. Four religious groups are now registered: the Eritrean Orthodox Church, the Evangelical (Lutheran) Church of Eritrea, Islam, and the Roman Catholic Church. Religious facilities that did not belong to the four officially recognized religious groups were forced to close. The government retains significant control over the four registered religious groups, in most cases controlling their leadership and finances. Many places of worship have closed because of government intimidation and the mass conscription of religious workers and parishioners. The government routinely harasses and detains members of registered and unregistered religious groups, some of whom reportedly died as a result of torture and lack of medical treatment while in detention. By the end of 2011, many estimated that the population of religious prisoners remained at 2,000 to 3,000. Some arrestees reported that they were only released after they signed statements recanting their religious beliefs and agreeing to join an officially registered religion as a condition of their release.

The application for an exit visa requires a designation of religious affiliation, and members of unregistered religions or no religion require additional permission from the Office of Religious Affairs, which has been reported to grant permission, deny permission, or arrest applicants on the spot for practicing an unrecognized faith or being non-religious.

Ethiopia

Discriminatory Laws:

The constitution requires the separation of state and religion; however, under a 2008 law it is a crime to defame religious groups.

The Gambia

Discriminatory Laws:

Article 25 of the Constitution protects the rights of citizens to follow any religion or belief that they choose. The government has not established a state religion, although the constitution establishes Qadi (Muslim judge trained in the Islamic legal tradition) courts in such places as the chief justice determines. Their jurisdiction applies only to marriage, divorce, and inheritance questions for Muslims where they apply traditional Islamic law. The Supreme Islamic Council (SIC) is an independent body that advises the government on religious issues. Although the government does not have representation on the council, it provided the council with substantial funding. The minister of religious affairs maintains a formal relationship with the council. Government meetings and events typically commenced with two prayers, one Islamic and one Christian.

The government funds religious instruction in schools. Public and private schools throughout the country provide Biblical and Qur'anic studies with government support.

Mauritania

Discriminatory Laws:

The constitution and other laws and policies restrict freedom of religion or belief and the 1991 constitution defines the country as an Islamic republic and recognizes Islam as the sole religion of its citizens and the state. Due to this stance, all non-Muslims are restricted from being citizens of the country, and Mauritanians who leave Islam for another religion or no religion lose their citizenship. In addition, Article 306 of the penal code outlaws apostasy: anyone found guilty of converting from Islam will be given the opportunity to repent within three days and if the person does not repent, the individual will be sentenced to death and the person’s property will be confiscated by the Treasury.

Sharia (Islamic law) provides legal principles upon which the law and legal procedures are based. The government and citizenry consider Islam to be the essential cohesive element unifying the country's various ethnic groups. There is a cabinet-level Ministry of Islamic Affairs and Traditional Education. The High Council of Islam, consisting of six imams, advised the government on conformance of legislation to Islamic precepts. The judiciary consists of a single system of courts that uses principles of Sharia in matters concerning the family and modern legal principles in all other matters.

The government requires members of the Constitutional Council and the High Council of Magistrates to take an oath of office that includes a promise to God to uphold the law of the land in conformity with Islamic precepts. Both public schools and private Islamic schools include classes on Islam, and attendance at these religious classes is required.

Nigeria

Discriminatory Laws:

The constitution and other laws and policies protect freedom of religion or belief. The constitution mandates that local, state and federal government "shall not adopt any religion as State Religion." However, some state governments have a record of abusing freedom of religion or belief. There is significant hostility and violence between religious communities, especially Christians and Muslims, in many parts of the country. Some outbreaks of communal violence have resulted in hundreds of deaths. Yet, a climate of impunity exists, as authorities rarely prosecute and punish those responsible for violent attacks.

The constitution provides that states may establish courts based on the common law or customary law systems. Twelve northern states—Sokoto, Kebbi, Niger, Kano, Katsina, Kaduna, Jigawa, Yobe, Bauchi, Borno, Zamfara, and Gombe—maintained Sharia courts, which adjudicated both criminal and civil matters, along with common law and customary law courts. Non-Muslims had the option to try their cases in the Sharia courts if involved in disputes with Muslims. If non-Muslims did not agree to go to Sharia courts, common law courts would hear their cases. Although the constitution does not explicitly allow Sharia courts to hear criminal cases, they have done so in the past. In Zamfara State, the first state to adopt Sharia, a Sharia court must hear all criminal cases involving Muslims. No laws barred women or any groups from testifying in common law courts or gave less weight to their testimony; however, Sharia courts usually accorded less weight to the testimony of women and non-Muslims.

Both federal and state governments regulate mandatory religious instruction in public schools; however, the constitution mandates that students do not receive religious instruction in any religion other than their own. In theory students can request a teacher of their own beliefs to provide alternative instruction, but in practice many schools lack teachers capable of doing so.

Although the jurisdiction of Sharia technically does not apply to non-Muslims in civil and criminal proceedings, certain social mores inspired by Sharia, such as the separation of the sexes, affected non-Muslim minorities in the north. Many non-Muslims perceive that they lived under the rule of a Muslim government and often feared reprisals for their religious affiliation. The Hisbah—Sharia enforcement groups funded by state governments in Bauchi, Zamfara, Niger, Kaduna, and Kano—enforce, sometimes violently, some Sharia statutes.

Sudan

Discriminatory Laws:

The interim constitution and other laws and policies provide for some freedom of religion or belief. However, there are Islamic prohibitions against apostasy, blasphemy, and interfaith marriages. The Interim National Constitution enshrines Islamic law as a source of legislation in the country, and the official laws and policies of the government and the ruling National Congress Party favour Islam.

Although there is no legal penalty for converting from another religion to Islam, converting from Islam to another religion or belief is punishable by imprisonment or death. Persons convicted of conversion are given the opportunity to recant their conversion before execution. A Muslim man may marry a Christian or Jewish women, but a Muslim woman cannot marry a non-Muslim unless he converts to Islam. The penalty for blasphemy and “defamation” of Islam is up to six months in prison, whipping, and/or a fine.

Zambia

Discriminatory Laws:

The constitution and other laws and policies protect freedom of religion or belief. However, the government requires Christian instruction in public schools. The classes are conducted in both the Catholic and Protestant traditions and are mandatory for all students through grade seven.

East Asia & Pacific

Brunei

Discriminatory Laws:

Though the constitution guarantees freedom of religion or belief, other laws and policies restrict this right. The constitution states, "The religion of Brunei Darussalam shall be the Muslim religion according to the Shafi'i sect of that religion." The government continues its longstanding policies to promote the Shafi'i school of Sunni Islam and discourage other religions. Anyone who teaches or promotes any "deviant" beliefs or practices in public may be charged under the Islamic Religious Council Act and punished with three months incarceration and a fine of BND 2,000 (US$1,550). Visitors to the country are asked to identify their religion on their visa applications. The Ministry of Education requires courses on Islam in all schools that adhere to the state curriculum. Marriage between Muslims and non-Muslims is not permitted, and non-Muslims must convert to Islam if they wish to marry a Muslim.

Burma

Discriminatory Laws:

Religious activities and organizations are subject to restrictions on freedom of expression, association, and assembly as per Articles 34, 361, and 362 of the 2008 constitution. Recent political reforms have yet to include a liberalization of religious restrictions. Article 361 recognizes the “special position of Buddhism as the faith professed by the great majority of the citizens of the Union”, and article 362 recognizes Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Animism as the only religious minorities allowed to exist. There is no provision for the existence of atheists, humanists or other nonreligious people.

The government actively promotes Theravada Buddhism, particularly among ethnic minorities. Adherence or conversion to Buddhism was an unwritten prerequisite for promotion to senior government and military ranks. Nearly all senior-level officers of the ruling State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) and the armed forces are Buddhists.

Recent political liberalization has been followed by an increase in Buddhist intolerance and violence against non-Buddhists. In particular, Rohingya Muslims in the North East of Burma face severe and persistent discrimination from ethnic Rakhine Buddhists as well as the government. In 2012 outbreaks of violence against Rohingya Muslims, including summary executions of at least ten men, resulted in retaliatory violence against Buddhists. The president declared a state of emergency in the region and sent in troops.

Indonesia

Discriminatory Laws:

Indonesia recognizes only six official religions–Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Hinduism–and requires its citizens to adhere to one of these. The country's blasphemy law makes it illegal to promote other faiths, or atheism. Article 156(a) of the country's criminal code also punishes "disseminating information aimed at inciting religious hatred or hostility" with up to five years in prison. Persons who do not identify with one of the six official religions, including people with no religion, continue to experience official discrimination. This discrimination occurs often in the context of civil registration of marriages and births and other situation involving family law.

Official ID cards must list one of the six official religions; therefore "atheism" or "Humanism" or "no religion" are not permitted options. Applicants for government jobs must also identify as belonging to one of the six official religions. To register an organization in Indonesia, the organizers must declare their allegiance to the Basic Ideology of the State (called Pancasila); the first principle of Pancasila is 'Belief in the one and only God'. That means no atheist group can legally register itself.

Cases of discrimination:

In January 2012, Alexander Aan, an Indonesian civil servant in the province of West Sumatra, was arrested after being attacked by a mob of Muslim militants. The mob was reacting to statements Aan made on Facebook which criticized Islam and said he had left Islam and become an atheist. The police charged Aan on three separate counts: insulting religion (which has a maximum sentence of five years jail), the electronic transmission of defamatory comments (six years jail), and false reporting on an official form (six years jail). The charges of blasphemy and defamation related to his criticism of Islam on Facebook. The final charge claimed that his application for his civil service job falsely stated he was Muslim when he was in fact an atheist.

On June 14, 2012, a district court sentenced atheist Alexander Aan to two years and six months in prison for "spreading information inciting religious hatred and animosity." Aan was also reportedly fined 100 million rupiah (US $10,600).

Laos

Discriminatory Laws:

The constitution provides for freedom of religion or belief. However, other laws and policies restrict this right. The prime minister's Decree on Religious Practice (Decree 92) is the principal legal instrument defining rules for religious practice; it institutionalizes the government's role as the final arbiter of permissible religious activities. Although the government does not recognize an official state religion, the government's exemption of Buddhism from many of the Decree 92 restrictions, sponsorship of

Buddhist facilities, incorporation of Buddhist ritual and ceremony in state functions, and promotion of Buddhism as an element of the country's cultural and spiritual identity give Theravada Buddhism an elevated status.

Malaysia

Discriminatory Laws:

The constitution protects freedom of religion or belief. However, portions of the constitution as well as other laws and policies restrict this freedom.

Prosecutions for blasphemy usually target those who offend Islam, but an insult to any religion can give rise to prosecutionEvery Malaysian citizen over the age of 12 must carry an identification card, a 'MyKad', which must state the bearer's religion. This requirement alone appears to breach the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPT) under which States have no right to demand to know the religion of any of their citizens; a point reinforced by Section 3 of General Comment 22 of the Human Rights Committee: 'In accordance with articles 18.2 and 17, no one can be compelled to reveal his thoughts or adherence to a religion or belief.' But, in addition, the government has a history of limiting how citizens can identify their religion.

The constitution defines ethnic Malays as Muslim. Authorities at the state level administer Sharia laws through Islamic courts and have jurisdiction over all Muslims. Sharia laws and the degree of their enforcement vary by state. State governments impose Sharia law on Muslims in some cultural and social matters but generally do not interfere with the religious practices of non-Muslim communities; however, debates continued regarding incorporating elements of Sharia law, such as *khalwat* (being in close physical proximity with an unrelated member of the opposite sex), into secular civil and criminal law. Although specific punishments for violation of *khalwat* vary from state to state, it is typically punishable by some combination of imprisonment up to two years, a fine of RM 3,000 ($940), or several strokes of the cane.

Amending the penal code is the exclusive prerogative of the federal government. Despite contradicting federal law, the state governments of Kelantan and Terengganu passed laws in 1993 and 2002, respectively, making apostasy a capital offense. Apostasy is defined as the conversion from Islam to another faith. No one has been convicted under these laws and, according to a 1993 statement by the Attorney General, the laws cannot be enforced absent a constitutional amendment. Nationally, Muslims who seek to convert to another religion must first obtain approval from a Sharia court to declare themselves "apostates." This effectively prohibits the conversion of Muslims, since Sharia courts seldom grant such requests and can impose penalties (such as enforced "rehabilitation") on apostates. Additionally, Articles 295-298A of the penal code allow up to three years in prison and a US $1,000 fine penalties for those who "commit offenses against religion", which covers "blasphemous" statements, usually against Islam.

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Cases of discrimination:

In 2001, Lina Joy, a Malaysian who converted to Christianity 10 years before, applied to have the religious status 'Islam' removed from her identification card. On application to the Sharia courts, the judge ruled against her with the claim that “as the plaintiff is a Malay, she is subjected to the laws of Islam until she dies”. After further appeals and rejections, Joy's lawyer appealed to Malaysia’s highest court, the Court of Appeals, arguing that her conversion be considered a right protected under the Constitution, not a religious matter for the Sharia courts. Her appeal was rejected. According to the Court's judgment, the law does not officially recognize Lina Joy’s conversion from Islam to Christianity. According to Sharia law within most Malaysian states, apostasy or conversion is a punishable offence; either with a fine, a jail sentence or both.

On May 23, 2012, Nik Raina Nik Abdul Aziz, 36, a manager at the Borders bookstore in Mid Valley City, Malaysia, was accused of blasphemy for distributing a book, titled *Allah, Liberty and Love*, by the Canadian author Irshad Mani, which had been translated into Bahasa Malaysia. She faces a RM 3,000 fine (about $1,000) or maximum two years’ jail or both under Section 13(1) Syariah Criminal Offences Act (Federal Territories) 1997, if convicted.

Europe

Austria

Discriminatory Laws:

The constitution and other laws and policies protect freedom of religion or belief. There are some restrictions on speech that might offend religious feelings. Section 188 of the Austrian Criminal Code, called 'Vilification of Religious Teachings', criminalizes "Anyone who publicly disparages a person or thing that is the object of worship of a domestic church or religious society, or a doctrine, [or other] behavior is likely to attract legitimate offense…"

Cases of Discrimination:

On Dec. 11, 2009, Catholic clerics in Vienna sued the cartoonist Manfred Deix for two drawings on the website NEWS.at which depict God and the EU prohibition against crucifixes in schools, respectively.

On Jan. 22, 2009, the Austrian politician Susanne Winter was sentenced at a court in Graz to pay a $24,000 fine for "humiliating a religion" by saying, among other things, that Muhammad was a pedophile.

On Dec. 11, 2010, 63-year-old Helmut G. was convicted for offending his Muslim neighbor by yodeling while lawn mowing. The neighbor claimed Helmet was trying to mock and imitate the Muezzin, the Muslim call to prayer.

On Jan. 15, 2011, Elizabeth Sabaditsch-Wolf was convicted of offending religion because she exclaimed, about the Prophet Muhammad's nine-year-old wife, "If that is not pedophilia, what is it?"

France

Discriminatory Laws:

The constitution and other laws, including the 1905 law on the "Separation of the Churches and the State", ensure state secularism (*laïcité*) and protect freedom of religion or belief. There are some exceptions to the policy of strict secularism. For example the French government owns and maintains free of charge all the Roman Catholic churches built before 1905, but no other religious building. And the law of 1905 does not completely apply to regions that (re)joined France after 1905. For example,

there are still blasphemy laws on the book in the regions of Alsace and Moselle, as Articles 166 and 167 of the local penal code, although no convictions have been registered.

Germany

Discriminatory Laws:

The constitution and other laws protect freedom of religion or belief. However, the criminal code addresses the insulting of faiths, religious societies, and ideological groups. Article 166 of the German Criminal Code states, “Whoever publicly or through dissemination of writings insults the content of others' religious faith or faith related to a philosophy of life in a manner that is capable of disturbing the public peace, shall be punished with imprisonment for not more than three years or a fine.”

In 1974, the German state of Bavaria concluded a treaty with the Holy See (technically an addition to the concordat between Bavaria and Pope Pius XI of 1924) which gave Catholic bishops the right to veto the nomination of a professor of theology, philosophy, pedagogy and sociology/political science at state universities if the candidate does not entertain the standpoint of the Catholic Church. This stipulation concerned professors in the faculties of seven Bavarian universities. The Catholic Church had urged this privilege as a compensation for its loss of influence over children from Catholic families after the people of Bavaria had voted in a referendum in 1968 to abolish the separation of primary schools into separate Catholic and Protestant schools.

Cases of Discrimination:

On Feb. 23, 2006, a 61-year-old German businessman who printed the word “Koran” repeatedly along toilet paper reportedly in order to raise funds for an artistic campaign against Islamic terrorism was given a one year suspended prison sentence and ordered to complete 300 hours of community service. The jail term was suspended for five years, meaning the man could be jailed for one year if he committed another offence in the next five. His sentence was made harsher than usual because it followed the worldwide controversy over the cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad published in Danish newspapers.

On April 24, 2009, German professor of Islamic studies Sven Kalisch, expressed doubts about the historical existence of Muhammad and received death threats. He must live under police protection and teach in secret. Kalisch received a prohibition from the Minister of Science Andreas Pinkwart against participating in the education of teachers of Qu’ran, but he is permitted to continue his research.

On April 9, 2010, the German magazine Titanic was prosecuted by a Frankfurt court for a front page cartoon in which the crucified Jesus appears to be receiving fellatio from a Catholic cleric, as a commentary to the actual pedophilia scandals in the Catholic Church.

In 2007, the chair of moral philosophy at the Institute for Philosophy at Erlangen University in Bavaria went into retirement and the chair was advertised with the usual disclaimer that it was subject to the Bavarian-Catholic Concordant of 1974. Seven citizens then filed a claim with the courts regarding this advertisement, claiming that it was illegal and discriminatory. However, since of these seven people only Professor Ulla Wessels had actually applied for the position, Wessels was the only petitioner able to carry on with the litigation. The university, representing the State of Bavaria, argued that questions of religion had not played any role in the deliberation of the nomination committee. However, Wessels was able to present a letter to the court written by the dean of the faculty, who was also the head of the hiring committee, sent to one of the candidates asking which faith he belonged to. The court then ordered a stop to the proceedings of the nomination committee in December 2010. However, shortly after this ruling the last candidate on the nomination list declined the offer of the university and the proceedings of the committee and also of the litigation came to an end. Wessels, in order to get a ruling on the question of the constitutionality of this church privilege, asked the court to rule as to whether the proceedings of the faculty had been contrary to German law. However, the district court and the court of appeals rejected her claim, arguing that Professor Wessels had no justified interest in the ruling she was asking for since a case of recurrence could be ruled out: the university would be bound to pay no attention to the religion of the candidates in the future. Professor Wessels has now filed a constitutional appeal with the federal constitutional court. The aforementioned chair of moral philosophy has now been advertised anew with the relevant disclaimer regarding the Concordant, directly disobeying the ruling of the district court.

Greece

Discriminatory Laws:

The constitution and other laws and policies protect freedom of religion or belief. However, anti-blasphemy laws and state sponsorship of religion exist.

Article 198 of the Greek Penal Code states that “1. One who publicly and maliciously and by any means blasphemes God shall be punished by imprisonment for not more than two years; 2. Anyone, except as described in par.1, who displays publicly with blasphemy a lack of respect for things divine, is punished with up to 3 months in prison. ” Article 199 states that “one who publicly and maliciously and by any means blasphemes the Greek Orthodox Church or any other religion tolerable in Greece shall be punished by imprisonment for not more than two years.” Similarly, the country outlaws any speech or acts that “insults public sentiment” or “offends people’s religious sentiments.”

The government financially supports the Orthodox Church; for example, the government pays for the salaries and religious training of clergy, finances the maintenance of Orthodox Church buildings, and exempts from tax Orthodox Church's revenues from properties it owns. Orthodox religious instruction in primary and secondary schools, at government expense, is mandatory for all students, although non-Orthodox students may exempt themselves. However, public schools offer no alternative activity or non-Orthodox religious instruction for these children.

Cases of Discrimination:

On Feb. 8, 2005, the Austrian draughtsman Gerhard Haderere was sentenced to six months prison in Greece for blasphemy in his Das Leben des Jesu, a satire in which Jesus is portrayed as an incense-addicted hippy. Haderer, living in Germany, faced extradition and a suspended six-month jail sentence; the ban and sentence were reversed on appeal.

On June 9th, 2012, three actors in the play "Corpus Christi" were arrested with the charge of blasphemy following a lawsuit filed by Greek Orthodox Bishop Seraphim of Piraeus. Then, in November, the Athens public prosecutor charged the organizers, producers and cast of the play with blasphemy. If convicted, they could face several months in prison. According to newspaper reports, Bishop Seraphim was accompanied to court by members of the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party.

In late September, 2012, a man was arrested in Evia, Greece, on charges of posting "malicious blasphemy and religious insult on the known social networking site, Facebook". The accused, 27-year-old Phillipos Loizos, had created a Facebook page for "Elder Pastitsios the Pastafarian", playing on a combination of Elder Paisios, the late Greek-Orthodox monk revered as a prophet by some, and the Greek food pastitsio, a baked pasta dish made of ground beef and béchamel sauce. "Pastafarian" refers to the spoof religion of the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster, itself an intentional pun on aspects of Creationism. A manipulated image on the Facebook page depicted Elder Pastitsios with a pastitsio where the monk's face would normally appear.

Iceland

Discriminatory Laws:

The constitution and other laws and policies protect freedom of religion. However, the state financially supports and promotes Lutheranism as the country's official religion. The Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC), which is the state church, enjoys some advantages not available to other religion and belief groups. Members of religious communities are allowed to designate part of their income tax to go to their church, but the non-religious have consistently been refused the right to designate their Humanist Association to enjoy the same privilege.

Ireland

Discriminatory Laws:

The constitution and other laws and policies protect freedom of religion or belief. However, anti-blasphemy laws and state sponsorship of religion exist.

Section 36 of Ireland's Defamation Act of 2009 criminalizes the publishing or utterance of "blasphemous matter" and imposes a maximum fine of €25,000. That is "matter that is grossly abusive or insulting in relation to matters held sacred by any religion, thereby causing outrage among a substantial number of the adherents of that religion…" Protection exists if "a reasonable person would find genuine literary, artistic, political, scientific, or academic value in the matter to which the offence relates."

There is still a requirement for holders of public office—including judges and the state president--to take a religious oath.

Cases of Discrimination:

In 2000, a new religious education course was introduced that was supposed to be suitable for all religions and those without religion. However, parents who do not wish to have their children attend religious classes in school are routinely asked to supervise them personally during school hours because schools will not do so. Furthermore, some schools are reportedly forcing the children of non-religious parents to take a religious education course introduced a decade ago.

In 2003 the Equality Authority declared that publicly-funded church-linked schools are legally permitted to refuse to admit a student who is not of that religious group if the school can prove that the refusal is essential to the maintenance of the "ethos" of the school.

Italy

Discriminatory Laws:

The constitution and other laws and policies protect freedom of religion or belief. However, under article 724 of the penal code, blasphemy is considered as an "administrative offense" and punished with a fine. Administrative law requires that all classrooms in state schools display crucifixes.

Additionally, the government recognizes the Holy See as a sovereign authority. Under the 1984 revision of the concordat with the Catholic Church, the state is secular but maintains the practice of state support for religion, which can also be extended to non-Catholic confessions if requested. In such cases, state support is governed by legislation implementing the provisions of an *intesa* (accord) between the government and the religious group. An *intesa* grants clergy automatic access to state hospitals, prisons, and military barracks; allows for civil registry of religious marriages; facilitates special religious practices regarding funerals; and exempts students from school attendance on religious holidays. If a religious community so requests, an *intesa* may provide for state routing of funds, through a voluntary check-off on taxpayer returns, to that community. The state paid Catholic religion teachers, but this financial support was not available to other religious communities. If a student requested the assistance of a religion teacher of a non-Catholic religious group, that group could select a representative but had to cover the cost. The government provided funds for the construction of places of worship, granted public

land for their construction, and helped preserve and maintain historic places of worship that shelter much of the country's artistic and cultural heritage.

Cases of Discrimination:

On June 12, 2006, the blasphemy case against the author Oriana Fallaci begins in Bergamo, Italy. Prosecutors alleged that her latest book, La Forza della Ragione (The Force of Reason), contained eighteen statements “unequivocally offensive to Islam and Muslims.” Oriana Fallaci died of lung cancer before the trial could conclude.

On March 16, 2005, a Milan court prohibited a billboard campaign by the clothes company Francois Girbaut because of a photo imitating Leonardo’s Last Supper.

On October 20, 2010, the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Franco Frattini, called for Muslims, Jews and Christians to unite to fight the “threat” that he claims atheism poses to society.

Liechtenstein

Discriminatory Laws:

The constitution and other laws and policies protect freedom of religion or belief. However, the constitution makes the Catholic Church the "National Church" of the country, and as such it enjoys the full protection of the state.

The government gives money not only to the Catholic Church, but also to other denominations. Catholic and Protestant churches receive regular annual contributions from the government in proportion to membership as determined in the 2000 census; smaller religious groups are eligible to apply for grants for associations of foreigners or specific projects. Religious education is part of the curriculum at public schools. Catholic or Protestant religious education is compulsory in all primary schools. The curriculum for Catholic confessional education is determined by the Roman Catholic Church with only a minor complementary supervisory role by the municipalities. At the secondary school level, parents and pupils choose between traditional confessional education organized by their religious community and the non-confessional (secular) subject "Religion and Culture." Since its introduction in 2003, 90 percent of Catholic pupils have chosen the non-confessional subject.

Malta

Discriminatory Laws:

The constitution and other laws protect freedom of religion or belief. However, Article 2 of the Maltese Constitution states: (1) The religion of Malta is the Roman Catholic Apostolic Religion. (2) The authorities of the Roman Catholic Apostolic Church have the duty and the right to teach which principles are right and which are wrong. (3) Religious teaching of the Roman Catholic Apostolic Faith shall be provided in all state schools as part of compulsory education.

As a result of this state endorsement of a particular religion, one third of all primary and secondary students attend Catholic schools, which the state fully funds as per a 1993 concordat between Malta and the Vatican. Owing to certain historical factors, church schools have over the past thirty years obtained a reputation of being educationally better than state schools. This has led to a reinforcing cycle as more educationally-motivated parents send their children to church schools, leading to these schools obtaining better results (and therefore more funding) than state schools. The number of students attending church schools is increasing as the church embarks on a school building program aided by government funds.

Religion in secondary schools is taught by teachers dedicated to that subject. These teachers have to be given a "Certificate of Suitability" by the local church and there have been instances where these certificates have been revoked due to a teacher not living an "exemplary" life based upon Catholic values. In primary schools, teachers have to teach religion along with other subjects and the church can still object to a teacher regarding suitability though no certificate needs to be given prior to a teacher being engaged in teaching primary school.

Although teachers in church schools are paid by the State, they are selected and employed by the church school management. There have been reported instances of teachers not being hired, or else even being fired by church schools, owing to disapproval over their lifestyle. Unfortunately, it is difficult to gain concrete evidence of such instances.

Netherlands

Discriminatory Laws:

The constitution and other laws and policies protect freedom of religion or belief. However, it is a crime to engage in public speech that incites religious hatred.

Article 137c of the Dutch Penal Code penalizes defamation of groups "because of their race, religion or convictions, their heterosexual or homosexual orientation or physical, psychological or mental disability…" Article 137d criminalizes inciting "hatred or discrimination against persons or violence against person or property on the grounds of their race, religion or beliefs, their gender, their heterosexual or homosexual orientation or their physical, psychological or mental disability…" Article 429bis criminalizes display of "scornful blasphemy for insulting religious feelings" along public roads. Fines are to be levied, with prison for repeat offenders.

Cases of discrimination:

On March 19, 2008, the Dutch cartoonist Gregorius Nekschot (pseudonym) was arrested for insulting Muslims and African Americans in his drawings. He was later released, but still might be charged.

On Jan. 21, 2009, the Amsterdam appeal court authorized the prosecution of Geert Wilders for his film Fitna and its “comparisons between Islam and Nazism.” Wilders was subsequently acquitted of these charges in June, 2011.

Norway

Discriminatory Laws:

The constitution and other laws and policies protect freedom of religion or belief. However, the Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC), the state church, enjoys some benefits not available to other religious and humanist groups, even though 2012 saw a move towards greater separation between state and church. The state supports the church financially. Other religion or belief communities may register with the government to receive state financial support, which is provided to all registered life-stance groups in proportion to their formally registered membership. The largest such group after the state church is the Norwegian Humanist Association, a non-religious life-stance organization with around 80,000 members.

The Christian Knowledge and Religious and Ethical Information (CKREE) course for grades 1 through 10 (generally ages 6 to 16) reviews world religions and philosophy while promoting tolerance and respect for all religious beliefs. Citing the country’s Christian history (and the stated importance of Christianity to society), the CKREE course devotes an extensive amount of time to studying Christianity, but the course includes discussion of other religions. This course is mandatory; there are no exceptions for children of other religious groups, or Humanists or other non-religious students. Students may be exempted from participating in or performing specific religious acts, such as church services or prayer.

Poland

Discriminatory Laws:

The constitution and other laws and policies protect freedom of religion or belief. However, Poland’s penal code states "Whoever offends religious feelings of other people by publicly insulting an object of religious cult or a place for public holding of religious ceremonies, is subject to a fine, restriction of liberty or loss of liberty for up to 2 years.”

Cases of Discrimination:

On July 23, 2003, the Polish artist Danuta Nieznalska received a fine and a six months travel prohibition for exhibiting artwork with a photo of a penis on a cross.

In January 2012, Dorota Rabczewska, a popular musician better known as Doda, was fined US $1,450 for “offending religious feelings” when she said in an interview that the Bible is full of "unbelievable tales" and that "it's hard to believe in something written down by someone drunk on wine and smoking some kind of herbs."

In October 2012, Poland’s Supreme Court opened the way for a blasphemy verdict against another musician, Adam Darksi. Darski, who uses the stage name Nergal, is the lead singer of a heavy metal group named Behemoth. During a concert in 2007 Darski ripped up a Bible and called it deceitful and described the Roman Catholic Church as "a criminal sect". He was tried for “offending religious feelings”. A lower court dismissed the charges, but the Supreme Court was then asked to rule on the legal arguments arising from the case. The Supreme Court ruled that Darski could be convicted of the crime of “offending religious feelings” even if he did not act with the "direct intention" of offending those feelings. That interpretation closed off an argument used by lawyers for Darski, who said he had not committed a crime because he did not intend to offend anyone. The case therefore returns to a lower court. If found guilty, Darski faces a maximum sentence of two years in jail, under Poland's criminal code.

Russia

Discriminatory Laws:

The constitution and other laws and policies protect freedom of religion or belief; however, Article 282 of the Criminal Code bans “Inciting religious hatred”, for which maximum penalty is 3 years in prison. Most often fines are levied, at a maximum of 200,000 Rubles (US$6,500).

Cases of Discrimination:

On Jan. 18, 2008, Aleksander Sdvizhkov, the editor of the White-Russian magazine Zgoda, was sentenced to three years in a labor camp for reprinting the Danish Muhammad cartoons.

On June 13, 2010, two Russian gallerists, Jury Samadurov and Andrei Jerefeyev, were given large fines for organizing an exhibition called “Prohibited Art” at the Sakharov Center, which included portrayals of Jesus as Mickey Mouse and as Lenin.

On August 17, 2012, three members of Pussy Riot, a feminist group that spreads its freethinking message through punk rock and performance art, were convicted of "hooliganism motivated by religious hatred" and sentenced to two years hard labor. Their offense was to shoot a music video called "Punk Prayer: Mother of God, Chase Putin Away!" at Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Saviour.

Sweden

Discriminatory Laws:

The constitution and other laws and policies protect freedom of religion or belief. Members of religious communities are allowed to designate part of their income tax to go to their church, but the non-religious have consistently been refused the right to designate their Humanist Association to enjoy the same privilege.

Chapter 16 Section 8 of the penal code criminalizes “A person who, in a disseminated statement or communication, threatens or expresses contempt for a national, ethnic or other such group of persons with allusion to race, colour, national or ethnic origin or religious belief…”

Cases of discrimination:

On Sept. 16, 2010, a court case began against the Swedish politician Carl Herslow for making a poster depicting Muhammad with his nine-year-old wife, Aisha. The jury found him not guilty of “agitation against an ethnic group.”

Switzerland

Discriminatory Laws:

The constitution and other laws and policies protect freedom of religion or belief. However, some individual cantons still pursue discriminatory policies based on the locally dominant religion (Protestant or Catholic).

Most of the 26 cantons (with the exception of Geneva and Neuchatel, where church and state are separate) financially support at least one of the three traditional religious communities—Roman Catholic, Old Catholic, or Protestant—with funds collected through a church tax. Each canton observes its own regulations regarding the relationship between church and state. In some cantons the church tax is voluntary, while in others an individual who chooses not to contribute to the church tax may have to leave the church formally. In some cantons private companies are unable to avoid payment of the church tax. Some cantons also allow the church tax to be collected on behalf of the Jewish community. Islamic and other nontraditional religious and atheist groups are excluded from these benefits.

Cases of discrimination:

In October 2010, Valentin Abgottspon was dismissed from his job as teacher at a public school in the canton of Valais after he raised concerns about the state’s promotion of Catholicism in public

schools. Article 3 of the canton's education law states that schools should prepare students for their duties "as human beings and Christians". Abgottspon was told he was fired for removing the crucifix from the classrooms in the public school at which he taught.

Turkey

Discriminatory Laws:

The Constitution protects freedom of religion or belief, guaranteeing equal protection before the law, irrespective of 'philosophical belief, religion and sect'. It also lists secularism as one of the fundamental characteristics of the republic. However, there are a few constitutional provisions which infringe on freedom of religion or belief and go against the principle of secularism.

Religion classes at primary and secondary schools are compulsory. Article 42 requires this education to be conducted under the 'supervision and control of the state'. While these classes cover basic information about other religions, they are predominantly about the theory and practice of Sunni Hanefi Islam. The state allocates substantial funds to provide religious services for Sunni Muslims: to pay the salaries of imams, construct mosques and oversee pilgrimage.

Cases of discrimination:

On May 26, 2009, the Turkish court case began against Nedim Gursel for his description of Muhammad and his family in the book Allah's Daughters, which allegedly insults religion and incites hatred. He was acquitted in June 2009.

On June 1, 2012, Turkish authorities charged Fazil Say, an atheist and world-renowned classical and jazz pianist, with insulting Islamic values in Twitter messages, the latest in a series of legal actions against Turkish artists, writers and intellectuals for statements they have made about religion and Turkish national identity. Say has denied the charges, but a court in Istanbul has scheduled the case to begin on February 18, 2013. If convicted, he faces up to 18 months in prison.

United Kingdom

Discriminatory Laws:

Various statutes and policies protect freedom of religion or belief. However, the Church of England's status as the established church grants that Church a privileged constitutional status and position in official ceremonies and informally lends it many other advantages, and is viewed as a source of disadvantage to the non-religious as well as to other religious communities.

The Church of England (C of E) is granted privileged access to the British Parliament. The 26 most senior C of E Bishops are automatically granted membership in the House of Lords – the upper chamber of Parliament – where they have the right to speak and vote on all legislation. They acquired this right

solely by virtue of their position in the hierarchy of one particular denomination of one particular Church. They are unaccountable to the public.

More than 30% of state-funded schools (which are 100% funded by public monies) in England and Wales are run by church authorities, and their number is increasing. These schools are allowed to discriminate against students—in their admission policies—and teachers—in hiring, discipline and firing, even in subjects that do not relate to the religious mission of the school—based on their religion (either because they are not religious or belong to a different religion or denomination than the school authorities) or their personal life (for example, teachers may be fired, or simply not hired, because of their sexual orientation or even because they have children out of wedlock). The right to discriminate in employment was recently extended to non-teaching posts in England. In addition, a large number of these schools have statutory obligations to provide confessional religious teaching rather than non-confessional teaching which, again, is entirely publicly funded.

In England and Wales, every state-funded school (which are 100% funded by public monies) is legally required to hold a daily act of collective worship. In the 66% of schools which are not designated with a religious character, this worship must be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character. Schools can apply to have this changed to another faith for some or all of their students, but cannot have this changed to be secular. Students can be opted out of worship, however the opt-out is rarely used because it singles out students from their peers and is likely to mean they miss out on school notices.

Religious organisations have important exemptions from the Equality Act 2010 that allow them to discriminate in various ways, even when working under contract to provide a public service. For example, the exemptions from employment equality legislation allow religious employers to discriminate against potential applicants for jobs on grounds of religion or belief and of sexual orientation, and to discriminate against current employees on those same grounds in ways such as barring her/him from opportunities for promotion or by dismissing them.

In 2012, places of worship were singled out for preferential treatment following the removal of the zero Value Added Tax (VAT) rating concession for alterations to listed buildings announced in the budget. The government set aside £30 million per annum to compensate places of worship for the extra VAT resulting from the withdrawal of the concession. The government also helps fund the repair and maintenance of all listed places of worship for religious groups nationwide and contributes to the budget of the Church Conservation Trust, which preserves disused Church of England buildings of architectural or historic significance.

Under Section 5 of the Public Order Act, police and courts may charge people for expressions that are perceived as religiously “insulting”. Section 5 does not require proof of actual harm, only “likelihood” that someone, somewhere, might be “distressed”.

Cases of discrimination:

In 2008 Prospects, a Christian charity which receives public money for its work with people with learning disabilities, was found to have acted illegally when it began – in 2004 – recruiting only practising Christians for almost all posts, and told existing non-Christian staff that they were no longer eligible for promotion. Although the practice was found to be unlawful, there is evidence it is

still continuing and many other religious organisations in analogous positions are operating the same discriminatory rules.

Every year, local government bodies hear a number of appeals from parents who, because of their religion or belief, have had their children turned down from the local state-funded school.

In June 2012, John Roberts, a retiree in the county of Lincolnshire, was warned by police, referencing cases brought under Section 5 of the Public Order Act, that he could be arrested if he did not take a sign down from his window saying “religions are fairy stories for adults”.

Middle East & North Africa

Algeria

Discriminatory Laws:

The constitution and other laws and policies protect freedom of religion or belief. However, Algeria's constitution also makes Islam the official religion. Its penal code disallows persons from insulting religious sentiments or inciting hatred against religion. The country also has a Ministry of Religious Affairs that works to ban any publishing and broadcasting content deemed blasphemous.

Bahrain

Discriminatory Laws:

The constitution does not explicitly protect freedom of religion or belief, but it does make provision for the freedom of conscience, the inviolability of places of worship, and the freedom to perform religious rites and hold religious parades and meetings, in accordance with the customs observed in the country. The constitution stipulates that there shall be no discrimination in the rights and duties of citizens on grounds of religion. However, the constitution also states that Islam is the official religion and that Islamic law is a principal source for legislation.

By declaring Islam as the state religion and Islamic law as the source of legislation, the constitution implies that Muslims are forbidden to change their religion (since Sharia outlaws apostasy). The constitution imposes no restrictions on non-Muslims' right to choose, change, or practice their religion or belief, including the study, discussion, and promulgation of those beliefs. The constitution prohibits discrimination in the rights and duties of citizens on the basis of religion or belief; however, there are no further laws to prevent discrimination, nor procedures to file a grievance.

The civil and criminal legal systems consist of a complex mix of courts based on diverse legal sources, including both Shiite and Sunni schools of Islamic jurisprudence, tribal law, and other civil codes. Sharia governs personal status, and a person's rights can vary according to Shiite or Sunni interpretation, as determined by the individual's faith or by the courts. In May 2009, the government adopted the country's first personal status law, which regulates family matters such as inheritance, child custody, marriage, and divorce. The law is only applicable to the Sunni population as Shiite clerics and lawmakers opposed legislation that would have applied to Shiite courts.

The press and publications law prohibits anti-Islamic media, and mandates imprisonment for "exposing the state's official religion for offense and criticism." The law states that "any publication that prejudices the ruling system of the country and its official religion can be banned from publication by a ministerial order." The law allows the production and distribution of religious media and publications. Islamic studies are a part of the curriculum in government schools and mandatory for all public school students. In 2011, Bahrain experienced prolonged unrest as protestors, predominantly from the majority Shia community, demanded political reform and an end to the political hegemony of the Sunni minority. The sectarian dimension of the political uprising resulted in substantial intra-Muslim conflict, including government attacks on Shiite religious buildings and the violent oppression of Shiite protestors. Violence

has diminished in 2012, but the simmering sectarian tensions remain alongside the demands for political reform.

Discriminatory cases:

In August, 2012, a Bahraini court sentenced a man to two years in prison for making insulting comments about one of the Prophet Mohammad's wives. The man reportedly insulted Aisha in comments online.

Egypt

Discriminatory Laws:

The constitution and other laws and policies protect freedom of religion or belief. However, Article 98(f) of the country's penal code, as amended by law 147/2006, states that "whoever makes use of religion in propagating, either by words, in writing, or in any other means, extreme ideas for the purpose of inciting strife, ridiculing or insulting a heavenly religion or a sect following it, or damaging national unity" should be punished with between six months and five years imprisonment, and/or a fine between five hundred and one thousand pounds. The constitutional situation remains unclear and fluid with continuing political upheaval following the democratic revolution. There has been a marked increase in blasphemy charges in the past year directed at atheist and Coptic Christians, especially since the YouTube video "Innocence of Muslims" (produced by Coptic emigrants from Egypt) was publicized in the country.

Cases of discrimination:

On February 22nd, 2007 An Egyptian court sentenced a blogger, Abdel Kareem Soliman, to four years' prison for insulting Islam and the president. Soliman's trial was the first time that a blogger had been prosecuted in Egypt. He had used his web log to criticise the country's top Islamic institution, al-Azhar university and President Hosni Mubarak, whom he called a dictator.

On Oct. 27, 2007, blogger Kareem Amer was sentenced for Facebook posts deemed offensive to Islam, along with being seditious toward Hosni Mubarak. He was released on Nov. 17, 2010, upon which he was re-detained by security forces and allegedly tortured.

On Oct. 12, 2011, a court gave Ayman Yusef Mansur, 24, a three-year prison sentence with hard labor because he allegedly intentionally insulted the dignity of the Islamic religion with criticism on Facebook. The court did not make available what exactly Mansur posted on Facebook to draw the sentence.

In February 2012, a Christian school secretary named Makram Diab was sentenced to six years in prison for "insulting the Prophet Muhammad." A mob of 2,500 Muslims rallied outside the

courthouse and demanded Diab be sentenced to death. Diab was apparently convicted on the testimony of Muslim colleagues, who stated he had made offensive remarks.

On 4 April 2012, An Egyptian court sentenced 17-year-old Christian boy, Gamal Abdou Massoud, to three years in jail for publishing cartoons on his Facebook page that “mocked” Islam and the Prophet Mohammad. Massoud was also accused of distributing some of his cartoons to his school friends in a village in the southern city of Assiut, home to a large Christian population. The child's court in Assiut sentenced Gamal Abdou Massoud to three years in prison “after he insulted Islam and published and distributed pictures that insulted Islam and its Prophet,” the court said in a statement seen by Reuters. The cartoons, published by Massoud in December, had already prompted some Muslims to attack Christians, with several Christian houses burned and several people injured in the violence.

September 2012 also saw riots across Egypt over the YouTube video “Innocence of Muslims”, which offended Muslims with its portrayal of the Prophet Mohammad. As a result, in November an Egyptian court convicted, in absentia, seven Coptic Christians, allegedly involved in the production of the movie, for "insulting the Islamic religion through participating in producing and offering a movie that insults Islam and its prophet." At the same time, the court convicted an American Christian pastor, Terry Jones, for burning the Quran on YouTube. All eight were sentenced to death, but they are all living abroad in countries that are not expected to extradite them to Egypt.

On September 14, 2012, during the riots over the “Innocence of Muslims”, Alber Saber was arrested after a mob formed outside his home and demanded his arrest for insulting religion. Saber is a twenty-seven-year-old prominent activist for secular democracy in Egypt. Raised in a Coptic Christian household, Saber is an atheist who reportedly operates the Egyptian Atheists page on Facebook and has been a vocal critic of fundamentalist Islam. Saber was reportedly beaten after a prison guard announced his charges to others in Saber’s cell. He faces between six months and five years in prison and/or a fine between five hundred and one thousand pounds. His trial is currently ongoing.

In late July 2012 a Coptic Christian teacher, Bishoy Kamel, 32, was arrested in the southern governorate of Sohag over an accusation that he posted images “insulting” to Islam on his Facebook page. Police were reported by al-Ahram newspaper as saying Kamel could be charged with blasphemy and would face up to five years in prison if convicted. The images he allegedly posted were cartoons depicting the Prophet Mohamed and Egypt’s new President Mohamed Morsi. Mohamed Safwat, who filed the charges against Kamel, reportedly argued that that the teacher had also “insulted members of his own family.” Kamel admitted to managing the Facebook page under investigation but denied the charges, claiming his account had been hacked. In September 2012 Kamel was sentenced to six years in prison for blasphemy.

Iran

Discriminatory Laws:

There is no freedom of religion or belief in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Iranian law bars any criticism of Islam or deviation from the ruling Islamic standards. Government leaders use these laws to persecute religious minorities and dissidents.

Article 110 of the Constitution lists all the powers granted to the Spiritual Leader (a Muslim religious and political leader), appointed by his peers for an unlimited duration. Among others, the Spiritual Leader exercises his control over the judiciary, the army, the police, the radio, the television, but also over the President and the Parliament, institutions elected by the people. Article 91 of the Constitution establishes a body known as the "Guardian Council" whose function is to examine the compatibility of all legislation enacted by the Islamic Consultative Assembly with "the criteria of Islam and the Constitution"3 and who can therefore veto any and all legislation. Half of the members of the Guardian Council are appointed by the Spiritual Leader and the other half are elected by the Islamic Consultative Assembly from among the Muslim jurists nominated by the Head of the Judicial Power (who is, himself, appointed by the Spiritual Leader).

The Guardian council exercises a double control of any draft legislation, with two different procedures:

- conformity with the Constitution (all 12 elected members vote, a simple majority recognizes the constitutionality)
- conformity with Islam (only the six religious leaders elected personally by the Spiritual leader vote, and a simple majority is required to declare the compatibility of a draft legislation with Islam).

Consequently, four religious leaders may block all draft legislation enacted by the Parliament. The Guardian Council and the Supreme Leader therefore and in practice centralize all powers in Iran.

Articles 12 and 13 of the Constitution divides citizens of the Islamic Republic of Iran into four categories: Muslims, Zoroastrians, Jews and Christians. Nonbelievers are effectively left out and aren't afforded any rights or protections. They must declare their faith in one of the four officially recognized religions in order to be able to claim a number of legal rights, such as the possibility to apply for the general examination to enter any university in Iran. Other belief groups outside of the four recognized religions, such as Bahá'ís, also suffer from this discrimination and are actively prevented from attending university.

Only Muslims are able to take part in the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and to conduct public affairs at a high level. According to the Constitution, non-Muslims cannot hold the following key decision-making positions:

- President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, who must be a Shi'a Muslim (Article 1156)
- Commanders in the Islamic Army (Article 1447)
- Judges, at any level (Article 163 and law of 1983 on the selection of judges 8)

Moreover, non-Muslims are not eligible to become members of the Parliament (the Islamic Consultative Assembly) through the general elections. Finally, non-Muslims cannot become members of the very influential Guardian Council.

A study of the Penal Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran reveals that, for a number of offences, the punishment differs in function of the religion of the victim and/or the religion of the offender. The fate of Muslim victims and offenders is systematically more favorable than that of non-Muslims, showing that the life and physical integrity of Muslims is given a much higher value than that of non-Muslims. This institutionalized discrimination is particularly blatant for the following crimes:

1. *Adultery*: The sanctions for adultery vary widely according to the religion of both members of the couple. A Muslim man who commits adultery with a Muslim woman is punished by 100 lashes (Article 8811). However, a non-Muslim man who commits adultery with a Muslim woman is subject to the death penalty (Article 82-c12). If a Muslim man commits adultery with a non-Muslim woman, the Penal Code does not specify any penalty.
2. *Homosexuality*: Likewise, homosexuality "without consummation" between two Muslim men is punished by 100 lashes (Article 12113) but if the "active party" is non-Muslim and the other Muslim, the non-Muslim is subject to the death penalty.
3. *Crimes against the Deceased*: Article 49418 stipulates penalties for crimes against a deceased Muslim but the Penal Code does not edict any penalties for the violation of the corpse of a non-Muslim.

Cases of discrimination:

On Jan. 17, 2012, the country's Supreme Court confirmed the previously handed down death sentence for 35-year-old web designer and Canadian resident Saeed Malekpour. Malekpour had returned to Iran in 2008 to visit his dying father and was arrested for "insulting and desecrating Islam" for creating a computer program used by others to download pornography.

Israel

Discriminatory Laws:

While there is no formal constitution, Israel's Supreme Court has repeatedly held that the Basic Law on Human Dignity and Liberty protects freedom of religion or belief. The Basic Law describes the country as a "Jewish and democratic state" and references the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel, which promises religious freedom and full social and political equality, regardless of religious affiliation. However, governmental and legal discrimination against non-Jews, and non-Orthodox streams of Judaism including Secular Humanistic Judaism, continued. As a "Jewish State" some laws and policies promote certain Orthodox Jewish values over those of other religious beliefs.

Each officially recognized religious community has legal authority over its members in matters of marriage, divorce, and burial, limiting the freedom of many individuals who may not otherwise subject themselves to the authority of those religious communities. Orthodox control of Jewish family law continues to create problems for non-Orthodox Jewish families; for example practicing Jews who are not Orthodox must leave the country to marry. The government does not allow civil marriages, such as secular ceremonies performed by state or municipal authorities, or marriages performed by non-

Orthodox rabbis. Secular marriages, non-Orthodox marriages of Jews, or interfaith marriages must take place abroad to be recognized by the government. As a result, several hundred thousand citizens cannot marry within their own country due to either a lack of eligibility or their desire to wed outside of the rabbinic system. In 2010, a bill was passed that allows a limited right to an alternative form of civil marriage ("couplehood union" status) for Israelis who declare a non-religious status.

The religious freedom Article 173 of the country's penal code allows for one year imprisonment if "One publishes a publication that is liable to crudely offend the religious faith or sentiment of others," or if "One voices in a public place and in the hearing of another person any word or sound that is liable to crudely offend the religious faith or sentiment of others."

Jordan

Discriminatory Laws:

The Constitution, in Article 14, provides for the freedom to practice the rites of one's religion and faith in accordance with the customs that are observed in the Kingdom, unless they violate public order or morality. According to the Constitution, the state religion is Islam and the King must be Muslim. The Constitution, in Articles 103-106, also provides that matters concerning the personal status of Muslims are under the exclusive jurisdiction of Sharia courts which apply Sharia in their proceedings. Personal status, or "family law", includes religion, marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance. Personal status law follows the guidelines of the Hanafi school of Islamic jurisprudence, which is applied in cases that are not explicitly addressed by civil status legislation. Matters of personal status of non-Muslims whose religion is recognized by the Government are under the jurisdiction of Tribunals of Religious Communities, according to Article 108.

The Government prohibits conversion from Islam and efforts to proselytize Muslims. The Jordanian Penal Code makes insulting Islam, the Prophet Muhammad, or any Muslim's feelings, a crime punishable by up to three years in prison. Atheists must associate themselves with a recognized religion for purposes of official identification. Employment applications for government positions occasionally contain questions about an applicant's religion.

Kuwait

Discriminatory Laws:

The Constitution of Kuwait makes Islam the state religion, and Sharia a primary source of legislation, making blasphemy illegal. The 1961 Press and Publications Law prohibits the publication of any material that attacks religions or incites persons to commit crimes, create hatred, or spread dissension.

Cases of discrimination:

> Hamad Al-Naqi is a Shia Muslim who in February and March 2012 allegedly made a series of posts on Twitter critical of the Sunni rulers of Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, the Prophet Muhammad, his wife Aisha, and his followers. Several members of the National Assembly of Kuwait called for his death. Al-Naqi pled not guilty, arguing that he had not posted the messages, and that his account had been

hacked. In June 2012, Al-Naqi was found guilty of “insulting the Prophet, the Prophet's wife and companions, mocking Islam, provoking sectarian tensions, insulting the rulers of Saudi Arabia and Bahrain and misusing his mobile phone to spread the comments” and sentenced to ten years in prison. Al-Naqi was attacked within weeks of entering prison and has been put in solitary confinement for safety reasons.

Occupied Territories/Palestinian Territories

Discriminatory Laws:

Freedom of religion or belief in various parts of the Occupied Territories falls under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority (in much of the West Bank), or Israel, or Hamas (in the Gaza Strip). The “Basic Law” that functions as a constitution for the Palestinian Authority recognizes international human rights standards, which include freedom of thought and expression. However, in the West Bank territories the old Jordanian law against “defaming religion” is still in force and may result in a maximum penalty of life imprisonment.

Cases of discrimination:

On Oct. 31, 2010, a 26-year-old blogger was arrested in the West Bank for posting allegedly blasphemous comments on Facebook and his blog. Waleed Hasayin, who used the named Waleed al-Husseini online, described himself as “an atheist from Jerusalem-Palestine” and wrote that God is “a primitive Bedoiun and anthropomorphic” and that “people are free to think and believe in whatever suits them.” He was charged with “defaming religion”. Hasayin was released in 2012 and fled to Europe, where he is seeking asylum.

Saudi Arabia

Discriminatory Laws:

There is no freedom of religion or belief in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. There is no separation between state and religion, and the deep connection between the royal family and the religious establishment results in significant pressure on all citizens to adhere to the official government interpretation of Islam. The country’s laws rely on an interpretation of Sharia law, which treats blasphemy–or, in other words, any deviation from Sunni Islam–as apostasy, an offense usually met with a death sentence. The Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (the religious police) are especially intolerant of minority religions and disbelief.

Cases of discrimination:

In February 2012, journalist Hamza Kashgari, 23, was accused of blasphemy for posting messages on Twitter in which he imagined himself in conversation with the Prophet Muhammad. Soon after, Saudi King Abdullah ordered that Kashgari be arrested “for crossing red lines and denigrating religious

beliefs in God and His Prophet." Attempting to flee to New Zealand, Kashgari was arrested when changing planes in Malaysia and sent back to Saudi Arabia, where he faces charges that could result in the death penalty.

Tunisia

Discriminatory Laws:

The constitution and other laws and policies largely provide for freedom of religion or belief but, in practice, the government enforces some restrictions on this freedom.

Since the Arab Spring revolution, there has been a democratic process to create a new constitution that will better protect international human rights standards. Unfortunately, political Islamists are meeting little opposition in their efforts to insert a clause against blasphemy in the new constitution. Article 3 in the draft constitution says: "The state guarantees freedom of religious belief and practice and criminalises all attacks on that which is sacred." In August 2012, the ruling party, the Islamist party *Ennahdha* , filed an anti-blasphemy bill which criminalises "curses, insults mockery, and desecration" of Allah, the Prophets, the three Abrahamic books, the Sunnah (the practices of the Prophet Muhammad), churches, synagogues and the Kaaba (the most sacred building in Islam). The bill also forbids pictorial representation of God and Prophet Muhammad. When Sofiene Chourabi, a democracy activist and journalist called for a protest against the blasphemy law he was arrested the next day for "drinking alcohol during Ramadan", which is not a crime under Tunisian law.

Even before the blasphemy ban has become law, there has been an increase in prosecutions and censorship of allegedly blasphemous speech. The legal and political situation remains fluid and unpredictable.

Cases of Discrimination

On 28 March, 2012, two atheist friends, Jabeur Mejri and Ghazi Beji were sentenced to seven and a half years in prison, and to a fine of 1200 Tunisian Dinars (around US $800) each, for posting images on Facebook deemed blasphemous. Mejri,and Beji were put on trial following a complaint lodged by a group of residents in Mahdia. While Jabeur Mejri is in prison, his friend Ghazi Beji sought refuge in Europe. Mejri, and Beji were convicted under Article 121 (3) of the Tunisian Penal Code, which states that:"The distribution, putting up for sale, public display, or possession, with the intent to distribute, sell, display for the purpose of propaganda, tracts, bulletins, and fliers, whether of foreign origin or not, that are liable to cause harm to the public order or public morals is prohibited."

On May 3, 2012, Nabil Karoui was convicted for disrupting public order and violating moral values by airing *Persepolis* an animated film that some religious leaders say insults Islam. Karoui, the head of Nessma TV a private tv station, was ordered to pay a 2,400 dinar (US$1,500) fine.

South & Central Asia

Afghanistan

Discriminatory Laws:

The constitution states that Islam is the "religion of the state" and that "no law can be contrary to the beliefs and provisions of the sacred religion of Islam." The constitution and other laws and policies restrict freedom of religion or belief and, in practice, the government enforces these restrictions. Afghanistan's constitutional reliance on Sharia mandates the government to punish alleged blasphemers and apostates with sentences as serious as death by hanging. Non-Muslim minority groups, which together constitute approximately 1 percent of the population, are frequent targets of discrimination and persecution. The constitution requires that the president and vice president be Muslim.

Cases of discrimination:

In January 2008, the Afghan Senate supported the death penalty for the 23-year old journalist Sayed Pervez Kambaksh for blasphemy. He downloaded and distributed an article (written by Arash "The Atheist" Bikhoda) that critically discussed certain Qu'ran verses about women. In October 2008, Kambaksh's sentence was commuted to 20 years imprisonment. In August 2009, Kambaksh left Afghanistan after a grant of amnesty by President Hamid Karzai.

Bangladesh

Discriminatory Laws:

The constitution and other laws and policies protect freedom of religion or belief. An amendment to the constitution passed ini 2011 established Islam as the state religion yet t reaffirmed the country is a "secular state".

Section 295A of the penal code states that any person who has "deliberate" or malicious" intent to "hurt religious sentiments" can be imprisoned. Similarly, the Code of Criminal Procedure includes several clauses (99a-f) that states "the government may confiscate all copies of a newspaper if it publishes anything subversive of the state or provoking an uprising or anything that creates enmity and hatred among the citizens or denigrates religious beliefs."

Cases of discrimination:

On Jan. 4, 2012, the principal of a technical college, Yunus Ali, was arrested for keeping a copy of Taslima Nasrin's book Shame in the school library. The book tells the story of a Hindu family persecuted in Bangladesh. It was deemed blasphemous and banned by the Bangladeshi government in 1993 and Dr. Nasrin was forced to flee abroad to escape blasphemy charges and death threats.

On March 21, 2012, the Dhaka High Court ordered five Facebook pages and a website to be shut down after Dhaka University professors claimed the pages contained remarks and cartoons about the Prophet Muhammad, the Holy Qu'ran, Jesus, Buddha, and the Hindu Gods that insulted religious sentiments.

India

Discriminatory Laws:

The constitution and other laws and policies protect freedom of religion or belief. The country is a secular republic, with all religions offered equality under the law. However, some state-level laws and policies restrict this freedom, and there continues to be some violence between religious groups and organized communal attacks against religious minorities

Section 295 of Indian Penal Code allows up to three years imprisonment and fines for "whoever, with deliberate and malicious intention of outraging the religious feelings of any class of citizens of India, by words, either spoken or written, or by signs or by visible representations or otherwise, insults or attempts to insult the religion or the religious beliefs of a class." Also, in May 2011, the Indian Ministry of Communications and Information Technology issued new rules requiring operators of social media networks to screen and remove blasphemous content within 36 hours of receiving a complaint.

Cases of discrimination:

In April 2012, the Catholic Church filed a complaint under Section 295 of the country's penal code against Sanul Edamaruku, president of the Indian Rationalist Associaiton, an International Humanist and Ethical Union member organization. Edamaruku had previously exposed a supposed "miracle" by revealing that a weeping Jesus on the cross was actually the result of a leaky drain. The local police requested Edamaruku turn himself in and face the charges. He is currently in hiding to avoid arrest.

On November 19, 2012, Shaheen Dhada, 21, and her friend Renu Srinivasan, 20,were arrested for Facebook comments complaining that the city of Mumbai was shut down for the funeral of Bal Thackeray, leader of the Hindu nationalist party Shiv Sena. Shiv Sena declared that the Facebook posts had disrespected the Hindu religion as well as Mr. Thackeray, whom Shiv Sena regard as a Hindu god. According to Ms. Dhada's father, the two women were originally charged under Section 295a of the Indian Penal code (for "deliberate and malicious acts, intended to outrage religious feelings or any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs"). This was later changed to Section 505-2 of the same act ("statements creating or promoting enmity, hatred or ill-will between classes"), before they were finally charged under Section 66a of the Indian IT Act ("sending false and offensive messages through communication services"). They were released on bail awaiting trial. A hospital belonging to Ms. Dhada's uncle was ransacked by a mob protesting Ms. Dhada's Facebook comment. However, following public outrage, the police said the case would be dismissed, the policemen who arrested the women have been suspended, the magistrate who granted bail instead

of dismissing he charges has been transferred, and the government has said it will review Section 66a of the IT Act. The women remain under police guard, though.

Maldives

Discriminatory Laws:

The constitution and other laws do not permit freedom of religion or belief. The constitution designates Islam as the official state religion, and the government and many citizens at all levels interpret this provision to impose a requirement that all citizens must be Muslims. The constitution also stipulates that the president must be Sunni. The constitutional language on the fundamental rights and duties of citizens does not provide for the right to freedom of religion or belief. Furthermore, the constitution precludes non-Muslims from voting and holding public positions.

The constitution does not prohibit discrimination based on religious preference. It excludes religion from a list of attributes for which people should not be discriminated against. Several articles in the constitution make the practice of Islam mandatory. Article 36 states that it is imperative for parents and the state to provide children with primary and secondary education. Section (c) of that article states education shall strive to inculcate obedience to Islam and instill love for Islam.

Cases of discrimination:

In 2008 the Ministry of Islamic Affairs replaced the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs. The ministry mandates Islamic instructions in schools, funds salaries of religious instructors, and certifies imams, who are responsible for presenting government-approved sermons. By law no one may publicly discuss Islam unless invited to do so by the government.

In June 2010, Muhammad Nazim asked a Muslim preacher, at a large public event, how Islam viewed people such as himself who had tried to believe in Islam but could not. The preacher replied that Islam requires the death penalty for those who leave Islam. Several members of the enraged crowd attempted to attack Nazim and he was hustled away by the police. The Islamic Ministry arranged for Nazim to receive “religious counseling” before determining if he should be executed for apostasy. During this prison counseling, Muhammad saved his life by embracing Islam.

One month later, Ismail Mohamed Didi faced the same choice as Mohamamed Nazim: believe or die. He chose death. On July 13 2010, the 25 year-old air traffic controller was found hanged from the control tower of the Maldives international airport, after killing himself to escape persecution for his rejection of religion. Shortly before his death, Ismail Mohamed Didi wrote that he had "foolishly admitted my stance on religion" to work colleagues and the news had "spread like wildfire." He added that "A lot of my close friends and girlfriend have been prohibited from seeing me by their parents. I have even received a couple of anonymous phone calls threatening violence if I do not repent and start practicing Islam… Maldivians are proud of their religious homogeneity and I am learning the hard way that there is no place for non-Muslim Maldivians in this society."

Pakistan

Discriminatory Laws:

The constitution and other laws and policies restrict freedom of religion, and in practice national and local government enforces these restrictions.

Chapter XV of Pakistan's Penal Code contains several sections regarding blasphemy-type laws. Article 295-A outlaws "deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs." Article 295-B outlaws the defiling of the Holy Qu'ran. Article 295-C bans the use of derogatory remarks in respect of the Holy Prophet. Article 298 bars uttering works with the deliberate intent to wound religious feelings. And article 298-B punishes any misuse of epithets, descriptions, or titles reserved for certain holy personages or places.

Prosecutions for blasphemy are widely thought to be brought against those wishing to eliminate competitors or those against whom they have a feud or grudge. The mere accusation may result in accused's life being endangered in prison, and such is the power of the mullahs who often come to court to intimidate the judiciary in such cases, that obtaining a lawyer, and even a judge to try the case fairly is often impossible. An accusation, however false, can therefore become a sentence of death.

When applying for a passport, applicants must state their religion. "No Religion" is not accepted as an answer. If an applicant states their religious identity as "Muslim" then they are required to sign an additional declaration that they accept the Prophet Mohammad as the "final Prophet".

Cases of discrimination:

On November 8, 2010, Asia Bibi, a Christian farm worker and mother of five was convicted of blasphemy and sentenced to death for allegedly making blasphemous remarks following a disagreement with a Muslim co-worker who refused to drink from a container of water she carried, believing it was tainted. Several prominent Pakistani politicians have been assassinated for supporting her freedom (more below).

On January 4, 2011, Salman Taseer, the Governor of Punjab, was assassinated by his bodyguard, Mumtaz Hussein Qadri. Qadri was unhappy with Taseer's commitment to reforming the country's blasphemy laws. Taseer had been fighting for a presidential pardon for Asia Bibi, whose case is mentioned above.

On March 2, 2011, Shabaz Bhatti, Minister for Minority Affairs, was assassinated at his home in retaliation for his opposition to blasphemy laws. His assassins left leaflets threatening opponents of blasphemy laws with a similar fate. Despite the fact that members of the Tehrik-e-Taliban have taken responsibility for the murder, no one has yet been charged in Bhatti's death. Bhatti had been fighting for a presidential pardon for Asia Bibi, whose case is mentioned above.

On June 22, 2011, 29-year-old Abdul Sattar was sentenced to death and fined 50,000 rupees (US$1,000) for sending text messages and having phone conversations in which the Holy Qu'ran, the Prophet Muhammad, and other Islamic figures were allegedly blasphemed.

On Oct. 13, 2012, a retired schoolteacher named Ameer Ali Wahocho was sentenced to three years in prison for allegedly making insulting remarks about the Prophet Muhammad and his family. Wahocho was originally sentenced to one month, which he appealed. While out on bail, his accuser also petitioned–for a stricter sentence. The accuser's petition was granted and Ameer Ali Wahocho's prison sentence was extended to three years.

Western Hemisphere

Argentina

Discriminatory Laws:

The constitution and other laws and policies protect freedom of religion or belief. By constitutional and legal obligation, the government “sustains the apostolic Roman Catholic faith” and provides tax-exempt subsidies to the Catholic Church (to compensate for expropriation of church property in the colonial era). In addition, the Catholic Church receives institutional privileges such as school subsidies, a large degree of autonomy for parochial schools, and licensing preferences for radio frequencies.

Bahamas

Discriminatory Laws:

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom. The constitution specifically forbids infringement of a person’s freedom to choose and change religion and provides for the right to practice the religion or belief of one’s choice. However, the constitution also requires the government to respect Christian values. And political and public discourse often invokes the country’s strong Christian heritage and Christian values.

The government meets regularly with religious leaders, both publicly and privately, to discuss societal, political, and economic issues. Religion is recognized as an academic subject at government schools and is included in mandatory standardized achievement and certificate tests. The country's Christian heritage has a strong influence on religion classes in government-supported schools, which focus on the study of Christian philosophy, Biblical texts, and, to a lesser extent, comparative and non-Christian religions presented in a Christian context. The constitution allows students, or their guardians in the case of minors, to decline to participate in religious education and observance in schools.

Belize

Discriminatory Laws:

The constitution and other laws and policies protect freedom of religion or belief. There is no state religion; however, the preamble to the constitution states, "The nation of Belize shall be founded upon principles which acknowledge the supremacy of God." An amendment to the constitution expanded the appointed Senate to 12 persons, one of whom is appointed by the governor general acting in accordance with the advice of the Belize Council of Churches and the Evangelical Association of Churches. The membership of these organizations includes several Christian denominations, among them Anglican, Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian, Salvation Army, Chinese Christian Mission, Chinese Christian Church, and Seventh-day Adventist.

The constitution stipulates that religious communities may establish "places of education" and states that "no such community shall be prevented from providing religious instruction for persons of that

community." Although there is no state religion, the educational system maintains by statute a strong religious curriculum. The curriculum ties "spirituality" with social studies courses.

Brazil

Discriminatory Laws

The constitution and other laws and policies protect freedom of conscience, religion or belief, which is guaranteed under Article 5 of the constitution.

The law provides penalties of up to five years in prison for crimes of religious intolerance and enables courts to fine or imprison for two to five years anyone who displays, distributes, or broadcasts religiously intolerant material. It is illegal to write, edit, publish, or sell literature that promotes religious intolerance.

Canada

Discriminatory Laws:

The constitution and other laws and policies protect freedom of religion or belief. However six of the ten provinces provide partial or full funding to religious schools. Most of these publicly funded religious schools are Roman Catholic. Although five provinces allow other denominations to run publicly funded schools. Publicly funded religious schools can discriminate on religious grounds in hiring and in accepting students. Around 16 percent of the Canadian population claims no religious affiliation, yet in the vast low-population expanses of Canada, the religious school may well be the only public school within a reasonable distance for many non-religious students.

Ontario is the only province that funds Catholic religious education while providing no funding for other religious schools. One third of Ontario's public schools (around 1,400) are Catholic schools, and they receive 100% of their funding from the government. Catholic schools discriminate against non-Catholics in hiring staff. Catholic schools can also exclude non-Catholic children.

Chile

Discriminatory Laws:

Church and state are officially separate; however, anti-incitement laws exist for religious groups. A 2002 law on freedom of expression and information and the press prohibits the use of any means of social communication to publish or transmit information designed to promote hatred of or hostility towards persons or groups based on religion and establishes fines for infractions. Publicly subsidized schools are required to offer religious education two teaching hours per week through high school; although parents may decide to have their children omit religious education. Religious instruction in public schools is almost exclusively Catholic, although the Ministry of Education approved curricula for 14 other religious groups. Schools must teach the religion requested by the parents.

Costa Rica

Discriminatory Laws:

The constitution and other laws and policies protect freedom of religion or belief. However, the constitution establishes Catholicism as the state religion and requires that the state contribute to its maintenance. The constitution also prohibits the state from impeding the free exercise of other religions that do not impugn universal morality or proper behavior.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Religion is responsible for managing the government's relationship with the Catholic Church and other religious groups. The ministry includes funding in its annual budget for maintenance and repairs of some Catholic churches. The Catholic Church receives exemptions from income and real estate taxes. The law allows the government to provide land to the Catholic Church. Government-to-church land transfers typically are effected through periodic legislation. Public schools provide Catholic religious instruction. Students may obtain exemptions with the permission of their parents.

El Salvador

Discriminatory Laws:

The constitution and other laws and policies protect freedom of religion or belief; however, Article 296 of the penal code imposes criminal sentences of six months to two years on those who publicly offend or insult the religious beliefs of others, or damage or destroy religious objects. If such acts are carried out with and for the purpose of publicity, sentences increase to one to three years in prison. Repeat offenders face prison sentences of three to eight years.

United States of America

Discriminatory Laws

The United States of America has strong federal protections for freedom of religion, belief, and expression. These protections are outlined in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which reads: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

The first clause (the "Establishment Clause") protects citizens from the government officially endorsing or supporting one religion over another, or religion over non-religion. The second clause (The "Free Exercise Clause") protects citizens from the government infringing upon their right to believe and practice their religion so long as no harm is done to other citizens. These clauses combine with the other First Amendment protections for freedom of speech and association to create an exceptionally open society in which all people are afforded equal legal rights to practice religion or not; convert from one religion to another, or reconvert altogether; to express one's beliefs regarding religion; and to participate in all areas of public life.

The Constitution also states, in Article 6, Paragraph 3, that no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States.

Yet while the rights of all Americans to freedom of religion and speech are protected, the U.S. has long been home to a social and political atmosphere in which atheists and the non-religious are made to feel like lesser Americans or non-Americans. A range of laws limit the role of atheists in regards to public duties, or else entangle the government with religion to the degree that being religious is equated with being an American, and vice versa.

In 1954, the Pledge of Allegiance was amended to add the phrase "under God," so that it would read, "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." Most states have laws that require public schools to recite the pledge at the start of the school day. Several different courts have ruled that students are not required to stand for or recite the pledge. However, many students have been ostracized for exerting their right to sit out the pledge.

In 1956, Congress adopted "In God We Trust" as the country's official motto. This phrase is posted on all U.S. money and in courthouses at every level of government.

A 2006 law in Kentucky requires the state Office of Homeland Security to post plaques acknowledging that Almighty God has been integral to keeping the state safe. The penalty for breaking this law is up to 12 months in prison. The Kentucky State Supreme Court refused to review the law's constitutionality.

Through tradition both houses of Congress, most state legislatures, and most city and local council meetings begin with prayer.

At least seven states–Arkansas, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas–have in place constitutional provisions that bar atheists from holding public office. One state (Arkansas) even has a law that bars an atheist from testifying as a witness at a trial. The Supreme Court effectively struck down these kind of provisions as unconstitutional in 1961. However, their continued existence is a reminder of the pervasiveness of the idea that atheists are untrustworthy, and perhaps even not truly American.

The prevailing social prejudice against the non-religious reinforces, and is reinforced by, the political support for religious, especially Christian, privilege. While there is some legal remedy for clear religious discrimination by the government, it can often go unchallenged in situations where it is personally disadvantageous or even hazardous to take a stand against authority, for example in prisons, the military, and even some administrative contexts.

Cases of discrimination:

In February 2007, Newton Correctional Facility in Iowa conducted a state-funded program that provided literature to prisoners stating, "Criminal behavior is a manifestation of an alienation between the self and God. Acceptance of God and Biblical principles results in cure through the power of the Holy Spirit. Transformation happens through an instantaneous miracle; it then builds the prisoner up with familiarity of the Bible." Active participants in the program receive better cells, more privacy, greater access to relatives, and lessened prison requirements.

In May 2011, prisoners at Berkeley County Detention Center in South Carolina were denied all reading materials except for the Christian Bible.

Attendance at evangelical Christian events is often mandatory in the US military. Mandatory prayers continue to be conducted at numerous military ceremonies, including at the service academies such as West Point. In November 2011, a Marine Corps unit at Camp Pendleton, California, conducted a mandatory event raising a Christian cross as a war memorial; subsequently, other units conduct mandatory marches to it, many including mandatory Christian prayer. In November 2011, a mandatory suicide-prevention presentation at the US Air Force base in Lakenheath, England, included evangelical Christian material and equated atheism with life under the Soviet Union. US Army soldiers at Fort Sam Huston were forced to attend an anti-suicide class that was in fact a Christian prayer vigil. 80 Soldiers at US Army's Ft. Eustis were punished with punitive maintenance work for refusing to attend the base-endorsed "Commanding General's Spiritual Fitness" Christian rock concert. US Army soldiers receive extra privileges if they attend events hosted by Department of Defense contracted fundamentalist Christian ministry Cadence International. Atheist and nonreligious Marines at Camp Pendleton, California have been denied access to base facilities for their event while Evangelical Christian groups have been given "preferential treatment." Mandatory social and family counseling services for military members often includes evangelical anti-atheist content. One soldier reported that he and his wife were "subjected to mandatory counseling from a Protestant minister [who told them] that Jesus was the only solution to their marriage and that there would certainly be no possible chance of success for an atheist/Christian mixed marriage."

Protesting mandatory religious events can be harmful to your military career. In September 2007, Atheist soldier Jeremy Hall faced legal and professional threats after filing a lawsuit alleging retaliation for refusing to attend an overtly-Christian Thanksgiving service and convening meetings of atheist and other non-religious soldiers at Camp Speicher in Iraq. An officer physically broke up the meetings and threatened to block Hall's re-enlistment if he continued organizing them.

The US Army's Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Tracker and Global Assessment Tool, a mandatory, biennial online evaluation, includes a "Spiritual Fitness" section that when completed honestly by professed atheists and the nonreligious, ranks them as deficient in "spiritual fitness" and directs them to religious chaplaincies for counseling and required remedial activities. A poor score can also impact promotion and professional development.

The United States Army Chief of Chaplains denies soldiers the right to be listed as "Humanist" in official personal records and military identification tags.

Country / Region	Law or Case	Date (M/D/Y)	Description	Source
Africa				
Botswana	Law	N/A	Government meetings often begin with a Christian prayer. Religion is taught in school, but with a preference to Christianity.	2010 IRF report (US International Religious Freedom report)
Cameroon	Law	N/A	State-sponsored television and radio broadcast Christian and Islamic religious services on a regular basis, despite the constitution calling for a secular state.	2010 IRF report
Chad	Law	N/A	Despite calling itself secular, the government shows a preference to Islam. Government officials organized trips to Mecca for the Hajj.	2010 IRF report
Chad	Law	N/A	Religious leaders are given rights to restrict proselytizing. Christian and Muslim leaders are given oil reserves to maintain, with ownership switching. Muslims are also reported to be favored for building rights.	2010 IRF report
Comoros	Law	N/A	Islam is the state religion and proselytizing for any other religion is illegal. Converts from Islam may also be prosecuted under the law.	2010 IRF report
Djibouti	Law	N/A	Islam is the state religion and government officials must take a religious oath before taking office. Non-Muslim men must convert to Islam before marrying a Muslim woman and civil marriages for non-Muslims are only available to foreign residents.	2010 IRF report
Equatorial Guinea	Law	N/A	Roman Catholicism is the state religion and masses are part of most ceremonial events. Catholic and Reform church officials are also exempt from airport entry and exit taxes.	2010 IRF report
Eritrea	Law	N/A	The country only officially acknowledges 4 religions: Islam, and three sects of Christianity. A non-member of these religions seeking permission for an exit visa must go to the Office of Religious Affairs, which is known to grant or deny permission or even arrest applicants on the spot.	2010 IRF report
Ethiopia	Law	N/A	A 2008 law makes it a crime to defame religious groups.	2010 IRF report

Gambia	Law	N/A	Article 25 of the Constitution establishes a Muslim judge trained in Islamic legal tradition as chief justice. The government also funds religious classes in schools and an independent body, The Supreme Islamic Council.	2010 IRF report
Mauritania	Law	N/A	The state is officially Islamic, takes influence from Sharia, requires religious oaths, contains a cabinet-level Ministry of Islamic Affairs and Traditional Education, and both private and public schools have mandatory classes on Islam.	2010 IRF report
Zambia	Law	N/A	The country requires Christian instruction in public schools. This instruction is conducted in both Protestant and Catholic tradition and mandatory for students through grade 7.	2010 IRF report
East Asia & Pacific				
Brunei	Law	N/A	Islam is the official state religion. Any teaching or promoting a "deviant" belief can be charged with 3 months in prison and a $1,550 fine. Schools are required to teach courses on Islam and marriage between a Muslim and non-Muslim are prohibited.	2010 IRF report
Burma	Law	N/A	Article 362 of the constitution only recognizes Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Animism, and Buddhism as religions allowed to be practiced. The government supports Buddhism and requires high positions in government to be held by Buddhists.	http://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/.../MM/JC_JubileeCampaign_eng.pdf
Indonesia	Law	N/A	The country only ackowleges 6 official religions - Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Hinduism. It also has laws against blasphemy which if broken, carry up to 5 years of prison. Minority religions experience discrimination in areas of marriage, birth, and identity cards.	2010 IRF report
Indonesia	Law	N/A	When organizing and sort of group, organizers must declare their allegiance to the Basic Ideology of the State. The first principle is belief in only one God.	2010 IRF report
Indonesia	Case	6/14/12	Alexander Aan was sentenced to 2 years and 6 months of prison and a $10,600 fine for "spreading... religious hatred and animosity." He had previously been attacked by an angry	http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/on-faith/atheists-rally-for-persecuted-unbeliever-in-indonesia/2012/07/19/gJQAfg2JwW_story

			mob for earlier Facebook posts.	.html
Indonesia	Case	7/12/12	Tajul Muluk was sentenced to 2 years in jail for teaching that the Qu'ran was not an authentic text and that the hajj pilgrimage is not obligatory. Muluk's Shiite community had been under attack since 2006, when 40 Sunni clerics and 4 police officers declared the sect heretical.	http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/news/shiite-cleric-jailed-for-blasphemy-in-indonesia/530165
Laos	Law	N/A	Decree 92 assigns the state the role of monitoring which religions can and cannot be practiced. Although not an official religion, Buddhism is promoted and sponsored by the state.	http://www.uscirf.gov/government-relations/other-advocacy-materials/3751-laos-chapter-summary-2012.html
Malaysia	Law	N/A	The Constitution defines ethnic Malays as Muslim. Sharia is given authority over civil courts.	2010 IRF report
Malaysia	Law	N/A	Articles 295-298A of the penal code allow up to 3 years in prison and a $1,000 fine for those who "commit offenses against religion."	http://expression.freedomhouse.org/reports/blasphemy_report/malaysia
Malaysia	Law	N/A	The government makes everyone over 12 years old carry an identification card which states their religion, in violation with Section 3, General Comment 22 of the Human Rights Committee. The state is also known to limit how one may identify.	2010 IRF report
Malaysia	Case	5/30/07	Lina Joy, a convert to Christianity from Islam 10 years before, applied to have her religious identification changed. This was rejected, leaving her with many legal problems, for example, she is now unable to marry a non-Muslim.	http://www.reuters.com/article/2007/05/30/us-malaysia-religion-ruling-idUSSP20856820070530
Malaysia	Case	5/23/12	Nik Raina Nik Abdul Aziz, 36, a bookstore manager, was charged with blasphemy for distributing a book, titled *Allah, Liberty and Love*, by the Canadian author Irshad Manji.	http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2012/6/20/courts/11509803&sec=courts
Europe				
Austria	Law	N/A	Sec. 188 of Austrian Criminal Code criminalizes anyone that disparages a religious object, society, or doctrine.	http://www.caslon.com.au/blasphemyprofile9.htm
Austria	Law	N/A	Sec. 189 of Austrian Criminal Code criminalizes anyone that interferes with a religious ceremony.	http://www.caslon.com.au/blasphemyprofile9.htm

Austria	Case	12/11/09	Catholics clerics sued cartoonist Manfred Deix over drawings depicting God and the EU prohibition against crucifixes.	http://scienceblogs.com/pharyngula/2009/12/12/european-cartoonist-on-a-rampa/
Austria	Case	1/22/09	Politician Susanne Winter was fined $24,000 for "humiliating a religion" by saying Muhammad was a pedophile.	http://gatesofvienna.blogspot.com/2009/01/susanne-winter-found-guilty.html
Austria	Case	12/11/10	Helmut G. was convicted for offending his Muslim neighbor by yodeling while mowing his lawn.	http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/141152
Austria	Case	1/15/11	Elizabeth Sadaditch-Wolf was convicted of offending religion after asking "If that is not pedophilia, what is it?" in regard to Muhammad's nine-year-old wife.	http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/1596/sabaditsch-wolff-lawfare-austria
France	Law	N/A	Law No. 72546, a strict anti-defamation law, prohibits religiously motivated "attacks."	http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1369183X.1973.9975217?journalCode=cjms20
Germany	Law	N/A	Article 166 of the German Criminal Code criminalizes insulting another's religion or faith with up to three years of imprisonment.	http://www.iuscomp.org/gla/statutes/StGB.htm#166
Germany	Case	2/23/06	A German businessman who printed "Koran" repeatedly on toilet paper was initially sentenced to one year of prison and 300 hours of community service.	http://www.expatica.com/de/news/local_news/suspended-prison-for-german-who-insulted-koran-27912.html
Germany	Case	4/24/09	Professor of Islamic studies, Sven Kalisch, publicly doubts the historical evidence of Muhammad and recieves death threats before having his teaching lisence revoked.	http://dachnews.wordpress.com/2008/09/21/professor-for-islamic-theology-muhammed-sven-kalisch-faces-death-threats-after-denying-muhammads-existence/
Germany	Case	4/9/10	German magazine Titanic was prosecuted after their front page showed a crucified Jesus appearing to be receiving fellatio from a Catholic cleric.	http://www.spiegel.de/international/zeitgeist/pope-benedict-xvi-sues-german-satire-magazine-titanic-a-843690.html
Germany	Law	N/A	In 1974, the German state of Bavaria concluded a treaty with the Holy See which gave catholic bishops the right to veto the nomination of a professor of theology, philosophy, pedagogy and sociology/political science at state universities if the candidate does not entertain the standpoint of the Catholic Church	http://www.concordatwatch.eu/showtopic.php?org_id=870&kb_header_id=17061
Germany	Case	2007	Applicants for a position at a Bavarian state university were discriminated against by	www.konkordatslehrstuhlklage.de

			Catholic officials that have the right to veto the nomination of a professor of theology, philosophy, pedagogy and sociology/political science if the candidate does not entertain the standpoint of the Catholic Church.	
Greece	Law	N/A	Article 198 criminalizes blasphemy against God with up to two years imprisonment.	http://www.venice.coe.int/docs/2008/CDL(2008)090add2-e.asp
Greece	Law	N/A	Article 199 criminalizes blasphemy against the Greek Orthodox Church, which the country financially supports.	http://www.venice.coe.int/docs/2008/CDL(2008)090add2-e.asp
Greece	Case	2/8/05	Gerhard Haderere sentenced to 6 months jail for portraying Jesus as an incense-addicted hippy in his book *Das Leben des Jesu.*	http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2005/mar/23/austria.arts
Greece	Case	6/9/12	Cast, crew and producers from the play "Corpus Christi" charged with blasphemy.	http://greece.greekreporter.com/2012/11/16/greece-prosecutes-corpus-christi-for-blasphemy/
Greece	Case	9/?/12	27-year-old Phillipos Loizos arrested for creating a Facebook page that poked fun at Greeks' belief in miracles and compared the late monk Elder Paisios to pastitsio, a baked pasta dish. He was charged with blasphemy and insulting religion. The blasphemy charge was later withdrawn.	http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Europe/2012/1002/Blasphemy-in-democracy-s-birthplace-Greece-arrests-Facebook-user http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887324469304578143271912956476.html
Iceland	Law	N/A	The state financially supports and promotes Evangelical Lutheran Church as the state church. Members of religious communities can designate part of their income tax to go to their church, but the non-religious have been refused the right to do this for the Humanist Association.	http://www.iheu.org/node/2584
Ireland	Law	N/A	Judges, public office holders, and the president must all take a religious oath before taking their position.	http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/upload/static/256.htm
Ireland	Law	N/A	Sec. 36 of Ireland's Defamation Act of 2009 criminalizes publishing or utterance of "blasphemous matter" with penalities up to a €25,000 fine.	www.irishstatutebook.ie/pdf/2009/en.act.2009.0031.pdf
Ireland	Case	2000	Religious education classes in public schools are mandatory.	http://www.teachdontpreach.ie/2011/01/un-to-monitor-racial-and-religious-discrimination-in-irish-schools/
Ireland	Case	2003	Church-linked publicly funded schools are legally permitted to refuse a student not of that religious group.	http://www.teachdontpreach.ie/2011/01/un-to-monitor-racial-and-religious-discrimination-in-irish-schools/

Italy	Law	N/A	Article 724 of the penal code considers blasphemy an "administrative offense" punishable by a fine.	http://www.altalex.com/index.php?idnot=36776
Italy	Law	N/A	The 1984 revision of the Concordat with the Catholic Church allows the state to support religion through finances, land, and other commodities.	http://www.concordatwatch.eu/showtopic.php?org_id=878&kb_header_id=39221
Italy	Case	6/12/06	Oriana Fallaci faced blasphemy charges after her latest book, *La Forza della Ragione* contained 18 statements "unequivocally offensive to Islam and Muslims."	http://neveryetmelted.com/2006/06/12/oriana-fallaci-trial-begins-in-italy/
Italy	Case	3/16/05	Courts prohibited a billboard campaign by a clothes company because of a photo imitating Leonardo's Last Supper.	http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2005/feb/04/media.arts
Italy	Case	10/20/10	Franco Frattini, Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs, called for Muslims, Jews, and Christians to unite to fight against the "threat" that atheism poses.	http://coreysviews.wordpress.com/2010/11/01/foreign-minister-franco-frattini-christians-muslims-and-jews-lets-kill-the-atheists/
Liechtenstein	Law	N/A	Criminal code prohibits debasements of any religion or its adherents.	2010 IRF report
Liechtenstein	Law	N/A	The Constitution makes the Catholic Church the "National Church" of the country, entitling it to full protection of the state.	2010 IRF report
Malta	Law	N/A	Article 2 of the Maltese Constitution states: (1) The religion of Malta is the Roman Catholic Apostolic Religion. (2) The authorities of the Roman Catholic Apostolic Church have the duty and the right to teach which principles are right and which are wrong. (3) Religious teaching of the Roman Catholic Apostolic Faith shall be provided in all state schools as part of compulsory education.	http://www.constitution.org/cons/malta/chapt0.pdf
Netherlands	Law	N/A	Article 137c of the Dutch Penal Code penalizes defamation of groups because of their religion.	http://www.internationalfreepresssociety.org/2009/02/the-dutch-law-used-against-geert-wilders/
Netherlands	Law	N/A	Article 137d of the Dutch Penal Code penalizes inciting "hatred or discrimination against persons" on grounds of their religion or beliefs.	http://www.internationalfreepresssociety.org/2009/02/the-dutch-law-used-against-geert-wilders/
Netherlands	Law	N/A	Article 429b of the Dutch Penal Code penalizes display of "scornful blasphemy for insulting religious feelings."	http://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0001854/DerdeBoek/TitelII/Artikel429bis/geldigheidsdatum_07-08-2012

Netherlands	Case	3/19/08	Dutch cartoonist Gregorius Nekschot is arrested for insulting Muslims and African Americans in his drawings.	http://www.forbes.com/sites/abigailesman/2011/12/27/radical-islam-claims-another-gregorius-nekschot-rip/
Netherlands	Case	1/21/09	Geert Wilders is put on trial because his film *Fitna* compared Islam and Nazism.	http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/edwest/100093524/geert-wilders-has-been-acquitted-that-he-went-on-trial-at-all-is-a-disgrace/
Poland	Law	N/A	Article 196 of Poland's penal code states that anyone who "offends religious feelings of other people" are subject to imprisonment for up to 2 years.	http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4d5a70081a.html
Poland	Case	7/23/03	Polish artist Danuta Nieznalska is fined and receives 20 hours/month community service plus travel prohibition for her artwork depcitnig a penis on a cross.	http://www.secularnewsdaily.com/2010/05/polish-pop-star-faces-two-years-prison-for-blasphemy/
Poland	Case	1/16/212	Pop singer Doda is fined for criticizing the Bible	http://www.centerforinquiry.net/blogs/entry/poland_fines_pop_singer_for_blasphemy/
Poland	Case	10/29/12	Rock singer Nergal charged with “offending religious sensibilities” for ripping up Bible at a heavy metal concert.	http://musicfeeds.com.au/news/behemoth-frontman-facing-jail-after-blasphemy-charges/
Russia	Law	N/A	Article 282 of the Russian Criminal Code bans "inciting religious hatred," which can lead to 3 years in prison and fines up to $6,500.	http://www.russian-criminal-code.com/PartII/SectionX/Chapter29.html
Russia	Case	1/18/08	Aleksander Sdvizhkov, editor of Zgoda is sentenced to 3 years in a labor camp for reprinting the Danish Muhammad cartoons.	http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,331188,00.html
Russia	Case	6/13/10	Jury Samadurov and Andrei Jerefeyey are fined after organizing an art show which included pieces depicting Jesus as Mickey Mouse and Lenin.	http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/13/arts/design/13curators.html
Russia	Case	8/17/2012	Three members of feminist punk band Pussy Riot sentenced to 2 years hard labor for “religiously motivated hooliganism” for an anti-Putin protest song in a cathedral	http://www.iheu.org/iheu-condemns-charges-verdict-and-sentencing-moscows-pussy-riot-trial
Sweden	Law	N/A	Religious Swedes can designate part of their income tax to go to their church or religious body, but secular Swedes have been denied the right to do this for the Humanist Association.	http://www.iheu.org/node/2584

Sweden	Law	N/A	Chapter 16, section 8 of the penal code criminalizes any person who expresses contempt for persons with allusion to religious belief.	http://www.sakerhetspolisen.se/english/english/countersubversion/politicalextremism/politicallymotivatedoffences/penalcodechapter16section8.4.7671d7bb110e3dcb1fd800018808.html
Sweden	Case	9/16/10	Carl Herslow is tried for "agitation against an ethnic group" after making a poster of Mohammad and his nine-year-old wife.	http://www.thelocal.se/32368/20110303/
Switzerland	Case	10/5/10	Valentin Abgottspon was fired from his job as a teacher at a public school after removing crucifixes from the classroom over a year earlier. The school's explanation was that they could not trust him as a teacher.	http://www.iheu.org/swiss-dubbed-school-yard-bullies-firing-non-religious-teacher
Turkey	Law	N/A	School children are forced into mandatory religious education which focuses heavily on the Sunni Haefi Islamic belief.	http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/default.aspx?pageid=438&n=alevis-to-open-mass-lawsuits-against-compulsory-religious-courses-2011-01-17
Turkey	Case	5/26/09	Nedim Gurel was prosecuted because his book Allah's Daughters allegedly insults religion and incites hatred.	http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2009/jun/26/turkish-novelist-gursel-religious-hatred
Turkey	Case	6/1/12	Fazil Say, an atheist and international jazz pianist is charged with insulting Islamic values in Twitter messages. He faces up to 18 months in prison.	http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/02/world/europe/turkey-charges-pianist-fazil-say-over-twitter-posts.html
United Kingdom	Law	N/A	The penal code contains laws against inciting religious groups through "hate speech" and the government has given money to churches.	2010 IRF report
United Kingdom	Law	N/A	More than 30% of state-funded schools are run by church authorities and are free to discriminate. Schools are also required to hold a daily act of collective worship.	http://accordcoalition.org.uk/campaigning-for-inclusive-admissions-in-local-voluntary-controlled-faith-schools/
United Kingdom	Law	N/A	The government set aside €30 million to compensate places of worship when laws became tougher on state-funding for architectural improvements for churches.	http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2146068/Osborne-30m-heritage-tax-U-turn-Compensation-fund-relieve-burden-churches.html
United Kingdom	Law	N/A	The Church of England is given special privilege to Parliament, allowing them to lobby with greater ease than other religions.	2010 IRF report
United Kingdom	Case	3/4/10	Harry Taylor was sentenced to six months imprisonment, a five year Anti-Social Behaviour Order, 100 hours of unpaid work, and a fine of €250 after he left anti-religious	http://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/liverpool-news/local-news/2010/04/24/militant-atheist-harry-taylor-hit-with-asbo-for-offensive-images-in-john-lennon-airport-

			cartoons in the prayer-room of John Lennon Airport.	100252-26307049/
United Kingdom	Case	9/23/10	Six people were arrested for filming the burning of a Koran and putting it on YouTube.	http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/sep/23/six-arrested-alleged-quran-burning
Middle East & North Africa				
Algeria	Law	N/A	Islam is the country's official religion and disallows insulting religious sentiments. The country also works to ban any publishing or broadcasting that is blasphemous.	2010 IRF report
Bahrain	Law	N/A	Islam is the country's official religion and principal source for law. Thus leaving Islam is illegal. The law also mandates imprisonment for "exposing the state's official religion for offense and criticism."	2011 IRF report
Bahrain	Case	8/?/12	Unnamed man sentenced to 2 years in prison for online insults of the Prophet Mohammad's wife Aisha	http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/08/12/us-bahrain-insult-idUSBRE87B0C020120812
Egypt	Law	N/A	Article 98(f) of the penal code prohibits insulting religion by any means, threatening anywhere from 6 months to 5 years of imprisonment and a €500-1,000 fine.	http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4dbe90c4c.html
Egypt	Case	9/13/12	Atheist activist Alber Saber was originally arrested on September 13th over claims that he published the anti-Islam film "Innocence of Muslims" on Facebook, but when it emerged that there was no evidence to support the claim, he was later charged on the basis of an atheist video that he had made and is currently being detained.	http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/rights-groups-condemn-detention-atheist-blasphemy-charges
Egypt	Case	2/22/07	Abdel Kareem Soliman was sentenced to four years of imprisonment for insulting Islam and the president in his blog.	http://www.aina.org/news/2008079165111.htm
Egypt	Case	10/27/07	Kareem Amer was sentenced for Facebook posts insulting the president and Islam. After serving his term, he was re-detained and allegedly tortured.	http://www.readwriteweb.com/archives/historys_longest_imprisoned_blogger_kareem_amer_is.php
Egypt	Case	10/12/11	Ayman Usef Mansur was given a 3 year prison sentence with hard labor after insulting Islam on Facebook.	http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/egyptian-facebook-user-jailed-3-years-anti-islamic-opinions
Egypt	Case	2/?/12	Makram Diab was sentenced to six years in prison for "insulting the Prophet	http://www.bikyamasr.com/59777/egypt-

			Muhammad."	christian-man-jailed-for-insulting-prophet/
Egypt	Case	4/4/12	Gamal Abdou Massoud, 17, sentenced to 3 years in jail for publishing cartoons on Facebook that “mocked” Islam.	http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/04/04/ozatp-egypt-christians-jail-idAFJOE83309420120404
Egypt	Case	7/31/12	Bishoy Kamel, 32, imprisoned for six years for distributing, and posting images on Facebook, “insulting” to the Prophet Muhammad and Egypt’s new President Mohamed Morsi.	http://www.bikyamasr.com/74251/egypt-arrests-christian-teacher-on-blasphemy-charges/ http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/2012/10/04/growing-numbers-of-abuses-demonstrate-need-to-reform-egypt%E2%80%99s-blasphemy-laws/
Iran	Law	N/A	Iran appoints a Spiritual leader, who must be of Muslim faith, to hold massive governmental power.	http://www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/ir00000_.html
Iran	Law	N/A	Only Muslims are allowed to be elected to office or hold jobs as judges or commanders in the army.	http://www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/ir00000_.html
Iran	Law	N/A	Citizens must register as Muslims, Zoroastrians, Jews, or Christians to obtain full legal rights.	http://www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/ir00000_.html
Iran	Law	N/A	Crimes such as adultery, homosexuality, and crimes against the deceased are always much stricter on non-Muslims. Muslims face 100 lashes for adultery, but non-Muslims face the death penalty.	http://www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/ir00000_.html
Iran	Case	1/17/12	Canadian Saeed Malekpour was given the death penalty upon his return to Iran to visit his dying father. He was arrested for "insulting and desecrating Islam" for making a computer program to download pornography.	http://www.springboardbath.org.uk/news/1460-amnesty-bath-urge-us-to-appeal-against-web-programmers-execution-in-iran.html
Israel	Law	N/A	Article 173 of the penal code allows for imprisonment for any publication or expression that is liable to crudely offend the religious faith or sentiment of others.	www.oecd.org/dataoecd/15/58/43289694.pdf
Jordan	Law	N/A	The official religion of the state is Islam and many laws are based upon it, which includes the necessity of Kings to be Muslims and the prohibition of conversion from Islam.	2010 IRF report
Kuwait	Law	N/A		2010 IRF report

			Islam is the country's official religion.	
Kuwait	Case	6/4/12	Hamad Al-Naqi is sentenced to ten years for "blasphemous" statements onTwitter	http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/47673850/ns/today-today_tech/t/kuwaiti-gets-years-twitter-blasphemy/#.T9GZorBfElc
Palestinian National Authority	Case	10/31/10	Waleed Hasayin wrote that God is "a primitive Bedoiunand anthropomorphic" and that " people are free to think and believe in whatever suits them" on Facebook and his blog. He faced a potential life sentence for defaming religion. He has escaped to France, where he is seeking asylum.	http://www.iheu.org/iheu-protests-palestinian-atheist-persecution
Saudi Arabia	Law	N/A	There is no separation of church and state. Sharia is used as interpretation for the law and the country is very intolerant of minority religions and disbelief.	2010 IRF report
Saudi Arabia	Case	2/8/12	Hamza Kashgari was accused of blasphemy for posting messages on Twitter in which he imagined himself in conversation with Muhammad. He faces charges as severe as the death penalty.	http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/saudi-writer-detained-after-tweets-about-muhammad/2012/02/09/gIQApsgW2Q_story.html
Tunisia	Draft Law	2012	Article 3 of the proposed onstitution would outlaw "all attacks on that which is sacred".	http://uncut.indexoncensorship.org/2012/10/blasphemy-tunisia-constitution/
Tunisia	Draft law	2012	Anti-blasphemy bill would criminalise "curses, insults mockery, and desecration" of Allah, the Prophets, the three Abrahamic books, and other 'blasphemous' speech	http://uncut.indexoncensorship.org/2012/10/blasphemy-tunisia-constitution/ http://protectionline.org/2012/08/10/sofiene-chourabi-journalist-and-human-rights-defender-detained-while-camping-on-a-beach/
Tunisia	Case	3/28/12	Two atheists sentenced to 7.5 years in prison for publishing blasphemous content on social media	http://uncut.indexoncensorship.org/2012/05/atheists-appeal-Muhammad-cartoon-conviction/
Tunisia	Case	5/3/2012	Nabil Karoui fined for "violating moral values" because his tv channel broadcast *Persepolis*, an animated film that depicts God	http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/may/03/tunisian-court-tv-station-persepolis
South & Central Asia				
Afghanistan	Law	N/A	Islam is the state religion and no laws are allowed to be contrary to this belief system. Blasphemy is punishable by death and president and vice president are required to be Muslim.	2010 IRF report
Afghanistan	Case	1/?/08	Sayed Pervez Kambaksh was sentenced to death for blasphemy after downloading and	http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/72

			distributing an article critical of Koran verses about women.	04341.stm
Bangladesh	Law	N/A	Section 295a of the penal code says that anyone who has "deliberate" or "malicious" intent to "hurt religious sentiments" can be imprisoned.	http://www.asiamedia.ucla.edu/religion/article.asp?parentid=45887
Bangladesh	Law	N/A	Clauses 99a-f in the Code of Criminal Procdure states that the government may confiscate all copies of a newspaper should it enflame religious beliefs.	http://www.asiamedia.ucla.edu/religion/article.asp?parentid=45887
Bangladesh	Case	1/4/12	Yunus Ali, principal of a technical school, was arrested for keeping a copy of Shame, which discusses the persecution of a family in Bangladesh and was deemed blasphemous by the government.	http://www.jihadwatch.org/2012/01/bangladesh-teacher-facing-three-years-in-jail-for-blasphemous-book-in-school-library.html
Bangladesh	Case	3/21/12	The Dhaka High Court ordered 5 Facebook pages to be shut down along with 1 website after Dhaka professors claimed the pages insulted religious sentiments.	http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-17465550
India	Law	N/A	Section 295 of the Indian Penal Code allows up to 3 years imprisonment for "attempts to insult the religion or the religious beliefs of a class."	http://indiankanoon.org/doc/1803184/
India	Law	N/A	The Indian Ministry of Communications and Information Technology requires operators of social media to screen and remove blasphemous content within 36 hours of a complaint.	http://globalvoicesonline.org/2012/04/28/india-protests-against-the-new-information-technology-rules/
India	Case	4/21/12	Sanul Edamaruku is currently in hiding after the Catholic Church filed a complaint against him. Edamaruku had previously exposed a "miracle" by showing water from a statue of Jesus was the result of a leaky drain.	www.patheos.com/blogs/friendlyatheist/2012/06/10/indian-rationalist-faces-jail-for-exposing-miracle/
India	Case	11/19/12	Shaheen Dhada and Renu Srinivasan, arrested for complaining on Facebook that the city of Mumbai was shut down for the funeral of Bal Thackeray, leader of the Hindu nationalist party Shiv Sena.	http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/mumbai/6-days-after-DGPs-assurance-Palghar-case-yet-be-closed/articleshow/17499455.cms
Maldives	Law	N/A	The consitution of Maldives designates Islam as the official state religion. Non-Muslims are not allowed to vote and the presidentmust be Sunni.	2010 IRF report

Maldives	Law	N/A	Article 36 states that it is imperative for parents and the state to provide children with primary and secondary education and that this education must include obedience and love for Islam, regardless of the parents' beliefs.	www.maldivesinfo.gov.mv/home/upload/downloads/Compilation.pdf
Maldives	Law	N/A	The Ministry of Islamic Affairs mandates Islamic instruction in school, funds salaries of religious leaders, certifies imams, and disallows anyone not certified to discuss Islam in public.	2010 IRF report
Maldives	Case	6/5/10	Muhammad Nazim was forced to convert to Islam or face death after admitting to a preacher that he did not believe. He was later attacked by a crowd and forced into religious counseling.	http://maldivesdissent.blogspot.com/
Maldives	Case	7/13/10	Ismail Mohamed Didi committed suicide after being outcast when co-workers learned that he was a nonbeliever. He was shunned from his girlfriend and other friends and received threatening phone calls before his death.	http://freethinker.co.uk/2010/07/14/muslim-apostate-found-hanged-after-admitting-he-was-an-atheist/
Pakistan	Law	N/A	Chapter XV of Pakistan's Penal Code outlines an extensive blasphemy ban, including the insult of religious beliefs, the defiling of the Qu'ran, and remarks against the Holy Prophet.	http://www.pakistani.org/pakistan/legislation/1860/actXLVof1860.html
Pakistan	Law	N/A	Passport applicants must state their religion. "No religion" is not accepted as an answer. Should an applicant choose Islam, they must also sign a declaration that they accept Muhammad as the "final Prophet," and that they consider Mirza Ghulam Qadiani to be an imposter and his followers non-Muslim.	2010 IRF report
Pakistan	Case	11/8/10	Asia Bibi was convicted of blasphemy and sentenced to death for making remarks following a disagreement with a Muslim co-worker who refused to drink from the same containter as she had, calling it tainted.	http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-11930849
Pakistan	Case	1/4/11	Salmeen Taseer, Governon of Punjab was assassinated by his bodyguard who was unhappy with his support for Asia Bibi and his work to reform the country's blasphemy laws.	http://www.aolnews.com/2011/01/04/salman-taseer-apparently-killed-because-of-stance-on-pakistans/
Pakistan	Case	3/2/11	Shabaz Bhatti, Minister for Minority Affairs was assassinated at his home in retaliaion for his oppoistion to blasphemy laws according to	http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/mar/02/pakistan-minister-shot-dead-

			a note left by his assassins. Bhatti also supported Aasia Bibi.	islamabad
Pakistan	Case	6/22/11	Abdul Sattar was sentenced to death and fined $1,000 for sending text messages and having private phone conversations which blashphemed the Qu'ran, Muhammad, and other Islamic figures.	http://dawn.com/2011/06/22/man-sentenced-to-death-for-blasphemy/
Pakistan	Case	10/13/12	Ameer Ali Wahocho was sentenced to 3 years imprisonment after making insulting remarks about Muhammad. He was originally sentenced to one month, but appealed. While on bail, his accuser petitioned for a stricter sentence, which was granted.	http://tribune.com.pk/story/276379/lifes-ironies-man-appeals-1-month-blasphemy-sentence-lands-in-jail-for-3-years/
Western Hemisphere				
Bahamas	Law	N/A	The constitution requires the government to respect Christian values. The government met regularly with religious leaders to discuss societal, political, and economic issues. Religion is recognized as an academic subject at government schools and is included in mandatory standardized achievement and certificate tests	2010 IRF report
Belize	Law	N/A	One of the 12 members of the Senate is a religious appointee, religious instruction in schools is common.	2010 IRF report
Chile	Law	N/A	A 2002 law on freedom of expression and information and the press prohibits the use of any means of social communication to publish or transmit information designed to promote hatred of or hostility towards persons or groups based on religion and establishes fines for infractions	2010 IRF report
El Salvador	Law	N/A	Article 296 of the penal code imposes criminal sentences of six months to two years on those who publicly offend or insult the religious beliefs of others, or damage or destroy religious objects	2010 IRF report
United States	Law		Arkansas constitution (Article 19, Section 1): "No person who denies the being of a God shall hold any office in the civil departments of this State, nor be competent to testify as a witness in any Court."	http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/assembly/Summary/ArkansasConstitution1874.pdf
United States	Law		Maryland constitution (Article 37): "That no religious test ought ever to be required as a qualification for any office of profit or trust in	http://www.msa.md.gov/msa/mdmanual/43const/pdf/2006const.pdf

			this State, other than a declaration of belief in the existence of God…"	
United States	Law		Mississippi constitution (Article 14, Section 265): "No person who denies the existence of a Supreme Being shall hold any office in this state."	http://www.mscode.com/msconst/14/14-265.html
United States	Law		North Carolina constitution (Article 6, Section 8): "The following persons shall be disqualified for office: First, any person who shall deny the being of Almighty God."	http://www.ncga.state.nc.us/legislation/constitution/ncconstitution.html
United States	Law		South Carolina constitution (Article 17, Section 4): "No person who denies the existence of a Supreme Being shall hold any office under this Constitution."	http://www.scstatehouse.gov/scconstitution/scconst.php
United States	Law		Tennessee constitution (Article 9, Section 2): "No person who denies the being of God, or a future state of rewards and punishments, shall hold any office in the civil department of this state."	http://www.state.tn.us/sos/bluebook/07-08/47-Constitution,%20Tennessee.pdf
United States	Law		Texas constitution (Article 1, Section 4): "No religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office, or public trust, in this State; nor shall anyone be excluded from holding office on account of his religious sentiments, provided he acknowledge the existence of a Supreme Being."	http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/CN/htm/CN.1.htm
United States	Law		In 1954, the Pledge of Allegiance was amended to add the phrase "under God," so that it would read, "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."	United States Pledge of Allegiance. http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/02/23/AR2010022303889.html
United States	Law		In 1956, Congress adopted "In God We Trust" as the country's official motto. This phrase is posted on U.S. money and in courthouses at every level of government.	Official motto of the United States.
United States	Law		A 2006 law in Kentucky requires the state Office of Homeland Security to post plaques acknowledging that "Almighty God" has been integral to keeping the state safe. The penalty for breaking this law is up to 12 months in prison.	http://www.alternet.org/belief/year-jail-not-believing-god-how-kentucky-persecuting-atheists
United States	Law		Miami-Dade Commission successfully re-instated prayer before its meetings.	http://www.miamiherald.com/2012/12/04/v-fullstory/3126361/miami-dade-commission-reinstitutes.html
United States	Case	2/?/07	Newton Correctional Facility in Iowa conducts a state-funded Biblical program.	http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/02/24/AR2007022401230.html

United States	Case	5/?/11	Prisoners at Berkeley County Detention Center in South Carolina were denied all reading materials except for the Christian Bible.	http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2011/may/10/us-prisoners-refused-books-bible
United States	Case	9/?/07	Atheist soldier Jeremy Hall faced legal and professional threats after filing a lawsuit alleging retaliation for refusing to attend an overtly-Christian Thanksgiving service and convening meetings of atheist and other non-religious soldiers at Camp Speicher in Iraq.	http://archive.truthout.org/article/jason-leopold-soldier-who-sued-army-facing-threats http://militaryreligiousfreedom.org/press-releases/jeremy_hall_harassed.html
United States	Case	11/?/11	A Marine Corps unit at Camp Pendleton, California conducted a mandatory event raising a Christian cross as a war memorial. Subsequently, other units conduct mandatory marches to it, many including mandatory, command-led Christian prayer.	http://militaryatheists.org/news/2011/11/camp-pendleton-cross-privileges-christianity-marginalizes-non-christians/ http://www.talk2action.org/story/2011/12/2/92028/6416/
United States	Case	11/?/11	A mandatory suicide-prevention presentation at the US Air Force base in Lakenheath, England, included material from Pastor Rick Warren's *The Purpose Driven Life*. The presentation lauded religiously-motivated living "as the most beneficial, because if you love God (in a majority of world religions), you'll love man and yourself." It also equated atheism and naturalism with life under the totalitarian Soviet Union and argued that "Faith is Foremost."	http://www.talk2action.org/story/2008/11/30/11914/687/Front_Page/Creationism_The_Latest_In_Military_Suicide_Prevention
United States	Case			

Freedom of Thought 2012: A Global Report on Discrimination Against Humanists, Atheists and the Non-religious was created by the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU) with the American Humanist Association, Center for Inquiry, Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science, and the Secular Coalition for America.

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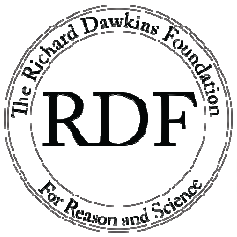

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The cover image features Alber Saber, arrested in Egypt this year over posts allegedly made on Facebook criticizing Islam and professing non-religious beliefs. He is awaiting a sentencing hearing as this report is being published on Human Rights Day, 10 December 2012.