Committee: Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee

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Introduction

In a world that has become increasingly interconnected, it is more important now than ever for countries to promote the tolerance of religious differences that exist within and between them. While some countries have welcomed the idea of religious tolerance to promote the improvement of the masses, others have struggled with the implementation of practices that combat religious intolerance and its effects on both the economy and society as a greater whole. Targets of religious intolerance can include members of specific religions or religion in general, people who choose to change their religion or to have no religion at all, and even people randomly victimized by religion-related terror or armed conflict. The future of modern society largely depends on religious tolerance. Because of the world’s greater economic interdependence, business growth relies on peaceful relationships between countries of differing religious majorities, while societal advancement depends on the understanding and acceptance of religious diversity.

Definition of Key Terms

- **Religious intolerance**: Religious intolerance is when a group (e.g., a society, religious group, non-religious group) specifically refuses to tolerate practices, persons or beliefs on religious grounds.
- **Religious tolerance**: Allowing followers of other religions to follow their spiritual beliefs and practices without being oppressed or discriminated against. Religious tolerance is a fundamental right in a democracy.
- **Religious Freedom**: Religious freedom *includes* being able to freely hold different religious beliefs, assemble with fellow believers, engage in inter-faith and intra-faith cooperation, etc.
• It is an important attribute of democracies. However, demanding the right to apply one’s religious beliefs in order to denigrate, oppress, harm, or discriminate against others is another matter entirely. The latter is the new and rapidly growing definition of the term “religious freedom.” It is often a direct contradiction of the Ethic of Reciprocity, a.k.a. Golden Rule.

• **Golden Rule:** The Golden Rule (which can be considered a law of reciprocity in some religions) is the principle of treating others as one would wish to be treated. Unfortunately, throughout history, one may observe people of different religions applying the Golden Rule only to members of their own religion. People of other faiths (and even those of other denominations in the same religion) are sometimes actively discriminated against. The most vicious civil disturbances and wars often have a religious component (as in Northern Ireland, Bosnia, Kosovo, Middle East, Sudan, India, Sri Lanka, Philippines, and East Timor).

• **Forms of Religious Intolerance:**
  1. Inter-faith intolerance (e.g., a Hindu - Christian conflict)
  2. Intra-faith intolerance (e.g., Shi’ite vs. Sunni Muslims)
  3. Intolerance by from a faith group against a secular group (e.g., Christian fundamentalists vs. Agnostics, Atheists, Humanists, Homosexuals, Transsexuals, loving, committed same-sex couples who wish to marry, etc.)
  4. Intolerance by a secular group against a religious group. (e.g. feminists vs. some organized religions)

• **Actions considered as exhibiting religious intolerance:**
  1. Spreading misinformation about a group’s beliefs or practices, even though the inaccuracy of that information could have been easily checked and corrected;
  2. Spreading hatred about an entire group; e.g. stating or implying that all members of a group are evil, behave immorally, commit criminal acts, etc.
  3. Ridiculing and belittling an entire faith group for their sincerely held beliefs and practices;
  4. Attempting to force religious beliefs and practices on others against their will;
  5. Restricting human rights of members of an identifiable religious group;
  6. Devaluing other faiths as worthless or evil;
  7. Inhibiting the freedom of a person to change their religion.
Hijab: It is a veil worn by some Muslim women in the presence of adult males outside of their immediate family, which usually covers the head and chest. It has been banned in some countries, such as France.

General Overview

Economic consequences as results of religious intolerance are grave and can damage or hinder economic development. Between 2008 and 2012 the twelve most religiously diverse countries were found to have above average economic growth, noting the idea that religious tolerance has positive impacts on the economic. Religious tolerance allows business to flourish through the incorporation of diverse ideas and solutions. In addition, discrimination based on religion in business environments has been shown to decrease economic output.

Discrimination and xenophobia are the social consequences of religious intolerance. Across Europe and North America, Muslim women wearing hijabs and other traditional articles of clothing have faced discrimination due to their religion from employers, businesses, and members of the community. Furthermore, reported hate crimes against religious minorities increased 86 percent globally from May 2016 to May 2017, with Muslims, Christians, and Jews being main targets across the world. Countries with higher populations of migrants in the European Union, such as Germany and France, have also seen massive spikes in reports of hate crimes, leading to questions of regional instability and social injustice.

It can be observed that through the protection of freedom of religion by the government and society, economic and social prosperity will increase. For the achievement of such, governments must ensure great respect for other important rights in liberal democracies as well, such as freedom of the press, speech and assembly. In this way, groups can express their beliefs freely and can fight against religious intolerance when a case of it arises.

Major Parties Involved

The advocacy group Freedom House produced a report in 2000 called "Religious Freedom in the World" which ranked countries according to their religious freedom. The countries receiving a score of 7 were given to countries where religious intolerance was the highest, including Turkmenistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Myanmar and North Korea.
Countries with the highest levels of freedom of religion received a score of 1, that is Estonia, Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway and the United States. Thus, the aforementioned countries hold great roles in the handling of religious differences and tolerance.

Muslims have long been the target of discrimination in the United States, mainly following the tragedies of 9/1. Anti-Muslim sentiment and hate crimes have skyrocketed sharply. 33% of the world’s countries actively harass women over their style of religiousness and 46% of Americans believe that Islam is more likely to entice and encourage violence among its believers than any other religion.

In India, one of the world’s fastest growing economies, religious intolerance considering Hindu nationalism has been a deep concern. This intolerance hurts the prospects of investing and the overall economic well being of the growing nation and contributes to hostilities between Hindus and Muslims, creating an environment that is unappealing to foreign investment.
### Timeline of Events

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<td>1948</td>
<td>The modern concept of intolerance developed out of the religious controversies between Protestants and Catholics. The doctrine of 'religious toleration' at this time, sought to eradicate religious sentiments and dogmas from the political demesne. The United Nations upholds the right to free expression of religious belief in articles and 18 and 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights while article 2 forbids discrimination on the basis of religion. Article 18 also allows for the freedom to change religion.</td>
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<td>1998</td>
<td>The United States passed the International Religious Freedom Act, mandating that the United States government take action against any country found to violate the religious freedoms outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.</td>
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<td>2006</td>
<td>Apostasy, the rejection of one's old religion, is also criminalized in a number of countries, notably in Afghanistan where Abdul Rahman was the first to face the death penalty for converting to Christianity.</td>
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### Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

- In 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenants on Human Rights proclaimed the principles of non-discrimination and equality before the law and the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief.
In 1981, the UN General Assembly passed the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief. It includes declarations on the topics of religious intolerance, freedom of religion and discrimination on the basis of religion or belief.

Human Rights Council in 2011 adopted Resolution 16/18 on "Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against, persons based on religion or belief" which was considered by stakeholders from all regions and faiths as a turning point in international efforts to confront religious intolerance.

The United Nations has launched a new campaign in 2016 to promote tolerance, respect and dignity across the world. TOGETHER is a global campaign that aims to reduce negative perceptions and attitudes towards refugees and migrants, and to strengthen the social contract between host countries and communities, and refugees and migrants.

The Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief is an independent expert appointed by the UN Human Rights Council. The mandate holder has been invited to identify existing and emerging obstacles to the enjoyment of the right to freedom of religion or belief and present recommendations on ways and means to overcome such obstacles.

The law in Germany provides the term of "religious majority with a minimum age for minors to follow their own religious beliefs even if their parents do not share those or do not approve. Children 14 and older have the unrestricted right to enter or exit any religious community. Children 12 and older cannot be compelled to change to a different belief. Children 10 and older have to be heard before their parents change their religious upbringing to a different belief. There are similar laws in Austria and in Switzerland.

Benefits of a diversity of religious institutions are felt across religious lines. In Indonesia, for example, the building of a Christian congregation, succeeded because Muslim residents were able to work as parking attendants. This type of relationship between religions provides employment opportunities and encourages cooperation between parties to promote economic achievement.
Possible Solutions and Approaches

- Teaching of religions in schools (including comparative religious studies) to promote religious understanding and prevent radicalization particularly among the youth.
- Teachers of religious studies must be well-trained and groomed themselves.
- Regular debates and dialogue between religious leaders and governments at the federal and state levels.
- Moving in promptly and decisively (not necessarily violently) to deal with crises when they occur. Government must act fairly and must not be one-sided in its intervention.
- Governments must address the socio-economic problems and unemployment in the countries and the resultant deprivation, pain, frustration, agony, hunger and anger of the citizens (particularly the youth) which make them vulnerable and susceptible to crime.

Questions to Consider:
How can the UN respond to growing religious intolerance across national borders?
Why is the issue of religious intolerance of international concern, rather than national?
What is the role of each individual country in determining solutions to its consequences of intolerance?
Which countries should lead the way in ensuring the establishment of religious tolerance?
How could the harmful social and economic consequences of religious intolerance be battled, even if religious intolerance cannot entirely be banned?

Useful Documents and Sources

- What is Religious Intolerance: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i-J1oUufm0
- Imagine the world without hate: https://youtu.be/3KyvIMJefR4
- Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief: http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/36/a36r055.htm
- Religious Tolerance: [http://www.religioustolerance.org](http://www.religioustolerance.org)
- TOGETHER: [https://together.un.org/our-aim](https://together.un.org/our-aim)

**Bibliography**

- Religious Tolerance: [http://www.religioustolerance.org](http://www.religioustolerance.org)
- TOGETHER: [https://together.un.org/our-aim](https://together.un.org/our-aim)
Annex


- https://cdn.theatlantic.com/assets/media/img/posts/2014/06/Pew_Religious_Diversity/4ad68033a.png
Quotes promoting religious tolerance (and intolerance):

Zainab Al-Suwaij, co-founder of the American Islamic Congress: “We have to respect others and we have to understand and not discriminate on the basis of faith. ... When people do not talk and communicate, everything around them becomes dehumanized. ... When you mix politics and religion, you get the worst of everything.”

Anon: “Religious tolerance is not religious indifference. It consists of valuing the right of another person to hold beliefs that you know absolutely, and without a doubt, to be wrong.”

Paul Copan: “Contrary to popular definitions, true tolerance means ‘putting up with error’ -- not ‘being accepting of all views’... It is because real differences exist between people that tolerance becomes necessary and virtuous.” “True for You, But not for Me”

Robert Fleishmann: “When it comes to fundamentally wrong behavior (called "sin" by the Word of God), there is no tolerance. Wrong is wrong!”

The Dalai Lama: I appreciate any organization or individual people who sincerely make an effort to promote harmony among humanity, and particularly harmony among the various religions. I consider it very sacred work and very important work.

What do religions teach?

All major religions teach a "Theory of Reciprocity," commonly called the "Golden Rule."

Christianity urges that we: “Treat others as you want them to treat you.” (Luke 6:31).

Confucius said “Do not do to others what you do not want the others to do to you.”

Hillel the Elder, the famous Jewish rabbi from the 1st century BCE and CE summed up the Torah with the expression "What is hateful to you, do not do to your friend."

Wiccans follow the Wiccan Rede which allows them to: “Do whatever you wish, as long as it harms nobody, including themselves.”