



Call for Input | Special Procedures

**Report on the challenges and discriminations faced by
faith minorities on the move and examples of good
practices from faith-based actors**

Input for GA report on Freedom of religion or belief and People on the Move

28 February 2025

The World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) is a network of churches in over 140 national evangelical alliances and over 100 international organizations joining together to give a worldwide identity, voice, and platform to more than 600 million evangelical Christians worldwide.

The Refugee Highway Partnership (RHP) is an international network of churches, agencies, and individuals serving forcibly displaced people. The RHP is creating and sustaining a community that helps facilitate more effective ministry, stimulate strategic initiatives, and envision and equip the church so that refugee ministries are strengthened, and more refugees are served.

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1. The WEA presents this submission for the call for input of the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief (FORB) on FORB and People on the Move. It was written thanks to the collaboration of the RHP and faith-based actors within their network. We are witnesses that faith minorities on the move face significant challenges. They are isolated from the rest of their community and are at risk of discrimination and attacks, including from their fellow compatriots, as their conversion is sometimes viewed as a betrayal. However, we are grateful for the interest of the Special Rapporteur in the role of faith-based actors because we believe that they have a unique role to play and that better collaboration and communication can help relieve the situation.

Discrimination and violence faced by religious minorities on the move

Rohingya Christians: driven out of their homes they remained threatened by their compatriots¹

2. The Rohingya converts are one of the many examples of how religious minorities can be especially at risk among refugees. It is known that nearly 1 million Rohingya refugees live in Bangladesh². What some might not be aware of is that we estimate that around 3000 Christians are now living in the refugee camps or United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Protection Centres. However, Christian Rohingya refugees see their freedom of religion or belief being violated and some even receive death threats because of their faith.
3. Incidents of violence against Rohingya Christians go back multiple years but sadly have not stopped in the last decade. Here are a few examples from the last four years:
4. In January 2020 Taher, a Rohingya Christian pastor, was beaten and abducted from his shelter in Kutupalong refugee camp in Bangladesh.³ Even after terrible days of interrogation and when he was finally released, he had to go live in Türkiye due to the continued harassment.⁴
5. In August 2021, after a deadly incident in Kutapalong refugee camp, Rohingya Muslims prevented the body of a Christian being buried in the camp graveyard for 30+ hours. When he was finally buried in Chittagong, Muslim Rohingya refugees formed a barrier to protest.⁵
6. In August 2024, after the resignation of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, politicians had to ask for the protection of all Bangladeshis as assaults on temples and churches were reported.
7. In December 2024, a video was published by Rohingya Islamic students inciting violence against Christians⁶
8. Finally, in the two months since the start of the year 2025, tension continues to be felt. Rohingya militant groups operating within the camps are spreading dangerous propaganda against the Christian community. Religious posters and banners calling for the assassination of three Christian leaders are circulating and were displayed in the camps.⁷
9. All these examples show the ongoing tension between Christians and the rest of the Rohingya communities, and how the violation of their freedom in regard to manifesting their religion extends even within the border of official refugee camps.
10. Overall, the religious minorities in Rohingya refugee camps express their fear of discrimination and violence, as shown in this extract from a protection request of a Rohingya Christian, written on the 15 January 2025: “Our children are terrified and cannot sleep at

night because of the situation. Our people live in fearful situations. We beg you to ensure protection for all those in this terrible situation”.

Religious minorities: persecuted in Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan, and at constant risk of deportation

11. Afghan Christians in Afghanistan also face serious and numerous dangers and recent events have shown that neighboring countries offer little to no further security. Here is a brief overview of the risks faced by Afghan Christians in and around Afghanistan.
12. The Taliban regularly attack Christians and or at least threaten them. Some even state that the Taliban are working to completely erase Christianity or any religious minority from the country.⁸ Therefore, many Christians and other religious minorities have been forced into hiding or leaving to avoid arrest, torture, or execution by the Taliban. The United States "2023 report on international religious freedom" reports that Sikhs, Hindus, Christians, and Ahmadi Muslims are all trying to move outside the country, "fearing the enforcement of the Taliban's interpretation of sharia would lead to further persecution and harm".⁹
13. Unfortunately, the year 2024 has proved them right with the most notable event being the implementation of new "Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice" laws. Those laws have been advertised as serving to elevate the population towards a more ethical lifestyle but are in fact being used to increase restrictions on the population.
14. As observed by the UNHCR in a press release "Empowered by the new law, the Taliban's morality inspectors have extensive authority to arbitrarily detain and punish individuals, including physically, for so-called moral crimes, based on suspicion, without any requirement for evidence or due process, with ordinary citizens encouraged to report transgressions."¹⁰
15. Afghan Christians who choose to stay in Afghanistan as internally displaced face daily dangers and are in no way allowed to manifest their beliefs. Sadly, the ones who reach neighboring countries do not always find the security they are looking for.
16. The UNHCR estimates that 2.2 million out of the 2.6 million registered Afghan refugees are in Iran and in Pakistan.¹¹ However, when we see Open Doors' "World Watch List" of countries where Christians face persecution, we note that both Iran and Pakistan are in the top 10 most dangerous ones with Afghanistan and listed as "extremely dangerous" for Christians.¹²
17. One of our partners, Philoi, which is supporting 160 Afghan Christian families in Pakistan, observes that they are subjected to physical assaults and targeted violence, homelessness, lack of basic shelter and have overall limited access to essential resources. However, they are mostly concerned with the risks of deportation.¹³
18. This fear is exacerbated by the renewed warning issued during an interview with Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar: "If any refugee who was undertaken to be taken by another country after due process —no matter the timeline — if it doesn't happen and the country refuses, then for us, that will be an illegal immigrant in Pakistan, and we might be forced to send such refugee back to [their] original country, which is Afghanistan."¹⁴
19. In Iran the situation is also dire. The law prohibits Muslim citizens from changing or renouncing their religious beliefs and are then persecuted if they choose to convert. For instance, they may face arrest or imprisonment, and be excluded from education and career

opportunities.¹⁵ Additionally, it is estimated that hundreds of thousands of Afghans are deported from Iran each year ¹⁶

20. The situation of Afghan Christians is alarming, and drastic solutions are needed in order to allow Afghan Christians, whether they are Internally displaced or refugees in neighboring countries, to enjoy their freedom of belief.

Recommendation regarding religious minorities on the move

21. We urge international humanitarian actors to ensure that religious minorities within the assisted communities are equally reached and particularly protected, because of the risk that converts will be ostracised.
22. We recommend states and UNHCR to facilitate legal pathways and resettlement solutions for religious minorities when they face such constant persecution as noted above.

The role of faith-based actors

Diversity of faith-based actions

23. Faith-based organizations, including churches, are often the Frontline Responders in crises, hosting forcibly displaced communities. They play a critical role in:
 - Relief efforts – Providing food, shelter, medical aid, and trauma counseling.
 - Relocation – Helping displaced individuals find safety within the region/ country.
 - Resettlement – Assisting with long-term solutions for refugees.
 - Reconciliation – Engaging in peacebuilding efforts to prevent further conflicts.
 - Advocacy – Being witnesses to the suffering of the forcibly displaced populations they work with.
24. Organizations and networks such as the Refugee Highway Partnership (RHP), the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA), the Refugee Law Project (RLP), and national evangelical alliances are great partners in identifying potential field actors to collaborate with.

Speed and quality of grass-rooted faith-based responses

25. The main strength of faith-based organizations lies in their grassroots nature. They call day after day on congregations, foundations, and individual believers to respond to the Christian call to help our neighbors in need. This is also a significant advantage in facilitating resettlement and integration, as well as in sharing crucial information about the day-to-day realities faced by refugees and migrants in and around their congregations.
26. In addition, most of these organizations primarily rely on donors and foundations within their own congregations or the global Church. This has allowed faith-based initiatives to react nearly instantaneously during most refugee crises, as forcibly displaced have sometimes literally come knocking on the doors of churches.

Recommendations to strengthen collaborations

27. **Share information and guidelines with faith-based actors.** Being independent of public funding, many Christian organizations are not on official partnership mailing lists but are

nonetheless interested in collaborating and coordinating with others. Therefore, it is crucial to ensure that information flows to all field actors, including the faith-based ones.

28. Take advantage of the expertise and capabilities of faith-based organizations.

Consulting local faith-based actors will provide a great source of firsthand information about local specificities. In addition, many Christian organizations have been helping refugees for decades. We strongly encourage all officials to include them in defining effective action plans.

29. Create spaces and organize gatherings for local faith-based and secular organizations to share their best practices and find new ways to work together.

Diversity is a source of richness, and such meetings can only be beneficial to everyone, including states and international organizations, as they encourage the development of innovative solutions. We note that the Pact for the Future, Action 55, commits States to collaborate with a variety of actors, including faith-based organizations, to resolve current and future challenges.¹⁷

¹ The section “Rohingya Converts” has been written in collaboration with James Tahiyat a Christian activist, who is himself a Rohingya and had direct exchanges with Rohingya Christians in refugee camps.

² UNHCR, “Rohingya emergency.” Online: <https://www.unhcr.org/emergencies/rohingya-emergency>.

³ Fortify Rights, “Bangladesh: Investigate Abductions, Protect Ethnic-Rohingya Christians.” Online: <https://www.fortifyrights.org/bgd-inv-2020-03-06/>.

⁴ Open Doors Hong Kong, “Police wanted names. Taher wouldn’t give them.” Online: <https://www.opendoors.org.hk/en-US/news/latest/the-secret-police-wanted-names-taher-wouldnt-give-them/>.

⁵ US Dept of State, “2021 Report on International Religious Freedom: Bangladesh.” Online: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-report-on-international-religious-freedom/bangladesh/>.

⁶ Muhammad Sheik Adnan, “What does our Islam say about the Murted?” Online: <https://www.facebook.com/reel/1771545150269703>.

⁷ Luke Hunt, “Christians’ execution demanded in Bangladesh Rohingya camps.” Online: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/christians-execution-demanded-in-bangladesh-rohingya-camps/107556>.

⁸ International Christian Concern, “Afghanistan’s Christians Fight to Survive Under the Taliban,” Online: <https://www.persecution.org/2023/07/13/afghanistans-christians-fight-to-survive-under-the-taliban/>.

⁹ US Dept of State, “2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Afghanistan.” Online: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-report-on-international-religious-freedom/afghanistan/>.

¹⁰ OHCHR, “New morality law affirms Taliban’s regressive agenda, experts call for concerted action.” Online: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/08/new-morality-law-affirms-talibans-regressive-agenda-experts-call-concerted>.

¹¹ UNHCR, “Afghanistan.” Online: <https://www.unhcr.org/countries/afghanistan>.

¹² Open Doors, World Watch List 2025. Online: <https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/>.

¹³ Jude Simion, “Briefing Document: Afghan Christian Families in Pakistan”, Philoi, 07 February 2025.

¹⁴ Ayaz Gul, “Pakistan threatens to deport Afghans if US relocation timeline isn’t met.” Online: <https://www.voanews.com/a/pakistan-threatens-to-deport-afghans-if-us-relocation-timeline-isn-t-met/7984905.html>.

¹⁵ Brian O., “What’s next for Iran’s persecuted Christians.” Online: <https://globalchristianrelief.org/christian-persecution/stories/whats-next-for-irans-persecuted-christians/>.

¹⁶ Mitra Naseh, “One of the World’s Largest Refugee Populations, Afghans Have Faced Increasing Restrictions in Iran.” Online: <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/afghan-refugees-iran#:~:text=An%20estimated%20485%2C000%20Afghans%20were,2%20million%20by%20March%202025>.

¹⁷ United Nations, “Pact for the Future.” Online: https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sof-pact_for_the_future_adopted.pdf.