

Answers by the German Federal Government

Call for Submissions of the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief: Report to the United Nations General Assembly on Eliminating Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief and the Achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 16

Addressing intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief and building peaceful, just and inclusive societies in Germany and elsewhere are top priorities of the Federal Government. Many measures aiming at achieving these goals are undertaken at federal, state and communal level. A full description of these measures in this submission has not been feasible due to the short deadline. The measures described in the following represent only selected examples.

Examples of legislative, policy and institutional frameworks and measures protecting minority religious or belief communities against discrimination and violence.

There is a multitude of government measures and prevention programmes in place, which aim at protecting minority religious or belief communities within Germany against discrimination and violence. Examples are the programmes “Living democracy!” (“Demokratie leben!”) developed by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth and “Cohesion through participation” (“Zusammenhalt durch Teilhabe”) devised by the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community. After the right-wing terrorist attack in Halle on 9th September 2019, the Federal Government adopted a common catalogue of measures developed by the Federal Ministry of the Interior and the Federal Ministry of Justice to combat right-wing extremism and hate crime. One important element of it is the expansion of the mentioned prevention programmes.

The appointment Federal Government Commissioner for Global Freedom of Religion in 2018 (currently Member of Parliament Markus Grübel) also shows the Federal Government’s engagement with regards to the situation of minority religious or belief communities worldwide. The three main tasks of the Commissioner, who is institutionally attached to the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, are the following: 1) Monitoring of global freedom of religion, 2.) engaging in and promoting of the international dialogue concerning questions on freedom of religion or belief, 3.) presenting together with the Federal Foreign Office a Government report on freedom of religion or belief to Parliament every two years. The Commissioner’s work contributes to the protection of religious minorities.

The Federal Government supports various “pilot projects” implemented by the agency GIZ aiming at developing innovative approaches to protect the rights of religious minorities. The measures are all based on a human rights-based approach and are guided by the following principles: non-discrimination and equal opportunities, empowerment and participation, accountability and transparency.

An example for such a project is the training of investigative journalists from ten Arab countries in the MENA region in human rights and freedom of religion or belief, which has been conducted in November 2018 - April 2019 and aimed at fostering religious literacy. The project was implemented together with the local NGO Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism (ARIJ) and the NHRI German Institute for Human Rights. Participants learned techniques of investigative journalism, developed ideas for documentaries and refined writing and interview techniques. The project has resulted in six investigative reports on human rights

and religious challenges in the region, initiating discussions on the sensitive issue of religion and freedom of religion or belief in Arab countries (e.g. conversion and apostasy). The topics were chosen by the participants. The investigative reports dealt with human rights violations, in particular of the right to freedom of religion and belief. They were available to a broad public, strengthened religious literacy and led to a dialogue on these sensitive issues at political level.

Examples of state legislative, institutional and policy measures to address past injustices, including violence and discrimination, against religious or belief minorities and to provide redress and reparations (or examples of State failure to address such injustices).

The Federal Government has made the process of providing moral and material compensation for the crimes committed by the National Socialist regime (German Wiedergutmachung) a key priority and continues to attach great importance to this task. More than 78 Billion Euro in total since 1952 have been spent to support Holocaust victims worldwide, almost 1 billion in 2020. The Federal Government intends to continue to provide support for the survivors of the persecution and horrors of the concentration camps and ghettos and to enable them to live in dignity. In 2018 an archiving project was launched to make the legacy of files and documents concerning German Wiedergutmachung visible. The Federal Compensation Act, as an example, spans around 2.2 million files and documents that contain testimonies and descriptions of what happened to the victims of the Holocaust. It shows each individual perspective, each cruel fate. This is a unique legacy that should be made visible for the victims families, for new research impulses and in order to fight holocaust denial and distortion. For more information concerning German Wiedergutmachung please see the Brochure “Compensation for National Socialist Injustice”. [Link](#)

In 2020 the Federal Government will support new projects in Holocaust education initiated by Survivors organizations to represent the victims perspective in the field of Holocaust education. It is an amendment to existing federal governmental activities in the field of prevention programmes.

The Federal Government is committed to the Jewish community and takes a public stand against all tendencies to forget or obfuscate the Holocaust. In this context, the Federal Government has appointed Dr Felix Klein as the first Federal Commissioner for Jewish Life and Combatting Antisemitism in Mai 2018. Furthermore, the Federal Government supports civil society organisations which aim at removing the roots of Antisemitism and racial hatred. In addition, the Federal Government supports organisations and associations active in the field of cooperation of Christians and Jews as well as different formats of interreligious dialogue, in particular the German Coordination Council of the Societies for Christian and Jewish Cooperation and the International Council of Christians ans Jews.

The cooperative relationship between the Federal Government and the Central Council of Jews in Germany has been put on a solid basis by signing a contract on January 27th 2003, the Holocaust Remembrance Day. By this contract, the Federal Government supports the Central Council of Jews in Germany to fulfill its national tasks to preserve and foster the German-Jewish cultural heritage and to strengthen the Jewish community. In this contract, the Central Council declares to be open for all different denominations of Judaism. Therefore, the financial support for the Central Council is meant to be for the benefit of all Jews in Germany. Since 2018, the funding is 13 million Euros p.a.

Specific measures and initiatives promoting understanding and cooperation between different religious or belief communities in public life, including in the conflict and post-conflict contexts as well as part of transitional justice processes, and the role of faith actors and religious leaders in this regard (e.g. training and awareness-raising programmes; local interfaith institutions and dispute settlement mechanisms). / Specific measures to promote interfaith dialogue and religious pluralism in school curricula.

The Federal Government launched a broad range of actions to promote understanding and cooperation between different religious or belief communities both within Germany and abroad.

In its current 4th phase, the German Islam Conference (Deutsche Islam Konferenz, DIK, established in 2006 as the central forum for dialogue between the government and individual Muslims and Muslim organizations) pursues concrete, practical projects in three core areas: religious, integration and social policy. Key elements of the social policy focus include dialogue on preventing antisemitism and hostility towards Muslims, and the promotion of dialogue within the Muslim community. Based on the results so far, we want to continue the DIK's earlier activities and help prevent polarization in society. In late April 2019, a DIK workshop in Berlin addressed the problem of hostility towards Islam and Muslims. Topics covered included the practice since 2017 of recording anti-Muslim crimes; detailed research studies; and more comprehensive reporting and registration of cases of discrimination. The workshop also gave project organizers the opportunity to present and share their experience in the area of practical prevention. A DIK workshop on antisemitism among Muslims was held in early December 2019. The activities are to be continued within the framework of the DIK.

As part of the efforts in the area of religion and foreign policy, the Federal Foreign Office supports the organization "Religions for Peace" and its efforts to promote peace and well-being by inter-religious co-operation around the world. In 2020 a large gathering of women of faith is planned in Lindau, Germany. Some of the initiatives under the governments' strategy "Religious communities as partners for development cooperation" are explicitly targeted at preventing the discrimination of religious minorities (e.g. address discrimination and prejudice – invest in education). [Link](#)

The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development is furthermore a co-founder of PaRD - a partnership network of religious and civil society actors (civil society organisations (CSOs) / faith-based organisations (FBOs)), governmental and intergovernmental entities which emphasises the importance of religious actors and organisations for sustainable development. PaRD promotes greater and closer cooperation between its members and other actors on matters of sustainable development and the achievement of the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda.

A concrete example is the project "Education for social cohesion" (2016-2019) commissioned by the Federal Government in Sri Lanka. In Sri Lanka since the end of the civil war, religious intolerance has led to violent attacks on religious minorities such as Muslims. The segregation of the school system based on the ethnic, linguistic or religious origin of pupils, has not yet been overcome. The project's objective was to enable schoolchildren to learn to live together peacefully in Sri Lanka's multi-religious, multi-ethnic and multilingual society. The project thus makes a contribution to conflict transformation and reconciliation in Sri Lanka with a conflict-sensitive promotion of education, adapted to particular situations. In recent years, the ESC project supported 200 pilot schools and trained 343 instructors, 2904 teachers, 1306 head

teachers as well as 512 lecturers at the National Colleges of Education. Peace and value education (PVE) has been adopted as an integral component in the curriculum and in textbooks for children in grades 6 to 10. Student exchange programmes between Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim schools are a recognised part of peace and value education and are increasingly in demand from schools and education authorities. For further information see: [Link](#)

Examples of State efforts to protect against religious communities' infringement of the human rights of women and girls.

The Federal Government is supporting a first-time cooperation of the NGOs World Vision and Islamic Relief in expanding the “Channels of Hope” approach and adapting it to the prevention of violence against women and girls and female genital mutilation within the frame of children’s rights in Mali. The “Channels of Hope” approach is a faith-based methodology that mobilises faith leaders to prevent FGM. Although FGM is not a prescribed practice of Islam or Christianity, religion remains an important factor. Thus, the inclusion of religious leaders increases the impact, credibility and scope of these joint efforts. This interfaith cooperation runs from between December 2019 and December 2020 with a budget of 200.000 EUR.

Specific policies and initiatives promoting effective participation of religious or belief minorities in public life, including through responsive, inclusive and representative decision-making processes at all levels.

An example for the promotion of effective participation of religious or belief minorities in public life is a dialogue between Rohingya refugees and their host communities, supported by the Federal Government and organised by the Office of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide OSAPG in 2017. High-ranking religious leaders were involved in the dialogues and played an important role in the exchange. Both Rohingya refugees and representatives of the host communities complained before that there was no room for dialogue between them due to government restrictions. They found that a dialogue, including through religious leaders, could help to build closer relations between the communities, avoid misunderstandings and misinformation, and promote stability in the region. The dialogue, which included several meetings with religious leaders and an official visit by the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, has led to the proposal to establish an Interfaith Council of Bangladesh. Such a council would serve as a forum and could convey messages of integration and peace, including with regard to the Rohingya refugee situation.