



Bulletin 2015/I

Summary of the work of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on minority issues, between January-June 2015

Dear Reader!

The first bulletin that I issued in June 2014 has been welcomed by readers from all sectors. I was informed that government officials, NGOs, members of international organizations and academia, and various community representatives found it useful to read all the developments related to the mandate in one comprehensive document. Therefore, I decided to continue with this practice and it is my pleasure to provide you here with the third edition of this bulletin summarizing my work between January-June 2015. You can continue reaching me on my social media sites ([Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) account) or at the official e-mail address (minorityissues@ohchr.org). You can find my website [here](#).

It is my sincere hope that all those interested in minority rights and related issues can find many useful information in this Bulletin.

Happy reading!

IZSÁK Rita
Special Rapporteur on minority issues

Reporting to the Human Rights Council

This year, I appeared on two occasions at the Human Rights Council. At its 28th session, on 18 March, I presented my annual report, two country reports and the recommendations of the 7th Forum on Minority Issues. You can find the summary of the discussion as well as the reports here: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=15716&LangID=E>.

At its 29th session, on 15-16 June, I presented to the Human Rights Council my global study on the human rights situation of Roma worldwide, you can find the summary of the interactive dialogue and the report here:

<http://www.ohchr.org/ch/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=16080&LangID=E>
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=16088>

Annual thematic report

I presented my annual thematic report to the Human Rights Council on 18 March 2015, at its 28th session, titled “Hate speech and incitement to hatred against minorities in the media”.

I expressed that the factors behind the violence experienced by affected minorities are manifold and hate speech and incitement to hatred is one of them. Hatred is often constructed, fuelled, directed and maintained against individuals and communities who are different in ethnicity, language or religion from the dominant majority, often for political reasons or due to long-standing and entrenched discrimination. Hateful messages may fall on particularly fertile ground where there are wider social, economic or political problems or divisions in society. The root causes of hatred often lie beyond purely ethnic or religious differences. Governments, civil society and the international community must be alert to the early warning signs of hatred and violence, such as an atmosphere of discomfort and animosity when minorities exercise their right to freely and openly practise their religion, use their language, or assert their right to have a voice in political life and the decisions that affect them. If hate speech and hate incidents are not tackled quickly and effectively, targeted groups may experience permanent damage to their self-esteem and to their sense of belonging within their societies, increasing their marginalization. At the same time, majority communities may gradually become desensitized to the point where they begin to accept the hostility and stigmatization of certain groups in their societies as normal.

The report identifies a number of factors that lead to hate speech and incitement to hatred in the media, including the absence of or unclear legislation on incitement to hatred, the limited access and representation of minorities in the media, the existence of structural societal inequalities, the changing media landscape and the emerging and more organized forms of extremist and populist movements. Despite the countless examples of hate speech and incitement to hatred against minorities in the media today, my report also highlights a number of positive measures and initiatives implemented by a broad range of actors, including international organizations, States, civil society and individuals, to contest hateful speech and incitement to hatred in the media.

Country report on Nigeria

I visited Nigeria between 17 and 28 February. I found that the Nigerian Constitution provides guarantees of equality for all and for the most part, different communities in Nigeria live together in

harmony and mutual respect. Nevertheless, in States that I visited, including Plateau and Kaduna, I learned of violent intercommunal clashes, which have left thousands of victims over the past years. I was shocked and remain deeply concerned by the escalation of attacks perpetrated by Boko Haram in many locations, including killings, kidnappings and destruction of properties, which I condemn in the strongest terms. During my consultations with many actors in the field, it was clear to me that root causes of violence cannot be framed as religious or ethnic conflicts solely, but are rather complex and intertwined, including the indigenes-settlers dichotomy, competition for resources, poverty, good governance deficits, impunity and polarizations of ethnic and religious characteristics. I emphasized that sustainable solutions to communal violence require not only a heightened and effective security response, but also a comprehensive approach that addresses the underlying causes of violence, particularly good governance deficits, the low socioeconomic status of certain vulnerable groups and failure to hold perpetrators of crimes and violence to account.

Country report on Ukraine

My visit took place in the context of political and social unrest in some regions which started in February 2014, and since then, the situation has evolved into a conflict, with far-reaching impacts on human rights. The vast majority of people I consulted in all locations described, at that moment, harmonious inter-ethnic and inter-faith relations. The main concerns of minorities were primarily over language and cultural rights. I called on the Government to consult with minorities when revising existing legislation or policy relating to minorities and stressed that any newly adopted law must conform with international standards relating to equality, non-discrimination and minority rights. Ukraine has a legislative and policy framework that is conducive to the protection of minority rights. Nevertheless, the infrastructure for minority rights protection requires strengthening.

The 7th Forum on Minority Issues



Resolution 25/5 of March 2014 requests my mandate to guide the work of the Forum on Minority Issues, prepare its annual meetings and report its recommendations to the Human Rights Council. On 25 and 26 November 2014, the seventh annual session took place in Geneva with a thematic focus on preventing and addressing violence and atrocity crimes targeted against minorities.

The Forum was expertly chaired by Mr. Patrick Thornberry, of the United Kingdom, whom I warmly thank for his outstanding work in guiding the session. The participation in the seventh session of the Forum reached unprecedented levels, with around 600 participants from across the globe. The Forum considered four specific thematic areas in detail, thus addressing the entire cycle of violence: 1) understanding the root causes of violence and atrocity crimes against minorities; 2) improving the prevention of violence and atrocity crimes; 3) reflecting on the particular challenges of responding to violence after it has broken out; and 4) the role and importance of implementing minority rights in post-violence and conflict situations and in efforts to build and ensure a stable and lasting peace.

The recommendations of the Forum are directed at Governments, but importantly also at other actors, including the United Nations system and regional organizations, National Human Rights Institutions, civil society, minorities themselves and the media. I encourage you all to study these important recommendations, bring them to the attention of your Governments and civil society, and most importantly, make every effort to implement them by making them pragmatic and effective tools to prevent and address violence and atrocities against minorities.

Study on the human rights situation of Roma worldwide, with a particular focus on the phenomenon of anti-Gypsyism



Photo credit: Stefano Montesi/ERRC

I undertook this study at the invitation of Human Rights Council resolution 26/4. I issued a questionnaire to all Member States and National Human Rights Institutions and I adopted a consultative approach and liaised with numerous international and regional organizations, Roma rights experts and non-governmental organizations. I thank all the governments, institutions and individuals who consulted with me and contributed to this important study.

From my research, one of the main findings is that Roma communities and individuals around the world face deep-rooted problems of racism and extreme marginalization. In Europe, where the world's largest Roma population live, this remains a fact, despite a growing dedicated attention to the situation of Roma in recent years, and the establishment of numerous institutions and mechanisms to help address these deficiencies. Outside of Europe, my research highlighted the ongoing invisibility of the plight of Roma communities, who often still remain on the bottom rung of the ladder in terms of disadvantage.

While the reasons for the marginalization of Roma across the regions are complex, what I have identified is that throughout the world, Roma communities face deeply embedded social

and structural discrimination and anti-Romani bias, which can be termed anti-Gypsyism. Although anti-Gypsyism is originally a European term, the discrimination it embodies manifests itself in a variety of ways across regions. In my report, I also strongly emphasized that the so-called "Roma issue" is not merely a poverty question and that Roma communities should benefit from a wide range of minority rights protection measures.

Side events/conferences/meetings/lectures

I was blessed with my second child in November 2014 and so I was unable to honor several invitations during the first half of 2015. I thank all stakeholders for their kind understanding.

On 20 March I participated in a Human Rights Council side-event in Geneva organized by the Permanent Delegation of the Council of Europe to the UN Office in Geneva titled "Implementing Linguistic Minority Rights". I briefly introduced the rights and challenges of linguistic minorities and

launched my draft handbook titled “Language Rights of Minorities: A Practical Guide for Implementation”. The Guide is a practical, solutions-oriented publication in the form of a handbook, in order to provide States and other relevant stakeholders including civil servants, public officers, policy-makers and civil society organizations, with tools and resources as well as models of effective practice that have been demonstrated to be successful for the protection and promotion of the language and cultural rights of linguistic minorities.

On 16 June, my mandate together with the Permanent Delegation of the Council of Europe, the Permanent Delegation of the European Union and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe co-organized a side-event titled “Combatting Discrimination As a Root Cause of Roma Marginalisation”. The event aimed to promote human rights of Roma worldwide as well as best practices in combatting discrimination against Roma and addressing its root-causes.

Speakers proposed recommendations for the adoption of an integrated approach that combines measures in different policy areas, strengthen political will at the national and local levels, and build mutual trust and openness between Roma and non-Roma.

On 16 June, I participated in a side-event convened to commemorate the first-ever International Albinism Awareness Day (June 13) and had the honor to watch the movie “In the Shadow of the Sun” in the presence of its director, Harry Freeland. After the movie we discussed the many challenges ahead to protect and promote the rights of persons with albinism and how to better prevent and prosecute violence and atrocities committed against them.

I was invited to participate in the Fifth Annual Meeting of the Global Network of Responsibility to Protect (R2P) Focal Points in Madrid, Spain, on 23-24 June 2015 organized by the Governments of Spain and Chile. The thematic focus was on responding to new challenges and threats to vulnerable communities. The topics discussed included the relationship between R2P and Countering Violent Extremism, non-state actors and mechanisms for enhancing protection for vulnerable communities, including persons belonging to minorities, besieged communities and women. Unfortunately, I could not attend in person and I sent the following video message: <https://youtu.be/eU7tjpwjJs>.



Public press releases

I have issued public press statements in the following cases (all to be found on my website under “Latest News”):

[**UN expert urges political action to fight ‘anti-Gypsyism’ as a root cause of Roma marginalisation on International Roma Day, 8 April 2015:**](#) I called for strong and tangible political commitment to fight anti-Roma bias and combat the deeply embedded social and structural discrimination that continues to infringe upon the human rights of Roma.

[**Myanmar: UN rights experts express alarm at adoption of first of four ‘protection of race and religion’ bills:**](#) We expressed alarm at the enactment of the Population Control Healthcare Bill in

Myanmar, the first of four in a package of bills that seek to ‘protect race and religion’. The bills are highly discriminatory against ethnic and religious minorities as well as against women.



A damaged building in Aleppo City/Syria. Photo credit: OCHA/
Gemma Connel

[Statement by the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Responsibility to Protect, the Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues and the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, on the situation in Syria:](#) We strongly condemned the increased number of government aerial attacks in Syria and the use of indiscriminate weapons, such as barrel bombs, including in civilian populated areas. We warned that such attacks could escalate retaliatory action by non-state armed groups, and consequently, increase the vulnerability of religious and ethnic minorities perceived to support the government.

[The continuing struggle of Roma communities across the world – New report by UN expert on minorities:](#) On the occasion of releasing my global study on the human rights situation of Roma worldwide, I called for greater international and national attention to the plight of Roma communities around the world, who are frequently economically, politically and socially marginalized, and experience severe forms of discrimination.

Communications (letters of allegations and urgent appeals)

I have continued issuing communications (including both urgent appeal letters to prevent human rights violations and letters of allegation in the case of alleged committed violations), as well as press releases when disturbing and urgent news of minority rights violations have reached my office. As communications remain confidential until they are reported to the Human Rights Council, 27 communications sent between 1 June 2014 and 28 February 2015 are published below (see all communications sent [here](#)). The mandate since the beginning until 31 May 2014 sent out 186 communications in total, with a response rate of 57% (106).

19/06/2014 – Myanmar : Concerns expressed in relation to the draft bill on Religious Conversion in Myanmar which sets out a cumbersome application and approval process for conversion. Some provisions and requirements set forth are vague and subject to interpretation that may be discriminatory against the poor or religious and ethnic minorities. It could lead to arbitrary denial of the right to change or adopt a religion or belief. The draft law furthermore provides for disproportionate criminal sanctions on offenders. Reportedly, a number of civil society and human rights activists who oppose the proposed package of draft bills, including a proposed interfaith marriage bill and a religious conversion bill, have been threatened. Full Joint Urgent Appeal (JUA) letter : [MMR 4/2014](#). The response of Myanmar: [25/07/2014](#)

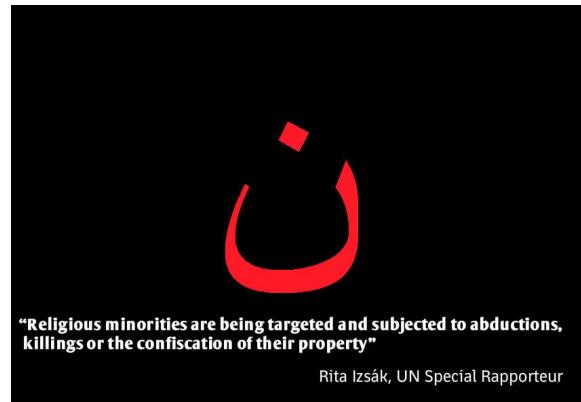
26/06/2014 – Sri Lanka : Alleged systematic attacks and violence against members of religious minorities. On 15 June 2014, a protest rally instigated by Bodu Bala Sena, an extremist Buddhist

group, turned violent as its supporters moved in procession through Muslim neighbourhoods, allegedly chanting anti-Muslim and racial slogans. Muslim-owned homes, shops and mosques were reportedly attacked and some set ablaze by mobs carrying poles and other weapons. Despite a curfew and deployment of police, violence apparently continued into the night as Muslim homes and properties were targeted in nearby Beruwala, Welipenna, and Dharga. Reportedly, four people were killed and about 80 others injured. The latest incident was not an isolated one; during the last two years there have been documented reports of more than 350 incidents of violent attacks on Muslims and more than 150 incidents of violent attacks against Christians. Serious concern is raised at the risk of eruption of further violence against religious minorities. Full JUA letter : [LKA 6/2014](#). Response of Sri Lanka: [02/10/2014](#)

01/07/2014 – **India** : Alleged abduction, gang-rape, and murder of two teenage girls and failure of the authorities to effectively respond after their abductions were reported. According to the information received, on the night of 27 May 2014, Ms. X and Ms. Y, both minors, were abducted as they walked to a field to relieve themselves because they had no access to sanitation at home. After being made aware of this incident, the girls' fathers reportedly went to the police station in the village to report their daughters as missing. However, the local police officers insulted them and refused to help, reportedly because the two young women belonged to a lower caste. The girls were later found dead, hanging from a tree in a mango orchard. It is reported that they had been gang-raped before they were killed. Full Joint Allegation Letter (JAL): [IND 4/2014](#)

14/07/2014 - **Islamic Republic of Iran** : Alleged arbitrary detention and infringement of due process and fair trial guarantees of 33 Kurdish men; and allegations of inhumane treatment and denial of urgent medical treatment in detention. According to the information received, between 2009 and 2010, 33 Kurdish men, including one minor, were arrested by Iranian officials in Kurdistan. They were convicted of several national security offenses. Four of them, Messrs. Hamed Ahmadi, Jameshed Dehghani, Jahangir Dehghani and Komal Molaye, were reportedly sentenced to death following a summary trial without the presence of a lawyer and subjected to both physical and psychological torture while in detention. The Supreme Court upheld their death sentences in September 2013 as well as those of four others of the group of 33 Kurdish men - Seyed Jamal Mousavi, Abdorahman Sangani, Sedigh Mohammadi and Seyed Hadi Hosseini. The other 25 men remain on death row pending review by the Supreme Court. Messrs. Hamed Ahmadi, Jameshed Dehghani, Jahangir Dehghani and Komal Molaye were the subject of a previous communication sent on 17 June 2014, A/HRC/28/85, case no. IRN 10/2014. Full JUA letter : [IRN 13/2014](#)

24/07/2014 – **Iraq** : Reported violence and forced displacement of ethnic and minority groups in northern Iraq. According to the information received, the advance of the Islamic State (IS) in northern Iraq has resulted in acts of violence against and forced displacement of minority groups, including Chaldean Assyrian Christians and Christians of other denominations, Shia, who are a minority in northern Iraq, Shabak, Turkmen and Yezidi. Reported human rights violations against ethnic and religious minority groups include abductions, targeted killings, destruction of holy sites and the seizing of properties. Grave concern is expressed over the situation of the ethnic and religious minorities in the territories under control of the IS and the situation of internally displaced persons due to the conflict. Full JUA letter : [IRQ 4/2014](#)



11/08/2014 – Sri Lanka : Alleged arbitrary detention and forced deportation of Pakistani asylum seekers by Sri Lankan authorities in violation of the principle of non-refoulement. According to the information received, around 1400 Pakistani asylum seekers in Sri Lanka were registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Reportedly, on 9 June 2014, a special operation began to arrest asylum seekers and refugees, and on 1 August 2014, the Government of Sri Lanka started to forcefully deport the detainees to Pakistan. Reportedly over 200 asylum seekers remain in detention. It is also alleged that immigration officers have confiscated passports and UNHCR documents of Pakistani Christian asylum seekers, while many were still waiting for their first instance interviews. The Pakistani asylum seekers belong to religious minorities in Pakistan, including Ahmadiyya Muslims, Christians and Shias, and if deported to Pakistan risk persecution and gross human rights violations. Full JUA letter : [LKA 9/2014](#).

18/08/2014 – Iraq : Allegations of mass summary executions committed by the Islamic State (IS) and other armed groups, and Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) between June and July 2014. According to the information received, IS and other armed groups have committed several summary executions in the country, including the executions of captured members of Government security forces. They have targeted the Turkomen, Shabak and Yezidi communities, which have been victims of kidnappings and killings. ISF are also involved in several grave violations of the right to life, including the killing of detainees and civilians during airstrikes. Concerns are raised about allegations of summary executions committed by the above-mentioned groups, the lack of investigations carried out on the aforementioned violations and the lack of protection measures in favour of minorities and people not taking part in the hostilities. Full JAL letter : [IRQ 5/2014](#). Responses of Iraq: [03/10/2014](#), [11/11/2014](#), [29/01/2015](#).

20/08/2014 - Islamic Republic of Iran : Alleged desecration of an old Bahá'í cemetery in Shiraz, Iran. According to the information received, at the beginning of August 2014, the Islamic Revolutionary Guards in Fars Province restarted construction work on the cemetery, which led to the dumping of the remains of those who were disinterred in a trench. Concerns are raised at a series of actions by the Iranian authorities, which appear to be motivated by religious discrimination against the Bahá'í community through restricting their fundamental human rights to freedom of observance and practice of one's religion or belief, including those in connection with such important rituals associated with life and death. The desecration of the cemetery was the subject of a previous communication sent on 8 May 2014, see A/HRC/27/72, case no. 8/2014. Full JUA letter : [IRN 17/2014](#). Response of Iran: [15/01/2015](#).

28/08/2014 - Saudi Arabia : Alleged arbitrary detention, inhumane treatment, lack of adequate medical treatment and infringement of due process and fair trial guarantees. According to the information received, on 8 July 2014, Sheikh Nimr Baqir Al-Nimr, a 55-year-old who had been denouncing the Saudi Arabian Government over discrimination faced by members of the Shi'a community, was arrested and detained without charge by Saudi Arabian security forces in al-Awwamiya, Eastern Province. On 25 March 2013, his case was sent to the Specialized Criminal Court where the prosecution accused him of "haraba" or banditry, which carries the death penalty. In a hearing that took place in August 2014, the Saudi prosecution allegedly demanded his "death by crucifixion" under several new accusations, including "igniting sectarian incitements", "aiding terrorists" and "waging war on God". Information received indicates that Sheikh Al-Nimr could be executed at any time. Concerns are raised about the fairness of the proceedings which did not comply with international human rights law and his health conditions while in detention. Full JUA letter: [SAU 9/2014](#)

28/08/2014 - United States of America : Allegations of the killing of a young African-American man, and of the subsequent excessive use of force and acts of intimidation against demonstrators and journalists in the city of Ferguson, Missouri. According to the information received, a series of largely peaceful protests have recently taken place in the city of Ferguson in response to the police

shooting of Mr. Michael Brown, a local African-American teenager, on 9 August 2014. They have reportedly been met with excessive use of force by law enforcement officials, who have shot tear gas and rubber bullets at protesters and bystanders, including journalists. On 13 and 19 August 2014, four journalists were assaulted by police, detained for a short period of time, and released without charges. A related communication was sent on 29 August 2013, see A/HRC/25/74, case no USA 15/2013. Full JAL letter : [USA 14/2014](#). Response of USA: [22/10/2014](#)



09/09/2014 – **Georgia** : Alleged involuntary resettlement of an estimated 1,700 to 2,500 inhabitants of the upper Svaneti region, including a large number of individuals and families from the Svan minority ethnic subgroup. According to the information received, the Government of Georgia plans to resume the construction of the Khudoni hydropower plant in the Enguri River gorge on the territory of the Mestia municipality in upper Svaneti, four kilometres south of the village of Khaishi, Georgia. It is reported that the construction will flood at least 1,500 hectares of forest and agricultural land along with the village of Khaishi, which is the administrative centre of a number of villages in the area. Concern is expressed that the residents of the Upper Svaneti region will face violations of their right to an adequate standard of living, including food and housing, and their right to take part in cultural life as a result of the construction of Khudoni dam and their resettlement. Full JAL letter : [GEO 1/2014](#). Response of Georgia: [16/12/2014](#).

25/09/2014 - **Brunei Darussalam** : Allegations concerning the non-compliance with international human rights standards of the Shariah Penal Code Order, 2013 (SPC), enacted in Brunei Darussalam. According to the information received, the SPC's implementation is taking place in three phases. The first phase became operational on 1 May 2014. The second and third phases are expected to commence in 2015 and 2016 respectively. Reportedly, contrary to international human rights standards, the SPC provides inter alia, for the mandatory death penalty and its use for some non-violent acts, including same-sex relations, insulting Islam and its doctrines, and witchcraft. The SPC also stipulates stoning as a method of execution, as well as corporal punishment by amputation and flogging, and allows reliance merely on the accused's confession in order to reach a guilty verdict. Concern is expressed that the SPC discriminates against women and religious minorities; institutionalizes gender-based stereotypes of women regarding their social role and responsibility to preserve the honour of the family; criminalizes blasphemy; and imposes restrictions on the right to freedom of opinion and expression. Full JAL letter : [BRN 1/2014](#). Response by Brunei Darussalam: [11/03/2015](#).

03/10/2014 – **Nepal** : Allegations of arbitrary arrest and detention of a human rights defender who peacefully advocates for the rights of the Madhesis. According to the information received, Dr. Chandra Kant Raut, the Central Coordinator of Alliance for Independent Madhesh, a non-governmental organization, was arrested without a warrant after delivering a speech on 13 September 2014 at a public meeting calling for a right to secession to be enshrined in Nepal's new Constitution. He reportedly spent six days in police custody on charges related to the Public Offence Act before being presented to the Special Court. On three occasions, the Special Court extended Dr. Raut's pre-trial detention, pending the hearing of his habeas corpus writ in front of the Supreme Court. It is reported that the habeas corpus hearing took place on 21 September 2014 and that the Supreme Court issued a show cause notice, requesting the Special Court to provide justification for Dr. Raut's detention. Following another application by the police, the pre-trial detention was again extended by an additional two days, until 24 September 2014, at which date the next habeas corpus hearing took place. On 24 September, the Special Court extended Dr. Raut's detention for an additional 14 days. Full JUA letter : [NPL 6/2014](#)

09/10/2014 - **Islamic Republic of Iran** : Allegations of arbitrary detention and mistreatment in prison of nine members of the Gonabadi dervish religious minority in Iran. According to the information received, Messrs. Mostafa Abdi, Reza Entesari, Hamidreza Moradi and Kasra Nouri, and their lawyers, as well as Messrs. Amir Eslami, Farshid Yadollahi, Mostafa Daneshjoo, Afshin Karampour and Omid Behrouzi, all of them currently imprisoned, are members of the Gonabadi dervish religious minority. Most of the above-mentioned individuals were reportedly arrested and detained in September 2011, during a wave of arrests of Gonabadi dervishes. Reportedly, the nine men were all held in prolonged solitary confinement without access to their lawyers and families. In 2013, they were sentenced to different prison terms on various charges, including "colluding against national security through membership in a deviant sect", "disseminating propaganda against the state", "disturbing public opinion", and "disturbing public order". Concerns were raised about the physical and psychological integrity of the detainees. Mr. Kasra Nouri was the subject of an earlier communication sent on 16 April 2013, see A/HRC/24/21, case no. IRN 7/2013. Full JUA letter : [IRN 22/2014](#)

14/10/2014 – **Israel** : Alleged imminent risk of forced eviction and transfer of Palestinian Bedouin



communities, acts prohibited under international human rights and humanitarian law. According to the information received, Palestinian Bedouin communities currently residing in the central West Bank, including the East Jerusalem periphery, are at imminent risk of forced eviction and transfer to three urbanized sites at Al Jabal, Nuweima and Fasayil in the Jerusalem and Jericho Governorates of the West Bank, as a result of steps being taken by the Government of Israel to relocate them. Between 5,000 and 11,000 individuals are considered to be at risk of relocation to these sites. Full JUA letter : [ISR 10/2014](#)

15/10/2014 – **Yemen** : Alleged arbitrary detention and torture of a Bahá'í follower in Yemen. According to the information received, Mr. Hamid Kamali was arrested on 3 December 2013 at his place of work, in Balhaf, Shabwa province, allegedly on orders of the Head of the National Security Agency of Yemen. He has since been detained at the National Security Prison in Sana'a. Mr. Kamali has allegedly been subjected to forty-five days of "electric torture", severe beatings and starvation in detention. He is reportedly accused of "spying for Israel" and proselytizing the Bahá'í faith. On 16 September 2014, Mr. Kamali was interrogated by the lead judge on his case in connection with the charges against him in the presence of his attorney, who, despite objections raised, was not allowed to speak. Concerns were raised in relation to the independence of the members of the judiciary and their reported discriminatory and intolerant speech towards religious minorities. Full JUA letter : [YEM 5/2014](#)

23/10/2014 – **Pakistan** : Alleged killing of two members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community in Pakistan. According to the information received, on 22 September 2014, Mr. Mubashar Ahmad Khosa Sahib, a 50-year-old Ahmadiyya Muslim from Satellite Town, Mirpur Khas, was shot dead by two unknown motorcyclists. On 15 October 2014, Mr. Lateef Alam Butt, a 62-year-old Ahmadiyya Muslim from Kamrah, District Attock, was shot dead by unknown assailants when returning home from work. Mr. Alam Butt was a well-known Ahmadiyya Muslim and his house was a prayer centre for local members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community (Jamaat). The attack against Mr. Alam Butt took place after Sipah-e-Sahaba, a banned extremist organization, announced plans to carry out

targeted killings of Ahmadiyya Muslims during a high-level internal meeting. Full JUA letter : [PAK 11/2014](#)

03/11/2014 – Austria : Allegations concerning a draft revision of the 1912 Islamic Law which may impinge on the religious autonomy of Islamic communities in Austria. According to the information received, on 2 October 2014, the Government of Austria presented a draft revision of the 1912 Islamic Law to Parliament and invited national stakeholders to submit their comments by 7 November 2014. The draft revision allegedly contains controversial provisions that attempt to regulate the content of teachings to Islamic communities; prohibit continuous foreign funding of mosques and religious activities; and further regulate the training, hiring and removal of Muslim clerics. Moreover, there is concern that this may also affect clergies from other religious minorities. Full JAL Letter : [AUT 1/2014](#). Response of Austria: [21/01/2015](#).

17/11/2014 - Saudi Arabia : Alleged arbitrary detention, inhuman treatment, lack of adequate medical treatment and infringement of due process and fair trial guarantees. According to the information received, on 15 October 2014, Sheikh Nimr Baqir Al-Nimr - who is a cleric belonging to the Shi'a religious minority in Saudi Arabia and in the past years has been denouncing the Saudi Arabian government over discrimination faced by members of the Shi'a community - was sentenced to death by the Specialized Criminal Court in Saudi Arabia for “disobeying the ruler”, “inciting sectarian strife” and “encouraging, leading and participating in demonstrations”. Information received indicates that Sheikh Nimr Baqir Al-Nimr could be executed at any time. Concerns are raised that the death penalty was issued after a trial that did not comply with the most stringent due process and fair trial guarantees. Concerns are also raised at the alleged denial of medical treatment while in detention. Sheikh Al-Nimr was the subject of a previous communication sent on 28 August 2014, see above, case no. SAU 9/2014. Full JUA letter : [SAU 12/2014](#). Response of Saudi Arabia (to be translated at the time of writing): [31/12/2014](#).

20/11/2014 - Indonesia: Alleged religious intolerance and violence against Church members in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. According to the information received, on 29 May 2014, members of Santo Fransiscus Agung Banteng Church in Sleman City were attacked by a mob during a prayer gathering in the garage of Mr. Julius Felicianus' house. During this attack, a number of church members were beaten up, an 8-year-old girl was electrocuted, and Mr. Felicianus was injured. On 1 June 2014, a similar incident took place in Pangukan Village in Sleman Regency where a Sunday service of El'Shaddai Pentecostal Church-GDPI was disrupted by a mob. Even though the police was able to stop the violence from escalating, the mob returned later that day and damaged the church building and the house of the Pastor of the Church. On 16 October 2014, Sleman-Yogyakarta District Court sentenced one of the perpetrators of the attack on Mr. Felicianus' home to a short prison sentence of three months minus time spent in pre-trial detention, while no other perpetrators have been held accountable. Full JAL letter : [IDN 5/2014](#)

25/11/2014 - Viet Nam: Allegations of ongoing harassment and violation of freedom of religion or belief of independent religious communities in Viet Nam, as well as reprisals for co-operating with the United Nations, its mechanisms and representatives in the field of human rights. According to the information received, Mr. Nguyen Bac Truyen, a human rights defender; independent Hoa Hao Buddhists; and Duong Van Minh believers have faced grave reprisals before, during and after meeting with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief during his visit to Viet Nam in July 2014. In addition, concerns are expressed at the forced renunciation campaign launched against Duong Van Minh believers in Bac Kan Province. Further, concerns are expressed at the series of attacks that have taken place against the Evangelical Mennonite Church since June 2014, including beatings, arrests and detention of members of the Church, and raids and attacks at places of worship. There is also imminent risk of the demolition of Lien Tri Pagoda due to an urban development project in Thu Thiem Peninsula. Mr. Nguyen Bac Truyen was the subject

of a previous communication sent on 26 March 2014, see A/HRC/27/72 case no. VNM 4/2014. Full JUA letter : [VNM 11/2014](#). Response by Viet Nam: [16/03/2015](#).

01/12/2014 – Pakistan : Allegations of abduction, child marriage and forced conversion to Islam in Pakistan. According to the information received, a 12-year-old Hindu girl was abducted, taken to a Madrassa “Dar Ul Uloom Ahsan Al Barakat”, forced into marriage and converted to Islam. Grave concern is raised that this case may be part of an ongoing pattern of violations affecting the Hindu religious minority community in Pakistan, as during October and November 2014 there have been at least four similar reported cases in Sindh Province alone. Particular concern is further expressed at allegations that Pakistan police in the above-mentioned cases have refused to duly fulfill their role and provide support and protection to parents belonging to the Hindu religious minority community, of which the daughters have been abducted. Full JUA letter : [PAK 14/2014](#).

05/12/2014 – France : Alleged forced evictions of Roma people. According to information received, in October 2014, more than 300 Roma, including 50 children, living in an informal settlement near Bobigny in the north-eastern suburbs of Paris, have been expelled. The forced eviction was carried out without prior consultation and adequate alternative accommodation has not been provided to families. Full JAL letter : [FRA 3/2014](#). Response of France: [03/02/2015](#).

09/01/2015 - Dominican Republic : On 22 October, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights issued a ruling against the Dominican Republic relating to the treatment of Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian origin and declared that the 2013 ruling of the Dominican Constitutional Court was discriminatory and thus infringed the American Convention on Human Rights. A few days later, on 4 November 2014, the Dominican Constitutional Court declared unconstitutional “the instrument used by the country to accede to the jurisdiction of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights” in 1999. Full JAL Letter : [DOM 1/2014](#)



Photo: AFP

28/01/2015 – Netherlands : Letter requesting information on the reported placement of the Dutch tradition of Sinterklaas and Black Pete on the National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage. According to the information received, on 15 January 2015, the Dutch Centre for Folk Culture and Intangible Heritage, a Government-funded organization, placed the Dutch traditional Sinterklaas and Black Pete festival on the National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Allegedly, concerned communities, who find the tradition of Black Pete to be offensive, as it perpetuates a negative stereotyped representation of African people and people of African descent, were not informed nor consulted about this process.

A previous communication on the same subject was sent on 17 January 2013, see A/HRC/23/51, case no. NLD 1/2013. Full JAL letter : [NLD 1/2015](#). Response of the Netherlands: [30/03/2015](#).

05/02/2015 – Myanmar : Allegations of physical abuse, rape and murder of two female ethnic Kachin schoolteachers by members of the Myanmar army in Northern Shan State. According to the information received, during the night of 19 January 2015, two ethnic Kachin schoolteachers were

physically abused, raped and murdered in their rooms in the dormitory inside the Kachin Baptist Convention church compound. The incident occurred in Kaung Kha village between Nan Taung and Mung Baw village tracts, Muse Township in the Northern Shan State. The two female victims, Maran Lu Ra, aged 20, and Tangbau Hkwan Nan Tsin, aged 21, were allegedly found in a state of undress with signs of having been beaten with a blunt instrument. Reports suggest that locals have accused soldiers of the 503rd Light Infantry Battalion of the Myanmar Army (Tatmadaw), who are stationed around 100 metres from where the incident took place, of being involved in the rape and murder of the two young women. Furthermore, it was reported that an initial investigation into the double murder failed to implicate Government soldiers, and that a military representative warned that legal action would be taken against those who accuse soldiers of involvement in this case. Full JAL Letter : [MMR 1/2015](#).

25/02/2015 – **Spain** : Allegations relating to the "Recommendations on interventions to people of Arab origin" issued by the Provincial Western Andalusia of the National Police. According to information received, police headquarters had issued recommendations to their officers to use ethnic and racial profiling, encouraging disproportionate and unjustified surveillance towards a specific group. Although these recommendations were subsequently canceled, concerns were expressed that such measures could promote racist and Islamophobic attitudes on the part of public officials and the general population. Full JAL letter : [ESP 2/2015](#)

Other Initiatives

I finalized my research on the recommendations made relevant to minorities during the 1st cycle of the Universal Periodic Review process. The analysis revealed that 112 Member States issued 895 recommendations about national, ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities to 137 Member States. Minorities were the 9th most discussed topic at the 1st cycle of the Human Rights Council's UPR process and constituted 4.2% of the total 21,353 recommendations. Recommendation on minorities centered on Europe, 43 European Members States received such recommendations, followed by 28 African Member States. For the full analysis, visit: <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/IEMinorities/MinoritiesIssues1stcycleUPRProcess.pdf>

| Rank | State under Review | Total Recommendations | % of 895 Recommendations |
|------|--------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. | Slovakia | 54 | 6.03 |
| 2. | Hungary | 38 | 4.25 |
| 3. | Italy | 29 | 3.24 |
| 4. | Croatia | 29 | 3.24 |
| 5. | Bulgaria | 29 | 3.24 |
| 6. | Austria | 21 | 2.35 |
| 7. | Georgia | 21 | 2.35 |
| 8. | Turkey | 21 | 2.35 |
| 9. | Lithuania | 20 | 2.23 |
| 10. | Myanmar | 20 | 2.23 |

I finalized a handbook titled “Language Rights of Linguistic Minorities” which has been uploaded to my website for comments. I would like to thank all those experts and governments that took their time to comment and contribute to this study. It is available here: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Minorities/SRMinorities/Pages/SRminorityissuesIndex.aspx> (under Highlights).

We established a dedicated website to the protection of Roma where you can find all background information about my study of the human rights situation of Roma worldwide; a list of thematic reports, country reports and communications relevant to the human rights situation of Roma; useful links and other information: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Minorities/SRMinorities/Pages/StudyProtectionRoma.aspx>

The Special Rapporteur in the media

The press releases issued by the mandate as well as the statements of the interactive dialogues at the Human Rights Council have been quoted and republished in several international and national media outlets which would be difficult to list. Below are the links to those media pieces in which I have been directly interviewed.

An interview on the situation of Roma in the ‘La Gazette des communes’ (in French): <http://www.lagazettedescommunes.com/372048/roms-la-plus-grande-responsabilite-repose-sur-les-autorites-locales/>

An interview on the situation of Roma for the European Roma Rights Center blog: <http://www.errc.org/blog/the-so-called-roma-issue-is-not-merely-a-poverty-question/64>

What's next? Where to keep an eye?

My next report to the General Assembly to be presented in October 2015 will look into the issues of minorities in the criminal justice system. The next UN Forum on Minority Issues will also address this theme. All relevant information will be uploaded very soon at <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Minority/Pages/ForumIndex.aspx>.



Special Procedures mandate holders in 2015

I would like to thank the Government of Brazil for accepting my visit request which is scheduled to take place in September 2015.

At the 22nd Annual Meeting of Special Procedures mandate holders in June 2015, I had the honor to be elected as a member for the Coordination Committee for the coming 12 months ahead.