



**Anti-Muslim hatred/Islamophobia and the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief,  
submission to the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, November 2020**

*Forum 18<sup>1</sup> provides truthful, original, detailed, and accurate monitoring and analysis of violations of freedom of thought, conscience and belief in Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, occupied Ukrainian territory, and Belarus. We also provide analyses on freedom of religion and belief in Turkey.*

In many contexts the freedom of religion and belief (FoRB) and other interlinked human rights of Muslims are violated precisely because the targets are Muslim or are perceived to be Muslim<sup>2</sup>. The same observation could be made about violations of the FoRB of followers of other beliefs, including atheists. Yet FoRB violations do not always have a belief-based motivation.

Islamophobia is much used to describe human rights violations against Muslims<sup>3</sup>. Yet this and similar terms can in some contexts be used for special pleading and “become a surrogate for the lack of progress (or the unwillingness to confront) the underlying issue. This is the lack of a real understanding of, and commitment to, the freedom of religion or belief for all.<sup>4</sup>” This is underlined by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation’s use of the term<sup>5</sup>. Its member states and observers – including **Kazakhstan**<sup>6</sup>, **Kyrgyzstan**<sup>7</sup>, **Tajikistan**<sup>8</sup>, **Turkmenistan**<sup>9</sup>, **Uzbekistan**<sup>10</sup>, **Azerbaijan**<sup>11</sup> and **Russia**<sup>12</sup> - are responsible for serious violations of the FoRB of Muslims. As former UN Special Rapporteur on FoRB Heiner Bielefeldt observed in his 2016 report to the General Assembly: “Freedom of religion or belief rightly has been termed a “gateway” to other freedoms, including freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly and association. There can be no free religious community life without respect for those other freedoms, which are closely intertwined with the right to freedom of religion or belief itself. This is exactly what worries authoritarian Governments and often causes them to curb freedom of religion or belief”<sup>13</sup>.

Apart from in **Georgia**<sup>14</sup> in the South Caucasus, in the contexts Forum 18 monitors it appears that a perpetrator or target’s beliefs are not primary factors in FoRB violations. As the former Special Rapporteur noted<sup>15</sup>: “While intolerant interpretations of religions or beliefs are in fact one of the most important root causes of numerous violations in this area, one should not ignore the relevance of various societal and political factors, such as interference by control-obsessed authoritarian

<sup>1</sup><http://www.forum18.org>

<sup>2</sup>See Forum 18, GEORGIA: Religious freedom survey, October 2020 [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2613](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2613) and in another context “The Impact of the Christchurch Terror Attack | Tell MAMA Interim report 2019”, 13 March 2020 <http://www.tellmamauk.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/The-Impact-of-the-ChristChurch-Attack-Tell-MAMA-Interim-Report-2019-PP.pdf>

<sup>3</sup>Tell MAMA Submission – A Working Definition of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim Hatred/Prejudice, 23 November 2018 <http://www.tellmamauk.org/tell-mama-submission-a-working-definition-of-islamophobia-and-anti-muslim-hatred-prejudice/>

<sup>4</sup>Advancing Freedom of Religion or Belief: Agendas for Change, lecture by Professor Sir Malcolm Evans, 8 June 2011 [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=1580](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=1580)

<sup>5</sup>Islamophobia - Organisation of Islamic Cooperation [http://www.oic-oci.org/page/?p\\_id=182&p\\_ref=61&lan=en](http://www.oic-oci.org/page/?p_id=182&p_ref=61&lan=en)

<sup>6</sup>See Forum 18’s reports on particular FoRB violations in Kazakhstan <http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?country=29>

<sup>7</sup>See Forum 18’s reports on particular FoRB violations in Kyrgyzstan <http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?country=30>

<sup>8</sup>See Forum 18’s reports on particular FoRB violations in Tajikistan <http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?country=31>

<sup>9</sup>See Forum 18’s reports on particular FoRB violations in Turkmenistan <http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?country=32>

<sup>10</sup>See Forum 18’s reports on particular FoRB violations in Uzbekistan <http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?country=33>

<sup>11</sup>See Forum 18’s reports on particular FoRB violations in Azerbaijan <http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?country=23>

<sup>12</sup>See Forum 18’s reports on particular FoRB violations in Russia <http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?country=10>

<sup>13</sup>Interim report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, 2 August 2016, A/71/269, paragraph 33 [http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Religion/A-71-269\\_en.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Religion/A-71-269_en.pdf)

<sup>14</sup>Forum 18, GEORGIA: Religious freedom survey, October 2020 [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2613](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2613)



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Governments, the utilization of religions for defining a homogeneous understanding of national identity, loss of trust in public institutions and concomitant processes of societal fragmentation, the prevalence of a ‘macho culture’, economic and social disparities, widening power gaps between different groups within a society and other variables.” FoRB violations against Muslims and followers of other beliefs in the territories Forum 18 monitors are overwhelmingly committed by such “control-obsessed authoritarian Governments”. These regimes, which rule people without submitting to free and fair elections<sup>16</sup>, “commit violations of freedom of religion or belief for utterly mundane purposes, for example, in the interest of exercising political control over society as a whole”<sup>17</sup>.

**Kazakhstan** is an example of one such “control-obsessed authoritarian Government”, whose serious systemic violations of many human rights are bound up with cross-cutting issues such as the rule of law<sup>18</sup>. All exercise of freedom of religion and belief without state permission is illegal, and all forms of Islam apart from state-controlled Sunni Hanafi Islam are banned. All Islamic literature that is neither Hanafi Muslim nor Muslim Board approved is banned, and there is strict censorship of all religious texts - including strict limits on where they can be bought or given away. Religious communities of under 50 people are illegal. All discussion of faith by people without state permission, or not using state-approved texts, or outside state-approved locations, is banned<sup>19</sup>.

All mosques outside the control of the state-controlled Muslim Board have been forced to close, even though there was no “legal” basis for such demands, or evidence for official claims that “they will breed terrorists”<sup>20</sup>. A variety of tactics were used to force independent mosques to join the Board or close – including threats to use bulldozers to demolish an independent mosque<sup>21</sup>. In the case of the Din-Muhammad Tatar-Bashkir Mosque in Petropavl, heavy state pressure caused attendance at prayers to drop from hundreds to tens because “people are afraid of the authorities”, community members stated. They also thought the pressure caused the June 2015 death from a heart attack of their Imam, Rafael Ryazapov<sup>22</sup>. Later that year the Mosque joined the Board.

The Justice Ministry has denied all registration applications by non-Muslim Board Islamic communities. The Board is registered as one legal entity with all mosques in the country as its branches. Islam is the only religious community on which the state imposes such a monopoly. All mosques are controlled by the Board and must be Sunni Hanafi. All other mosques are banned, including other schools of Sunni Islam (such as Hanbali or Shafi), Shia, Ahmadi, or independent Sunni Hanafi mosques<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup>Interim report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, 2 August 2016, A/71/269, paragraph 24  
[http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Religion/A-71-269\\_en.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Religion/A-71-269_en.pdf)

<sup>16</sup>OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections>

<sup>17</sup>Interim report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, 2 August 2016, A/71/269, paragraph 31  
[http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Religion/A-71-269\\_en.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Religion/A-71-269_en.pdf)

<sup>18</sup>Kazakhstan – Human Rights Watch World Report 2020  
<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/kazakhstan>

<sup>19</sup>Forum 18, KAZAKHSTAN: Religious freedom survey, September 2018 [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2409](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2409)

<sup>20</sup>Forum 18, KAZAKHSTAN: “Mosques cannot be independent”, 14 October 2010  
[http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=1498](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=1498)

<sup>21</sup>Forum 18, KAZAKHSTAN: “What difference does it make whether you are registered or not?”, 5 November 2012  
[http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=1763](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=1763)

<sup>22</sup>Forum 18, KAZAKHSTAN: Last days for embattled mosque?, 2 November 2015  
[http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2115](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2115)



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All mosques must give the Board 30 per cent of their income, and have their imams appointed by the Board with no consultation. Imams must only read out sermons at Friday prayers which have been provided by the Board. Independent mosques strongly objected to these restrictions, which make Muslim exercise of freedom of religion and belief even more restricted than the freedom of religion and belief of those who follow other beliefs<sup>24</sup>. The state also subjects Muslim communities to language restrictions which do not apply to other communities. Mosques must use Kazakh rather than other languages such as Russian, Tatar, Chechen, or Azeri for sermons. This particularly affects Shia Muslims<sup>25</sup>.

Prisoners of conscience jailed for exercising freedom of religion and belief are primarily alleged adherents of Muslim missionary movement Tablighi Jamaat<sup>26</sup>. One verdict claiming the defendant was “intolerant” towards Shia Islam – even though the regime itself has banned all Shia mosques and literature<sup>27</sup>. In the most recent jailing, after being arrested in 2018, jailed, tortured, acquitted, and put on trial again, 30-year-old Sunni Muslim Dadash Mazhenov was on 13 October 2020 jailed for nearly 8 years on “terrorism” charges. His “crime” was to post online four Islamic talks, which he later deleted. In 2019 he was tortured for praying in prison, yet contrary to binding legal obligations under the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Kazakhstan has not arrested and put on criminal trial the suspect torturers. One official insisted to Forum 18 that prisoner of conscience Mazhenov tortured himself<sup>28</sup>.

In her January 2020 report (A/HRC/43/46/Add.1<sup>29</sup>), Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, the United Nations Special Rapporteur for Protecting Human Rights while Countering Terrorism, found that Kazakhstan’s “broad formulation of the concepts of ‘extremism’, ‘inciting social or class hatred’, and ‘religious hatred or enmity’ in national law are used to unduly restrict freedoms of religion, expression, assembly and association”. Professor Ní Aoláin also described “an overly bloated security sector, numerous overlapping layers of legislation and bodies that exist primarily to provide the appearance of a system based on the rule of law and a professed adherence to the principle of equality”<sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup>Forum 18, KAZAKHSTAN: Religious freedom survey, September 2018 [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2409](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2409)

<sup>24</sup>Forum 18, KAZAKHSTAN: Religious freedom survey, September 2018 [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2409](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2409)

<sup>25</sup>Forum 18, KAZAKHSTAN: Ethnic-based mosques “cannot be opened”, 4 November 2010 [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=1506](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=1506)

<sup>26</sup>Forum 18, KAZAKHSTAN: 24 prisoners of conscience - list, 22 April 2020 [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2566](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2566)

<sup>27</sup>Forum 18, KAZAKHSTAN: Now 30 Sunni Muslims convicted since December 2014, KNB secret police spy, 22 April 2016 [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2170](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2170)

<sup>28</sup>Forum 18, KAZAKHSTAN: Tortured prisoner of conscience jailed again, 14 October 2020 [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2608](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2608)

<sup>29</sup>Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, A/HRC/43/46/Add.1, 22 January 2020 <http://www.undocs.org/en/A/HRC/43/46/Add.1>

<sup>30</sup>Forum 18, KAZAKHSTAN: 24 prisoners of conscience - list, 22 April 2020 [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2566](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2566)



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The regime also attempts to control how Muslims pray. In November 2016 the state-controlled Muslim Board banned saying out loud the word “Amen”. Human rights defenders state that fines for saying “Amen” aloud in mosques have become common. “I am an adherent of the Hanbali school and consider it necessary to pray the word 'Amen' aloud,” a Muslim who wished to remain anonymous for fear of state reprisals told Forum 18. “But after imams halted the prayers because I prayed the word aloud I had to stop and say it to myself just to avoid conflict”. After being contacted by Muslim Board-appointed imams, local religious affairs officials prepare prosecution cases under Administrative Code Article 490 (“Violating the Religion Law”)<sup>31</sup>.

From January to December 2019 at least 140 individuals, two religious communities, and one company were punished for meeting for worship without state permission, offering religious literature and items (including online), sharing or teaching faith, posting religious material online, Muslims praying in mosques in banned ways such as saying the word Amen aloud, inviting a child to meetings, or allegedly inadequate security measures. Fines were the equivalent of between three weeks' and four months' average wages for those in formal work. Yet an official claimed to Forum 18 that: “We have no problems in the area of freedom of conscience”<sup>32</sup>.

A similar “control-obsessed authoritarian Government” is **Uzbekistan**, where systemic violations of many human rights continue<sup>33</sup>. All exercise of freedom of religion or belief without state permission remains illegal<sup>34</sup>. Serious violations of freedom of religion and belief<sup>35</sup> include Muslims being jailed for discussed their faith online. Five were on 14 August 2020 jailed for up to 11 and a half years, the other three being given restricted freedom sentences, during which among other restrictions they cannot use any means of communication, and cannot attend public events. The mother of one of these prisoners of conscience stated that “the young men did not even know each other well. Most of them met for the first time on social media where they were asking questions about Islam”<sup>36</sup>. In the same way as in other recent cases where Muslims have been jailed for their beliefs<sup>37</sup>, police used an agent provocateur to provide false evidence to jail the men.

These prisoners of conscience were tortured<sup>38</sup>, yet Lieutenant Colonel Sherzod Shermatov of the Interior Ministry stated that against binding legal international human rights obligations<sup>39</sup> no arrests or trials of suspect torturers will happen as “all the actions of the investigators were lawful”<sup>40</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup>Forum 18, KAZAKHSTAN: Fined for praying “Amen” in mosque, 28 March 2017  
[http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2267](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2267)

<sup>32</sup>Forum 18, KAZAKHSTAN: 167 administrative prosecutions in 2019, 9 January 2020  
[http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2532](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2532)

<sup>33</sup>Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2020, Uzbekistan <http://www.freedomhouse.org/country/uzbekistan/freedom-world/2020>

<sup>34</sup>Forum 18 September 2017 Uzbekistan religious freedom survey [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2314](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2314)

<sup>35</sup>See Forum 18’s reports on particular FoRB violations in Uzbekistan <http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?country=33>

<sup>36</sup>Forum 18, UZBEKISTAN: Jail, restricted freedom sentences, for discussing faith, 8 September 2020  
[http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2599](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2599)

<sup>37</sup>Forum 18, UZBEKISTAN: Police agent provocateur used to entrap Muslims, 3 June 2020  
[http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2575](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2575)

<sup>38</sup>Forum 18, UZBEKISTAN: Police agent provocateur used to entrap Muslims, 3 June 2020  
[http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2575](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2575)

<sup>39</sup>Forum 18, UZBEKISTAN: Torture and death threats unpunished, 1 May 2020 [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2374](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2374)

<sup>40</sup>Forum 18, UZBEKISTAN: Agents provocateurs, arrests, torture, criminal cases, 23 July 2020  
[http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2586](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2586)



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The regime has also put on criminal trial a trauma surgeon, Dr Alimardon Sultonov, known for discussing the lack of freedom of religion and belief for Muslims<sup>41</sup>. He had called the local medical emergency service to ask about coronavirus cases as he suspected the regime of concealing this information which he as a doctor needed to know. After Dr Sultonov called, five police, Interior Ministry, and State Security Service (SSS) secret police officers came from the regional capital Nukus to question him, confiscate a computer with religious texts, and then open a criminal case against him. Among the charges he faces is a new Criminal Code Article 244-5 (“Dissemination of knowingly false information about an infectious disease”)<sup>42</sup>.

The regime seriously restricts the numbers of haj pilgrims, and imposes multiple obstacles against potential pilgrims joining the long pilgrimage waiting lists<sup>43</sup>. Methods used include exit ban lists, arbitrarily altering who can go on the pilgrimage and when they can go, and imposing a large financial cost for making the pilgrimage. Pilgrims have observed that the process provides many opportunities for corruption<sup>44</sup>.

The regime was on 13 October elected to the UN Human Rights Council<sup>45</sup> despite failing to implement<sup>46</sup> recommendations from: the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief; its last UN Universal Periodic Review in 2018; and May 2020 Concluding Observations of the UN Human Rights Committee<sup>47</sup>.

In May 2018 the regime added new restrictive requirements for seeking state permission to exist to the Religion Law<sup>48</sup>. An October 2020 Venice Commission / OSCE ODIHR opinion on a draft new Religion Law describing it as “incompatible with international human rights standards” has been welcomed by human rights defenders and members of religious and belief communities<sup>49</sup>. Officials have not explained why a draft which they knew seriously failed to implement human rights - as demanded by people the unelected regime rules - was sent for review<sup>50</sup>. One Muslim noted that: “We need to understand that the draft Law is only an advertisement for Uzbekistan aimed at international organisations and foreign states. If the authorities wanted real freedom for the people, then the draft Law would have been very different”<sup>51</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup>Forum 18, UZBEKISTAN: “No real public discussions” of draft Religion Law, 30 September 2020  
[http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2604](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2604)

<sup>42</sup>Forum 18, UZBEKISTAN: Trial postponed, home raided to pressure human rights defender, 30 October 2020  
[http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2614](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2614)

<sup>43</sup>Forum 18, UZBEKISTAN: Religious freedom survey, September 2017 [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2314](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2314)

<sup>44</sup>Forum 18, UZBEKISTAN: Haj pilgrims face state control, bribery, exit ban lists, 8 November 2019  
[http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2520](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2520)

<sup>45</sup>Reality Check on Human Rights in Uzbekistan, Hugh Williamson, Human Rights Watch, 15 September 2020  
<http://www.hrw.org/news/2020/09/17/reality-check-human-rights-uzbekistan>

<sup>46</sup>Forum 18, UZBEKISTAN: “The draft Religion Law is only an advertisement”, 16 October 2020  
[http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2609](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2609)

<sup>47</sup>Forum 18, UZBEKISTAN: “The draft Religion Law is only an advertisement”, 16 October 2020  
[http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2609](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2609)

<sup>48</sup>Forum 18, UZBEKISTAN: More legal personality restrictions imposed, 18 July 2018  
[http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2396](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2396)

<sup>49</sup>Forum 18, UZBEKISTAN: “The draft Religion Law is only an advertisement”, 16 October 2020  
[http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2609](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2609)

<sup>50</sup>Forum 18, UZBEKISTAN: “No real public discussions” of draft Religion Law, 30 September 2020  
[http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2604](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2604)



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Within **Russia**, long-running “anti-extremism” campaigns<sup>52</sup> against Jehovah’s Witnesses<sup>53</sup> and Muslims who meet to read theologian Said Nursi’s works<sup>54</sup> continue. As of 23 November 2020 eight Jehovah's Witnesses, and one Muslim who met with others to study Nursi’s works, are serving labour camp terms as “extremists”<sup>55</sup>.

After Yevgeny Kim was in April 2019 released from a labour camp (where he had been jailed for meeting with other Muslims to study his faith<sup>56</sup>), he was deprived of his Russian citizenship leaving him stateless, fined, and ordered to be deported. The excuse given by the court was that he did not have a Russian internal passport. He did not have this as officials confiscated it the day before<sup>57</sup>. Similarly, in April 2020 Jehovah's Witnesses Feliks Makhammadiyev and Konstantin Bazhenov were also deprived of Russian citizenship. Like Kim, Makhammadiyev is now stateless<sup>58</sup>. Russia has been trying to deport Kim since 2019<sup>59</sup>, and might try to deport Makhammadiyev and Bazhenov when they complete their jail terms<sup>60</sup>.

Russia is using Interpol Red Notices to try to get back at least three citizens now living abroad to prosecute them for exercising freedom of religion or belief. Two are Muslims who met to study their faith using the writings of Said Nursi. These Red Notices violate Interpol's rules, which ban their use in ways that violate individuals' human rights<sup>61</sup>.

There is also impunity for torturers<sup>62</sup>. Muslim prisoner of conscience Yevgeny Kim following his 2015 arrest<sup>63</sup>, and seven Jehovah's Witnesses were in 2019<sup>64</sup> were tortured. Contrary to the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, none of the officials suspected of torture have been arrested and put on criminal trial for torture<sup>65</sup>.

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<sup>51</sup>Forum 18, UZBEKISTAN: “The draft Religion Law is only an advertisement”, 16 October 2020

[http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2609](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2609)

<sup>52</sup>Forum 18, RUSSIA: “Extremism” religious freedom survey, September 2016 [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2215](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2215)

<sup>53</sup>Forum 18, RUSSIA: Jehovah's Witnesses banned, property confiscated, 20 April 2017 [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2247](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2247)

<sup>54</sup>Forum 18, RUSSIA: “Extremism” religious freedom survey, September 2016 [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2215](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2215)

<sup>55</sup>RUSSIA: “Extremist organisation” trial outcomes: jail sentences, 23 November 2020 [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2619](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2619)

<sup>56</sup>Forum 18, RUSSIA: Prison, trials, investigations for religious meetings, 23 June 2017 [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2290](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2290)

<sup>57</sup>Forum 18, RUSSIA: Imprisonment completed, citizenship stripped, awaiting deportation, 22 May 2019 [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2478](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2478)

<sup>58</sup>Forum 18, RUSSIA: Three prisoners of conscience stripped of citizenship, 9 July 2020 [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2583](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2583)

<sup>59</sup>RUSSIA: 15 months in deportation centre so far, 13 July 2020 [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2585](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2585)

<sup>60</sup>Forum 18, RUSSIA: Three prisoners of conscience stripped of citizenship, 9 July 2020 [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2583](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2583)

<sup>61</sup>RUSSIA: “Russia has deceived Interpol”, 10 July 2020 [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2584](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2584)

<sup>62</sup>Forum 18, RUSSIA: Impunity for officials who torture?, 13 March 2020 [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2554](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2554)

<sup>63</sup>Forum 18, RUSSIA: Muslim prisoner of conscience tortured, 7 November 2017 [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2332](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2332)

<sup>64</sup>Forum 18, RUSSIA: Tortured for beliefs, suspect torturers rewarded, 28 June 2019 [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2489](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2489)



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Other freedom of religion and belief violations<sup>66</sup> include use of July 2016 “anti-terrorism” restrictions against the sharing of beliefs and other manifestations of human rights<sup>67</sup>. For example, from January to June 2020 there were 98 prosecutions of religious organisations and individuals for not showing a full official name – even though such prosecutions of individuals are illegal. Most resulted in guilty verdicts and fines, and the largest increase in the number of prosecutions by religious community was of Muslims<sup>68</sup>.

Within **Russian-occupied Ukrainian territory**<sup>69</sup>, recent FoRB violations have included jailing Renat Suleimanov in January 2019 for four years for meeting openly in mosques with three friends to discuss their faith<sup>70</sup>. The second two such jailings in Crimea for meeting to discuss faith were of Jehovah's Witnesses Sergei Filatov<sup>71</sup> and Artyom Gerasimov<sup>72</sup>.

Among other violations, places of worship have been targeted including the closure of a mosque in Zavetnoye. Police and plain clothes officers raided it in March 2020. In April Imam Dilyaver Khalilov was fined for leading Friday prayers. They authorities insist the mosque the community was given, has repaired, and has been using since 2004 is not a mosque but a sports complex. Asked how the Muslim community should worship, Emil Velilyayev, deputy head of Sovetsky District, told Forum 18: “There is no community there”<sup>73</sup>.

In all the contexts Forum 18 monitors and analyses, violations of Muslims’ FoRB can be most accurately understood and addressed within the context of violations of everyone’s right to this and other fundamental freedoms. As current Special Rapporteur on FoRB Dr Ahmed Shaheed<sup>74</sup>, Professor Nazila Ghanea<sup>75</sup>, and Professor Sir Malcolm Evans<sup>76</sup> wrote in February 2019: “Seeking to protect some from persecution necessarily requires seeking to protect all from persecution. Upholding full enjoyment of freedom of religion or belief (which includes the freedom of worship) would enhance its enjoyment by all, whether believer, non-believer or ambivalent”<sup>77</sup>. (END)

<sup>65</sup>Forum 18, RUSSIA: Impunity for officials who torture?, 13 March 2020 [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2554](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2554)

<sup>66</sup>See Forum 18’s reports on particular FoRB violations in Russia <http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?country=10>

<sup>67</sup>Forum 18, RUSSIA: Religious freedom survey, January 2017 [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2246](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2246)

<sup>68</sup>RUSSIA: 2019-20 prosecutions increase for not showing full official name, 19 October 2020 [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2610](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2610)

<sup>69</sup>See Forum 18’s reports on particular FoRB violations in Russian-occupied Crimea <http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?country=86>

<sup>70</sup>Forum 18, CRIMEA: Four years' jail for mosque meetings, 24 January 2019 [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2444](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2444)

<sup>71</sup>Forum 18, CRIMEA: “Unjustifiable to jail someone for reading the Bible”, 5 March 2020 [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2552](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2552)

<sup>72</sup>Forum 18, CRIMEA: Third jailing as second Jehovah's Witness jailed, 10 June 2020 [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2577](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2577)

<sup>73</sup>Forum 18, CRIMEA: Mosque closed as “There is no community there”?, 18 August 2020 [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2592](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2592)

<sup>74</sup><https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/freedomreligion/pages/freedomreligionindex.aspx>

<sup>75</sup><https://www.law.ox.ac.uk/people/nazila-ghanea>

<sup>76</sup><http://www.bristol.ac.uk/law/people/malcolm-d-evans/overview.html>

<sup>77</sup>Letter in the Sunday Telegraph (London), 10 February 2019