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## **Human Rights Violation on Religious Minorities in Middle Eastern Countries**

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### **Abstract**

This research article deals with the issue of human rights violation in the Middle East , especially with respect to the religious minorities residing in these countries . Human rights is an internationally recognized idea as evident but has been unnecessarily accused of being a fancy concept of the west . This research article in brief has touched upon the violation of human rights of the Jews , Christians and Kurds as these are the most persecuted in this area of the world . The author has rightfully opined that though the situation is somewhat better than before , much work still needs to be done especially at the international level to secure the basic human rights to these communities .

Keywords : Human , Rights , Middle east , Kurds , Christians , Jews , westernized .

### **Introduction**

As the name suggests , human rights refers to all those inexplicable and infallible rights which have been which a person since the time of his birth . It is by virtue of a person's existence as a human being that such rights are vested with him or her . It is not the gift of any statute . Largely a global concept , human rights have often been accused of being a westernized concept and of being opposed to the community and religious rights of the oriental countries . Human rights have a individualistic nature while in oriental and middle eastern countries , the concept is just unknown to the masses and what is known to them is the rights of the community regarding their rituals and religion . This brings in a striking contrast in the applicability of human rights in the middle eastern countries , especially when the same comes in conflict of the religion .

Most of the middle eastern countries are theocracies and not secular . Theocracy refers to such form of the government which derives its policies, dictates and decisions from a particular religion . Governments which consider a certain religion to be its riding force or derives the legitimacy of its working from a religion are known as theocratic governments. Most of the theocratic nations in the world has the religion of Islam as its state religion. This means that Shariah law, the Islamic law is the governing authority in several countries, especially the middle eastern countries. The Shariah law since a long time is considered to be in violation of human rights as it is extremely stringent, does not allow for acceptance and tolerance towards other religions, etc . The direct implication of the same is thus that the religious minorities in the middle eastern countries have to suffer a lot. Religious minorities refers to the people who follow a religion other than the state religion of Islam and are quite lesser in number to the majority religion. Instances of violations of the human rights of the

minorities have been often recorded from this area of the world. Religious minorities like Christianity , Jews and Kurds have been the persecuted minorities in the middle eastern countries .

### **Minorities in Middle East**

The entire society in middle east is divided into two segments - one which comprises of muslims and the other which comprises of non - muslims . Non - Muslims are further classified into Dhimmi and non - believers . Dhimmi comprises of all the religious whose foundation is based upon revealed sacred texts like . Examples of such religions are Judaism , Christianity and Zorastarinism . However , this classification is not full proof and thus a much better classification has been made below .<sup>1</sup>

1. All culture and religion groups which are ethnically and culturally Arabs but are not Sunni Muslims ( the majority in Middle East ) .
2. Christian denominations like Greek Orthodox , Copts , Greek Catholic , etc .
3. Other Islamic sects like Alawis , Shias , Druze .
4. Non Arabian Sunni Muslim groups like Kurds , Turkomans , etc .
5. Non Arabian and Non muslim groups like Jews , Armenians , Christian tribes , etc .

Such classifications are not straight jacket formula . Some of these cultural , religious or ethnic minorities are falling in two or more such categories . For example , Druze is a heterodox and ethnic minorities and the Israelis of Arabian are religious and ethnonational minorities .<sup>2</sup>

### **Human Rights Violation of Jews in Middle East**

The most discussed and severe of all human rights violations in the middle east is that of the followers of Judaism known as the Jews . Jews are the most persecuted community ever in the history of mankind . Israel is a jews majority country in the middle east which has been at loggerheads with the surrounding Islamic Nations . In the year 1948 , Israel came into existence after which mass scale immigration of Jews from other parts of the world to Israel was observed . Most of the Jews who came to Israel after its establishment were the ones who had been the victims of human rights violations after the Israel's Independence war . During and after the Independence war of Israel , anti - Jews riots had broken out in the middle eastern countries . A total of forty four Jews had been killed during rioting in Morocco ; in Cairo, the capital of Egypt , bomb attacks on Jewish property and businesses killed seventy Jews . Even in Aden which had a good number of Jews as the residents , a plethora of pogroms took place . In Libya , there had been large scale demolition and burning of

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<sup>1</sup> PR Kumaraswamy , Problems of Studying Minorities in the Middle East , 2 TJIR 224 ( 2003 ) 224-226.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

synagogues , the religious place of Jews . The situation further deteriorated in the 1950s when most of the middle east countries got independence from their colonial rulers . Laws opposing Jews were enacted in many of these countries . Such laws denied them even basic human rights like that of movement , health , etc .

It has been suggested openly by a number of Israeli politicians , jurists and other eminent personalities that the United Nations has never looked into this matter with much concern . However , it is also a reality that sometimes the human rights violations of the Jews in the middle east countries is without any backing from the concerned state government . In Morocco , King Hassan II ( 1929–1999 ) had retained an invitation for the Jews to return to the country . He provided requisite finances for the maintenance of synagogues and even provided for the building of homes of the Jews who had been exiled . As of today , only 5,000 Moroccan Jews remain out of the pre 1948 population which was earlier more than 250,000 . Critics of the emigration of Jews say that the mass emigration of Jewish populations has been responsible for increasing the intensity of current Arab - Israeli conflict .<sup>3</sup>

### **Human Rights violation of the Christians in Middle East**

During the previous century , Christians comprised of around twenty percent of the population in the middle east countries . However as of now , thi percentage has decreased to 3 to 4 percent . This is evidently because of the exodus of this community . The political changes in the Middle East coupled with the rise of violent ideologies has led to lower concern for the human rights of the Christian in the eyes of the governments of the Middle Eastern nations .<sup>4</sup> Christians have notably faced a lot of violence and expulsion in the middle east . Mob attacks on Christian , sexual exploitation of female Christians have been a matter of common occurrence in these nations , particularly Syria and Iraq . Christians have been given life threats and have also been unfairly taxed in order to force them to convert to Islam . The houses of many Christians have been illegally taken over by the majority sect people . Issues related to the citizenship of Christians living in the middle eastern countries , right to freedom of religion , etc have undoubtedly been in existence . It is nearly impossible for the Christians to get permission in these countries to openly practice their religion or build and acquire land , especially for building churches . They have been arbitrarily arrested and prosecuted for crimes without any sufficient evidence . The converse of it is that the crimes committed against the members of this community are either not reported or no conviction takes place . It is difficult for Christians to teach their children about their religion even in private schools .<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Netanel Lorch , “Human Rights Abuses of Jews in Arab Countries After the Six Day War” , Encyclopedia.com ( January 25, 2021,12:00 am) <https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/legal-and-political-magazines/human-rights-abuses-jews-arab-countries-after-six-day-war>

<sup>4</sup> Huma Haider , “The Persecution of Christians in the Middle East” , K4D ( January 25, 2021, 12:25 am) <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/59786a0040f0b65dcb00000a/042-Persecution-of-Christians-in-the-Middle-East.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

### **Human Rights violation of Kurds in the Middle East**

Kurds is a term used to refer to the ethnic people from the Iran belonging originally to the mountainous region of Kurdistan which spans through a number of middle eastern countries . The community of Kurds is another one which has been prosecuted in several middle eastern countries , however most notably in Turkey . Kurds have been persecuted and discriminated against in Turkey on a large scale . Massacres of the Kurds have taken place since the establishment of Turkey as a country in the year 1923 . They were not even granted the recognition of a separate ethnic group - they were called as mountain Turks till as late as the 1980s . The usage of words like Kurd , Kurdistan , etc were strictly banned by the Turkey's government . During conflict between Kurds and Turkey , supply of food had been halted in such villages which had a sizeable population of Kurds . In the year 1992 , Kurdish Human Rights Project ( KHRP ) was established as the need of a platform for the Kurds to come together and solve their problems was felt . KHRP was the result of a desire to utilize the international ways which are available with the human rights violations victims , to hold the wrongdoers liable and mainly to prevent such abuses in the future . In the current decade , KHRP has achieved international recognition for its work to protect human rights of the Kurds in the middle east regions , especially Turkey . Now , KHRP has started teaming up with various NGOs so as to improve the quality and speed of the work being done by them .<sup>6</sup>

### **Conclusion**

It is not a herculean task to understand the concept of human rights and its large scale violations . The reason for such violations is same in all parts of the world - hatred and intolerance for the religion and culture of the majority . As the saying goes , majority wins explains how the members of the majority religion ( state religion ) have been responsible for promoting the persecution of the religious minorities . Middle East is that part on the globe which is blotted because of the instances of human rights violation . Communities of Christians , Kurds and Jews have been exclusively highlighted and discussed hereby as once upon a time , these communities were of the majority population segment in the areas were they were being now prosecuted . Such violations have been ignored or at worse justified by giving reasons that human rights are farce , it is a westernized concept which attempts to hamper the religious rights of the people , etc . What the people have failed to understand is that right to live with dignity was never a concept of the west ; it is a concept which originated with the origination of mankind on planet earth . Though the situation has become a bit better than before , however a lot of work has to be done so that the religious minorities in the middle east are not forced to leave their native countries and immigrate to other countries for saving their dignity as a human being .

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<sup>6</sup> Human Rights Violations against Kurds in Turkey Report Presented by Kurdish Human Rights Project ( January 25, 2021, 12:00 am) <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/4/0/26967.pdf>