

# Haileybury MUN

## Research report



Human rights council: committee 1

The question of religious freedom

By: Carmen Ngo

---

### Introduction

More than ever, in this ever changing political climate, religious freedom is repeatedly being called into question. With new world leaders, a scrutinising media, practically unregulated social media and the increasing issue of finding permanent homes for refugees from very religious countries, now more than ever all types of freedom are being debated from every side. As stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 18 “everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance” which clearly states that religious freedom is a human right.

### Definitions

**Religious freedom:** The right to choose what religion to follow and to worship without interference

**Religion:** A fundamental set of beliefs and practices generally agreed upon by a group of people. These set of beliefs concern the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe, and involve devotional and ritual observances. They also often contain a moral code governing the conduct of human affairs.

### Countries' Issue with Religious Freedom

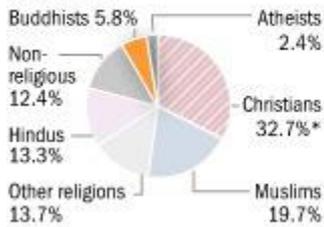
Although the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is clear that one can practice any religion they wish, countries' governments may have various issues with religious freedom such as:

- The government may want its citizens to practice its own national religion
- The government may not want an individual to practice a certain religion if they believe that their own citizens or society may become endangered

In December 2018, the US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced that the US believes that China, Eritrea, Iran, Myanmar, DPRK, Pakistan, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan were all countries “of Particular Concern” with their “systematic, ongoing, (and) egregious violations of religious freedom. This is not the first time that these countries have been called out for the same violations. An example is China, which is officially atheist, and home to one of the largest populations of religious prisoners. Despite this, it cannot be forgotten that even seemingly innocent and liberal nations will still have moments of enforced or restricted religious practices. An example of this is the public school Letcher County Central High, Whitesburg, Kentucky, USA. At this American school, Bible study worksheets instructed students to “[do] your best to build close relationships with other Christians, so that you may help one another through tough times” or “What are some promises in the Bible that God gives everyone who believes in him”.

## Countries by Religion

### WORLD RELIGIONS by percent



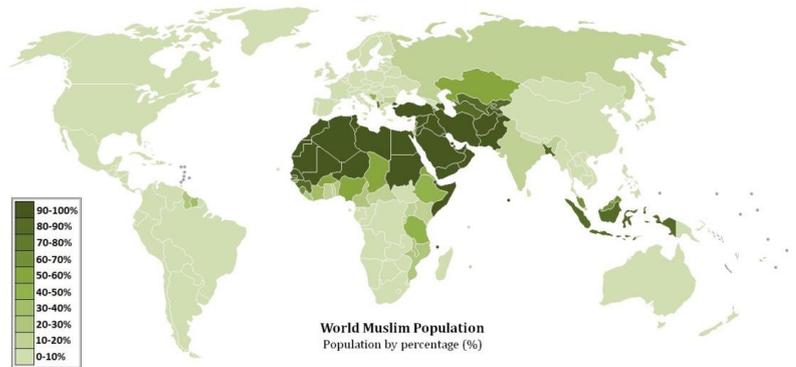
Germany, Uganda equally split between Catholic and Protestant; Cameroon equally split between Protestant and indigenous.

\* includes Roman Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox Christians

Source: CIA Factbook, Columbia Encyclopedia

### Islamic Countries:

31% of Muslims live in South East Asia, the largest population of Muslims, 20% live in the Middle East-North Africa (area where Islam is the dominant religion), and 15% in Sub-Saharan Africa.

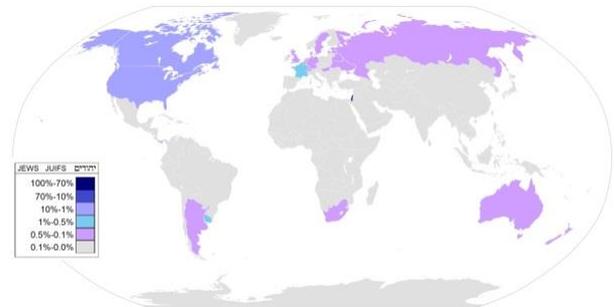


### Buddhist Countries:



18.2% of China's population is Buddhist but Sri Lanka, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, Tibet, Thailand, Japan, Korea, Burma, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, Taiwan, Cambodia and India are predominantly where it is practiced.

**Jewish Countries:** Judaism is most predominantly practiced in Israel and the US whilst France has the most European Jewish population.



**Hindu Countries:** mainly located in India, the UK and the US

