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Rising Restrictions on Religion: A Global Overview*

*Brian J. Grim, PhD***

About seventy percent of the world's population lives in countries where governments impose high restrictions on religion or where there were once high levels of religious hostilities in society, according to a global study by the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life. Additionally, the study finds that about a third of the world's population live in countries where restrictions or hostilities are increasing. There are several intriguing patterns. First, hostilities substantially increased in countries where restrictions and hostilities were already high but tended to decrease in countries where they were already low. Also, rising restrictions were associated with contradictory constitutional protections for religious freedom and with the presence of anti-blasphemy laws. Next, Christians and Muslims, the world's two largest religious groups, were harassed in the greatest number of countries. But while Jews comprise less than one percent of the world's population, they were harassed in seventy-five countries (38%). The Middle East and North Africa saw the largest increases in government restrictions, but Europe had the largest proportion of countries in which social hostilities related to religion rose. Finally, government restrictions in Egypt were increasing well before the ongoing revolutions known as Arab Spring. Given such trends, it's unarguable that changes in religious restrictions are a part of the larger social and political forces shaping the world today.

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I. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

For more than half a century, the United Nations and numerous international organizations have affirmed the principle of religious freedom.¹ For just as many decades, journalists and human rights groups have reported on persecution of minority faiths, outbreaks of sectarian violence, and other pressures on religious individuals and communities in many countries. But until the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life published *Global Restrictions on Religion* in 2009,² there was no quantitative study that reviewed an extensive number of sources to measure how governments and private actors infringe on religious beliefs and practices around the world.

At the Pew Forum, to assess and compare restrictions on religion we used a methodology that I developed in consultation with other members of the Pew Research Center staff, built on the methodology that Roger Finke and I developed at Penn State University's Association of Religion Data Archives.³ Our goal was to devise quantifiable, objective, and transparent measures of the extent to which governments and societal groups impinge on the practice of religion. We used the findings to rate 198 countries and self-governing territories on two reproducible indexes that can be periodically updated.

This Article summarizes key findings from *Rising Restrictions on Religion*, the Pew Forum's second report on global restrictions on religion, released in August 2011.⁴ The study covered 198 countries and

1. According to Article 18 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, one of the foundational documents of the United Nations, "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." Universal Declaration of Human Rights, G.A. Res. 217 (III) A, U.N. Doc. A/RES/217(III) (Dec. 10, 1948).

2. Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, *Global Restrictions on Religion*, PEW RESEARCH CTR. (2009), <http://www.pewforum.org/uploadedFiles/Topics/Issues/Government/restrictions-fullreport.pdf>.

3. See Brian J. Grim & Roger Finke, *International Religion Indexes: Government Regulation, Government Favoritism, and Social Regulation of Religion*, 2 INTERDISC. J. RES. ON RELIGION 1 (2006). See also BRIAN J. GRIM & ROGER FINKE, *THE PRICE OF FREEDOM DENIED: RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION AND CONFLICT IN THE 21ST CENTURY* (2011) (providing more details on the analytical applications of the indexes); Brian J. Grim, *Religion, Law and Social Conflict in the 21st Century: Findings from Sociological Research*, OXFORD J.L. & RELIGION (forthcoming 2012).

4. Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, *Rising Restrictions on Religion*, PEW RESEARCH CTR. (2011) [hereinafter *Rising Restrictions*], [http://www.pewforum.org/Government/Rising-Restrictions-on-Religion\(2\).aspx](http://www.pewforum.org/Government/Rising-Restrictions-on-Religion(2).aspx); see also Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, *Global Restrictions on Religion*, PEW RESEARCH CTR. (2009) [hereinafter *Global Restrictions*],

self-administering territories, which collectively contain more than 99.5% of the world's population. We scored each country on a total of thirty-three measures phrased as questions about government restrictions or social hostilities involving religion.⁵ The Government Restrictions Index is made up of twenty questions; the Social Hostilities Index is made up of thirteen.

To answer the questions that make up the indexes, Pew Forum researchers combed through eighteen widely cited, publicly available sources of information, including reports by the U.S. State Department, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, the Council of the European Union, the United Kingdom's Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Human Rights Watch, the International Crisis Group, the Hudson Institute, Freedom House, and Amnesty International.⁶ We drew many of the examples in this report from the State Department's annual International Religious Freedom reports.

The researchers involved in this process recorded only concrete reports about specific government laws, policies and actions, as well as incidents of religious violence or intolerance by social groups; the researchers did not rely on commentaries or opinions.⁷ Our goal was to devise a battery of quantifiable, objective measures that could be analyzed individually or combined into two comprehensive indexes: the Government Restrictions Index and the Social Hostilities Index.

The Forum's baseline report on global restrictions on religion calculated each country's average scores on the Government Restrictions Index and Social Hostilities Index for the two-year period from mid-2006 to mid-2008.⁸ The second report assesses changes over time by comparing each country's original scores with its average scores for the

<http://pewforum.org/Government/Global-Restrictions-on-Religion.aspx>.

5. Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, *Summary of Results: Government Restrictions on Religion*, PEW RESEARCH CTR. (2009), <http://pewforum.org/uploadedFiles/Topics/Issues/Government/RisingRestrictions-SummaryofResults.pdf> (original questions and full global findings).

6. A complete list of sources is available online. Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, *Rising Restrictions on Religion*, PEW RESEARCH CTR. (2011), <http://pewforum.org/Government/Rising-Restrictions-on-Religion%287%29.aspx#primary> (last visited Sept. 29, 2012).

7. For a more detailed explanation of the coding and data verification procedures, see Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, *Rising Restrictions on Religion: Methodology*, PEW RESEARCH CTR. (2011) [hereinafter *Methodology*], <http://pewforum.org/Government/Rising-Restrictions-on-Religion%287%29.aspx> (last visited Sept. 26, 2012).

8. *Global Restrictions*, *supra* note 4.

overlapping two-year period from mid-2007 to mid-2009.⁹ Comparing rolling averages for overlapping time periods reduces the impact of year-to-year fluctuations and helps identify consistent trends. The report focuses on changes in countries' scores on the indexes that are deemed to be "substantial."¹⁰

The study has limitations. The indexes of government restrictions and social hostilities are designed to measure obstacles to religious expression and practice. As a result, the report focuses on the constraints on religion in each country. It does not look at the other side of the coin—the amount of religious diversity and activity in particular countries. The study also does not attempt to determine whether particular restrictions are justified or unjustified, nor does it attempt to analyze the many factors—historical, demographic, cultural, religious, economic, and political—that might explain why restrictions have arisen. It simply seeks to measure restrictions that exist in a quantifiable, transparent, and reproducible way, based on published reports from numerous governmental and nongovernmental organizations.

Although it is very likely that more restrictions exist than are reported by the primary sources used in the study, taken together, the sources are sufficiently comprehensive to provide a good estimate of the levels of restrictions in almost all countries. The one major exception is North Korea. Sources clearly indicate that North Korea's government is among the most repressive in the world with respect to religion as well as other civil and political liberties.¹¹ But because North Korean society is effectively closed to outsiders and independent observers lack regular access to the country, sources are unable to provide the kind of specific,

9. *Rising Restrictions*, *supra* note 4. Answers to Questions 1 and 2 in the Government Restrictions Index were recoded for the period from mid-2006 to mid-2008 to match the coding conventions used for the period from mid-2007 to mid-2009. After the recoding, two fewer countries scored in the high or very high category for the period ending in mid-2008. As a result, this report lists sixty-two countries as having high or very high restrictions as of mid-2008 rather than the sixty-four countries listed in the 2009 baseline report.

10. The report refers to a change in a country's score as substantial only if it is at least 1.5 standard deviations above or below the mean amount of change among all 198 countries on each index. The change also had to be in the same direction over the two periods studied, meaning that it had to rise or fall both in the period from mid-2006 to mid-2008 and in the overlapping period from mid-2007 to mid-2009. For more details, see *Methodology*, *supra* note 7.

11. The U.S. State Department's 2008 Report on International Religious Freedom, for example, says that "[g]enuine religious freedom does not exist" in North Korea. *Democratic People's Republic of Korea: International Religious Freedom Report 2008*, U.S. DEP'T. OF STATE, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2008/108410.htm> (last visited Sept. 30, 2012).

timely information that the Pew Forum categorized and counted.¹² Therefore, this quantitative study does not report scores for North Korea.

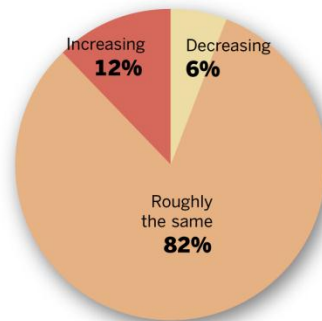
II. OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY'S FINDINGS

Restrictions on religious beliefs and practices rose between mid-2006 and mid-2009 in twenty-three of the world's 198 countries (12%), decreased in twelve countries (6%) and remained essentially unchanged in 163 countries (82%), according to the study.

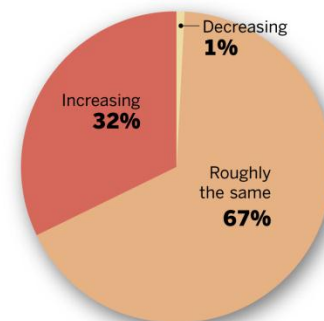
Changes in Global Restrictions on Religion

Only about one-in-eight countries have increasing government restrictions or social hostilities, but they contain almost a third of the world's population.

Percentage of **countries**
where government restrictions
or social hostilities are...



Percentage of **global population**
living where government restrictions
or social hostilities are...



Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

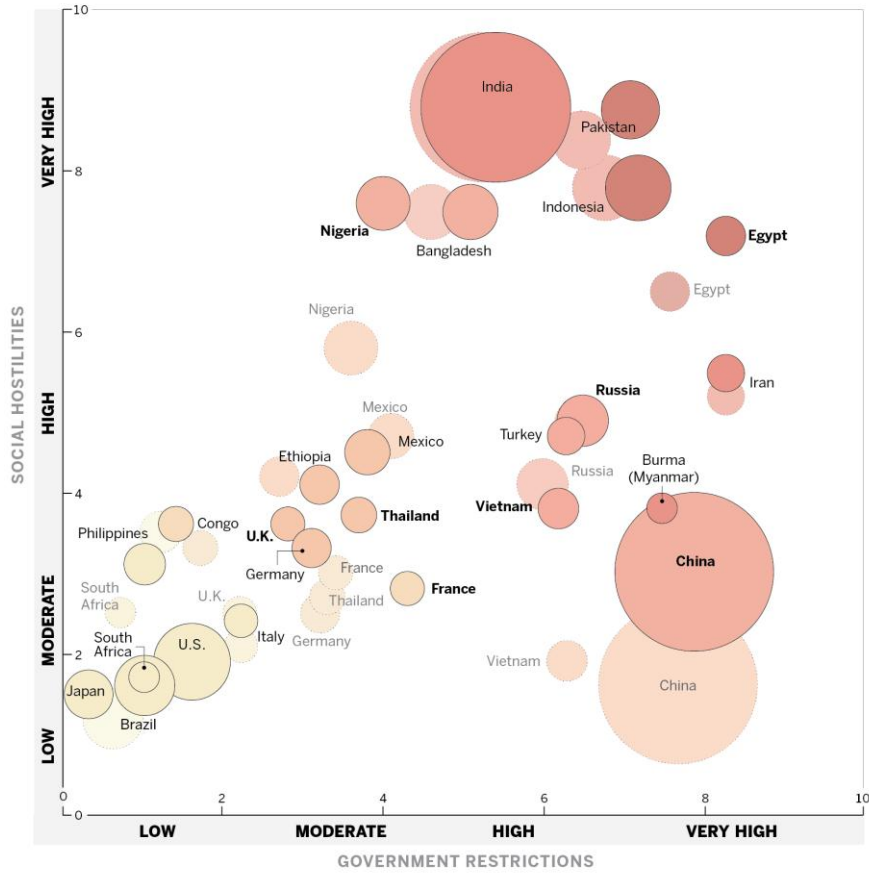
12. "Coded," in social-science parlance.

But because several countries with increasing restrictions on religion are very populous, the increases in global restrictions on religion affected a much larger share of people than of states. More than 2.2 billion people—nearly a third (32%) of the world's total population of 6.9 billion—live in countries where either government restrictions on religion or social hostilities involving religion rose substantially over the three-year period studied. Only about one percent of the world's population lives in countries where government restrictions or social hostilities declined.

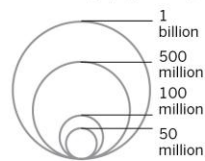
Among the world's twenty-five most-populous countries—which account for about seventy-five percent of the world's total population—restrictions on religion substantially increased in eight countries and did not substantially decrease in any. In China, Nigeria, Russia, Thailand, the United Kingdom, and Vietnam, the increases were due primarily to rising levels of social hostilities toward religion. In Egypt and France, the increases were mainly the result of government restrictions. The rest of the twenty-five most-populous countries, including the United States, did not experience substantial changes in either social hostilities or government-imposed restrictions.

Changes in Restrictions Among the 25 Most Populous Countries

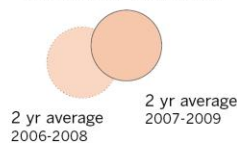
Among the world's most populous countries, government restrictions or social hostilities substantially increased in eight countries – China, Egypt, France, Nigeria, Russia, Thailand, Vietnam and the United Kingdom – and did not substantially decrease in any. Countries in the upper right have the most restrictions and hostilities. Countries in the lower left have the least.



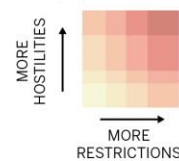
Circles are sized proportionally to each country's population (2010)



The center of each circle is positioned on the average index score for each country.



Colors are based on each country's position on the chart.



This is the second time the Pew Forum has measured restrictions on religion around the globe. Like the baseline report, the new study scores 198 countries and territories on two indexes:

The Government Restrictions Index measures government laws, policies, and actions that restrict religious beliefs or practices. This includes efforts by governments to ban particular faiths, prohibit conversions, limit preaching, or give preferential treatment to one or more religious groups.

The Social Hostilities Index measures acts of religious hostility by private individuals, organizations, and social groups. This includes mob or sectarian violence, harassment over attire for religious reasons, and other religion-related intimidation or abuse.

Among the five geographic regions covered in the study, the Middle East–North Africa region had the largest proportion of countries in which government restrictions on religion increased, with nearly a third of the region's countries (30%) imposing greater restrictions. Egypt, in particular, ranked very high on both government restrictions and social hostilities involving religion (in the top 5% of all countries, as of mid-2009). Egypt was one of just two countries in the world that had very high scores on both measures as of mid-2009.¹³

Europe had the largest proportion of countries in which social hostilities related to religion were on the rise from mid-2006 to mid-2009. Indeed, five of the ten countries in the world that had a substantial increase in social hostilities were in Europe: Bulgaria, Denmark, Russia, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. The study also found that social hostilities involving religion have been rising in Asia, particularly in China, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Overall, fourteen countries had substantial increases in government restrictions on religion, while eight had substantial declines. Ten countries had substantial increases in social hostilities toward religion, while five had substantial declines. No country saw substantial increases or declines in both categories over the three-year period. Kyrgyzstan was the only country to show a substantial increase in one category (government restrictions) and a decrease in the other (social hostilities); consequently, we treat Kyrgyzstan as having no overall change.

In general, most countries that saw substantial increases in government restrictions or social hostilities already had high or very high

13. The other country was Indonesia.

levels of restrictions or hostilities. Likewise, nearly half of the countries that saw substantial decreases in restrictions or hostilities already had low levels. This suggests that there may be a gradual polarization taking place in which countries with relatively high religious restrictions are getting more restrictive while those with relatively low restrictions become less restrictive.

Specifically, among the sixty-two countries with high or very high scores on either or both indexes as of mid-2008, restrictions or hostilities increased substantially in fourteen countries (23%) and decreased substantially in five (8%). Among the forty-two countries that started out with moderate scores on either or both indexes, increases occurred in seven countries (17%) and decreases in two (5%). In contrast, among the ninety-four countries that started out with low scores on both indexes, the level of government restrictions or social hostilities decreased in five countries (5%) and increased in two (2%).

During the three-year period covered by the study, the extent of violence and abuse related to religion increased in more places than it decreased. The number of countries in which governments used some force against religious groups or individuals rose from ninety-one (46%) in the period ending in mid-2008 to 101 (51%) in the period ending in mid-2009. The nature of this violence was wide ranging, including incidents of individuals being killed, physically abused, imprisoned, detained, or displaced from their homes, as well as damage to or destruction of personal or religious properties.

In nearly three-quarters of all countries, private citizens or groups committed crimes, malicious acts, or violence motivated by religious hatred or bias. Such acts occurred in 142 countries (72%) in the period ending in mid-2009, about the same as in the previous reporting period. The number of countries that experienced mob violence related to religion rose from thirty-eight (19%) as of mid-2008 to fifty-two (26%) as of mid-2009.

A. Harassment of Religious Groups

Members of the world's two largest religious groups, Christians and Muslims, who together comprise more than half of the global population, were harassed in the greatest number of countries.¹⁴ Over the three-year period we studied, incidents of either government or social harassment against Christians were reported in 130 countries (66%) and against Muslims in 117 countries (59%). Buddhists and Hindus—who together account for roughly one-fifth of the world's population and are geographically more concentrated than Christians or Muslims—were harassed in fewer places; harassment against Buddhists was reported in sixteen countries (8%) and against Hindus in twenty-seven countries (14%).

Relative to their numbers, some smaller religious groups faced especially widespread harassment. Although Jews comprise less than one percent of the world's population, government or social harassment of Jews was reported in seventy-five countries (38%). Incidents of harassment involving members of other world religions (including Sikhs, ancient faiths such as Zoroastrianism, newer faith groups such as Baha'is and Rastafarians, and localized groups that

Number of Countries Where Religious Groups Were Harassed

Christians	130
Muslims	117
Others*	84
Jews	75
Hindus	27
Buddhists	16

*Others includes Sikhs, members of ancient faiths such as Zoroastrianism, newer faiths such as Baha'i and groups that practice tribal or folk religions.

Covers time period from mid-2006 to mid-2009. This measure does not assess the severity of the harassment.

14. As of 2010, Muslims made up nearly a quarter (23.4%) of the world's population. Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, *The Future of the Global Muslim Population*, PEW RESEARCH CTR. (January 27, 2011), <http://pewforum.org/The-Future-of-the-Global-Muslim-Population.aspx>. The Pew Forum is currently compiling population data on other world religions and intends to publish a series of reports on the demography of religion in 2011-2012. In the meantime, the population figures used in this section are from the World Religion Database at Boston University, which estimates that Christians comprise about a third (32.9%) of the world's population.

practice tribal or folk religions) were reported in eighty-four countries (42%).¹⁵

B. Laws Against Blasphemy, Apostasy, and Defamation of Religion

The study found that restrictions on religion are particularly common in countries that prohibit blasphemy, apostasy, or defamation of religion. While such laws are sometimes promoted as a way to protect religion, in practice they often serve to punish religious minorities whose beliefs are deemed unorthodox or heretical.¹⁶

As of mid-2009, fifty-nine countries (30%) had a law, rule, or policy at some level of government forbidding blasphemy (remarks or writings considered to be contemptuous of God), apostasy (abandoning one's faith), or defamation (disparagement or criticism) of particular religions or religion in general. Penalties for violating these laws, ranging from fines to imprisonment to death, were enforced in forty-four of the fifty-nine countries.

Countries that have laws against blasphemy, apostasy, or defamation of religion were more likely to have high government restrictions or social hostilities than countries that do not have such laws. A majority (59%) of countries that enforce such laws had high or very high (government or social) restrictions on religion as of mid-2009. Among countries that do not have such laws, by contrast, fifty-eight percent had low restrictions or hostilities.

Not only were government restrictions and social hostilities involving religion generally higher in countries with laws against blasphemy, apostasy, or defamation of religion, but also restrictions rose in many of these countries. From mid-2006 to mid-2009, restrictions or hostilities increased substantially in ten (23%) of the forty-four countries where governments actively enforce penalties for blasphemy, apostasy, or defamation of religion; restrictions or hostilities decreased substantially in just one country in the same category (2%). In the fifteen countries where such laws are on the books but are not actively enforced, restrictions or hostilities increased substantially in four (27%) and

15. For more details, see Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, *Rising Restrictions on Religion: Harassment of Particular Religious Groups*, PEW RESEARCH CTR., <http://pewforum.org/Government/Rising-Restrictions-on-Religion%285%29.aspx> (last visited Sept. 26, 2012).

16. For more details, see Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, *Rising Restrictions on Religion: Laws Against Blasphemy, Apostasy and Defamation of Religion*, PEW RESEARCH CTR., <http://pewforum.org/Government/Rising-Restrictions-on-Religion%286%29.aspx> (last visited Sept. 26, 2012).

decreased substantially in just one (7%). By contrast, among the 139 countries that do not have laws against blasphemy, apostasy, or defamation of religion, restrictions or hostilities rose in nine (6%) and fell in ten (7%).

These findings do not mean that laws against blasphemy, apostasy, or defamation of religion necessarily cause higher restrictions on religion. But they do suggest that the two phenomena often go hand-in-hand: governments that impose laws against blasphemy, apostasy, or defamation of religion also tend to impose higher restrictions on religion.

1. Anti-blasphemy laws and government restrictions on religion

As of mid-2009, government restrictions on religion were high or very high in twenty-three (52%) of the forty-four countries that enforce laws against blasphemy, apostasy, or defamation of religion and in six (40%) of the fifteen countries that have such laws but do not enforce them. Among the 139 countries that do not have such laws, restrictions were high or very high in thirteen (9%).

Government restrictions on religion increased substantially in seven (16%) of the forty-four countries where the government penalizes blasphemy, apostasy or defamation of religion and in two (13%) of the fifteen countries where such laws exist but are not enforced. In contrast, restrictions rose substantially in five (4%) of the 139 countries with no penalties. Government restrictions on religion decreased substantially in seven (5%) of the 139 countries with no laws against blasphemy, apostasy or defamation of religion and in one (2%) of the forty-four countries that enforce such laws.

Governments in countries that actively enforce such laws engaged in a variety of practices that demonstrated hostility toward religious groups. These included harassment of and the use of force against religious groups, including actions that resulted in individuals being killed, physically abused, imprisoned, detained, or displaced from their homes.

During the two-year period from mid-2007 to mid-2009, governments in thirty-seven (84%) of the forty-four countries that actively enforce laws against blasphemy, apostasy, or defamation of religion engaged in actions classified as harassment in the Pew Forum report. The share of governments engaging in harassment was even higher (93%) in the fifteen countries that have but do not actively enforce such laws. In three-fourths of the forty-four countries that enforce these laws (thirty-three of the forty-four), government at some level used force against religious groups. Harassment and use of force were less common

in the 139 countries that do not have such laws; sixty (43%) of the countries in that category used force against religious groups and seventy-six (55%) harassed religious groups.

We saw similar patterns for other types of government restrictions on religion. For example, the share of national governments that showed hostility toward minority religions involving physical violence was much higher in countries where laws against blasphemy, apostasy, or defamation of religion are actively enforced than in countries without such laws (55% vs. 22%). We saw a similar gap among governments that characterized one or more religious groups as dangerous “cults” or “sects.” In countries that enforce laws against blasphemy, apostasy, or defamation of religion, nearly a quarter of the governments (23%) characterized certain religions as “cults.” In countries without such laws, nine percent of governments engaged in this practice.

There is a similar difference among countries where the national government attempted to eliminate an entire religious group’s presence. Countries that enforce laws against blasphemy, apostasy, or defamation of religion were more than five times as likely to engage in such attempts as those that do not have such laws (32% vs. 6%).

2. Anti-blasphemy laws and social hostilities involving religion

As of mid-2009, social hostilities involving religion were high or very high in nineteen of the forty-four countries that enforce laws against blasphemy, apostasy, or defamation of religion and in four of the fifteen countries that have such laws but do not enforce them. Social hostilities were high or very high in 17 of 139 countries that do not have such laws.

This pattern generally held true for different indicators of social hostilities. For example, religion-related mob violence occurred in a greater share of countries that enforce penalties for blasphemy, apostasy, or defamation of religion than countries without such laws (45% vs. 19%). Women were harassed for violating religious dress codes in a considerably higher share of countries among those that enforce such laws (48%) than among those without such laws (6%).

Social hostilities involving religion increased substantially in three of the forty-four countries that enforce laws against blasphemy, apostasy, or defamation of religion and in two of the fifteen where such laws exist but are not actively enforced. In contrast, social hostilities increased substantially in 5 of the 139 countries with no such laws.

3. *Anti-blasphemy laws and regional patterns*

Eight-in-ten countries in the Middle East–North Africa region have laws against blasphemy, apostasy, or defamation of religion—the highest share of any region. These penalties are enforced in sixty percent of countries in the region. In Europe, nearly four-in-ten countries (38%) have such laws and nearly one-third (31%) actively enforces them. Nearly three-in-ten countries in the Asia-Pacific region have such laws and about a quarter (24%) enforce the penalties. Relatively few countries in sub-Saharan Africa (15%) or the Americas (11%) have such laws or policies. In the United States, a few state legal codes still contain anti-blasphemy laws, but they generally are not enforced.

C. *Overall Situation as of Mid-2009*

The Pew Forum characterizes each country's place on the Government Restrictions Index and the Social Hostilities Index by percentile. Countries with scores in the top five percent are characterized as “very high.” The next highest fifteen percent of scores is categorized as “high,” and the following twenty percent is characterized as “moderate.” The bottom sixty percent of scores is characterized as “low.”

As of mid-2009, government restrictions on religion were high or very high in forty-two countries, about one-in-five worldwide. The ten countries that had very high government restrictions as of mid-2009 were Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Uzbekistan, China, Maldives, Malaysia,

Countries with Very High* Government Restrictions on Religion

Egypt	▲
Iran	
Saudi Arabia	
Uzbekistan	
China	
Maldives	
Malaysia	▲
Burma (Myanmar)	
Eritrea	
Indonesia	

Countries with Very High* Social Hostilities Involving Religion

Iraq	
India	
Pakistan	
Afghanistan	
Somalia	
Indonesia	
Nigeria	▲
Bangladesh	
Israel	
Egypt	

* Very High refers to countries in the top 5% of scores on the Government Restrictions Index or the Social Hostilities Index as of mid-2009.

▲ Denotes a substantial increase from mid-2006 to mid-2009, defined as an increase of at least 1.5 standard deviations above the mean amount of change among all 198 countries on each index. The change also had to be in the same direction over the periods studied. (See Methodology for more details.)

Burma (Myanmar), Eritrea, and Indonesia. Government restrictions were in the moderate range in thirty-nine countries. A much larger number of countries—117—had low levels of government restrictions. But because many of the more restrictive countries (including China and India) are very populous, more than half of the world's population (59%) was living with high or very high government restrictions as of mid-2009.¹⁷

Social hostilities involving religion were high or very high in forty countries, about one-in-five worldwide. The ten countries that had very high hostilities as of mid-2009 were Iraq, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Somalia, Indonesia, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Israel, and Egypt. Social hostilities were in the moderate range in forty-three countries. A much larger number of countries—115—had low levels of social hostilities. But because many of the countries with high or very high social hostilities (including India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nigeria) are very populous, nearly half of the world's population (48%) was living with high or very high social hostilities involving religion as of mid-2009.¹⁸

Government restrictions or social hostilities were high or very high in about one-third of countries as of mid-2009. But because some of the most restrictive countries are very populous, nearly seventy percent of the world's 6.9 billion people were living in countries where governments imposed high restrictions on religion or where there were high levels of religious hostilities in society.

D. Changes in Government Restrictions

Comparing the Pew Forum's first set of scores (for the two-year period from mid-2006 to mid-2008) with the second set of scores (for the two-year period from mid-2007 to mid-2009), we found that fourteen countries had a substantial increase in government restrictions and eight had a substantial decline.

Six of the fourteen countries where government restrictions rose substantially were in the Middle East–North Africa region: Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Qatar, Syria, and Yemen. In Egypt, for example, the government maintained a longstanding ban on the Muslim Brotherhood,

17. For a complete list of all countries in each category, see PEW RESEARCH CTR., <http://pewforum.org/Government/Rising-Restrictions-on-Religion-GRI.aspx>. (last visited Sept. 26, 2011).

18. For a complete list of all countries in each category, see PEW RESEARCH CTR., <http://pewforum.org/Government/Rising-Restrictions-on-Religion-SHI.aspx>.

an influential Islamic organization, and discriminated against Christians in various ways, including in public-sector hiring. In Yemen, government officials reportedly sought to intimidate Baha'is and converts to Christianity, including arresting people for promoting Christianity and distributing Bibles.

Most of the countries with substantial decreases in government restrictions, seven of the eight countries, began with low levels of restrictions. The exception was Greece, which started out with high government restrictions but moved to the moderate level by mid-2009. While the government of Greece continued to restrict proselytizing, for example, there were fewer reported cases where the police detained people for proselytizing.

E. Changes in Social Hostilities

Ten countries had substantial increases in social hostilities involving religion and five had substantial declines.

As noted above, the level of social hostilities involving religion rose substantially in five European nations: Bulgaria, Denmark, Russia, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. Much of the tension in Europe focused on the region's rapidly growing Muslim population; but in some cases it also reflected rising anti-Semitism and antagonism toward Christian minorities, such as Jehovah's Witnesses.¹⁹

Social hostilities also rose in several Asian countries, including China, Mongolia, Thailand, and Vietnam. In China, for example, an August 2008 terrorist attack, attributed by Chinese authorities to a militant Muslim separatist group known as the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, caused more than a dozen casualties in Xinjiang Province; and riots in Tibet in March 2008 pitted ethnic Tibetans, mainly Buddhists, against ethnic Han Chinese.

Three of the five countries where social hostilities declined are in sub-Saharan Africa: Chad, Liberia, and Tanzania. But social hostilities involving religion rose in Nigeria, the region's most populous country, where a number of violent clashes occurred between Christians and Muslims.

19. For background on Europe's growing Muslim population, see the Pew Forum's January 2011 report, *The Future of the Global Muslim Population*, PEW RESEARCH CTR., <http://pewforum.org/The-Future-of-the-Global-Muslim-Population.aspx> (last visited Sept. 26, 2012).

F. Government Restrictions or Social Hostilities

In countries that had a substantial increase in either government restrictions or social hostilities, most (fourteen out of twenty-three, or 61%) previously had high or very high levels of restrictions or hostilities. By contrast, in countries that had substantial declines in either government restrictions or social hostilities, most (seven out of twelve, or 58%) previously had low or moderate levels of restrictions or hostilities. And of the countries that stayed roughly the same, most (120 out of 163, or 74%) previously had low or moderate levels of restrictions or hostilities. These statistics suggest that a gradual polarization may be taking place: restrictions are rising predominantly in countries that already have high or very high restrictions or hostilities and are declining or staying the same predominately in countries that already have low or moderate restrictions or hostilities.

G. Other Findings

Following are other key findings from the study:

- Among the five geographic regions covered in this report, the Middle East–North Africa region had the highest government and social restrictions on religion, while the Americas were the least restrictive region on both measures. The Middle East–North Africa region also had the greatest number of countries where government restrictions on religion increased from mid-2006 to mid-2009, with about one-third of the region’s countries (30%) imposing greater restrictions. In contrast, no country in the Americas registered a substantial increase on either index.

- Before the recent uprising in Egypt, government restrictions on religion were already very high there. By mid-2009, Egypt also had joined the five percent of countries with the most intense social hostilities involving religion. But the increase in social hostilities in Egypt fell just short of being a substantial increase, as defined in this study.

- Government restrictions on religion increased substantially in two European countries: France and Serbia. In France, members of Parliament began discussing whether women should be allowed to wear the burqa, and President Nicolas Sarkozy said the head-to-toe covering was “not welcome” in French society. The French government also put pressure on religious groups it considers to be cults, including Scientologists. For example, the lead prosecutor in a fraud case involving the Church of Scientology sought to have the group declared a “criminal

enterprise.” In Serbia, meanwhile, the government refused to legally register Jehovah’s Witnesses and several other minority religious groups. There also were reports that some government officials referred to minority religious groups as “sects” or other pejorative terms.

- Government restrictions also increased substantially in Malaysia, which, like Egypt, began with very high restrictions. Although the country’s constitution recognizes freedom of religion, Malaysia restricts the observance of Islamic beliefs and practices that do not conform to Sunni Islam. Indeed, the Malaysian government monitors more than fifty Muslim groups that it considers unorthodox, including the Ahmadiyya movement.

- In China, there was no change in the level of government restrictions on religion, which remained very high. But social hostilities involving religion, which had been relatively low, increased substantially from mid-2006 to mid-2009. During that time period, protests erupted among the predominantly Buddhist population in Tibet and among Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang Province over what they saw as cultural and economic domination by ethnic Han Chinese.

- In some other Asian countries, social hostilities also involved ethnic and religious minorities such as Malay Muslim separatists in southern Thailand, who were involved in several violent clashes with the majority Buddhist population.

- Social hostilities involving religion in the United States remained at a moderate level. In recent years, the U.S. annually has had at least 1,300 hate crimes involving religious bias, according to FBI reports. (Most of the recent controversies over the construction of mosques and Islamic centers in New York City and other communities across the country took place after the period covered in this report.)

- Religion-related terrorist groups were active in seventy-four countries around the world in the period ending in mid-2009. The groups carried out acts of violence in half of the seventy-four countries. (In the other half, their activities were limited to recruitment and fundraising.) In Russia, for example, more than 1100 casualties resulted from religion-related terrorist attacks during the two-year period ending in mid-2009. This was more than double the number of casualties recorded in the previous reporting period. This includes people who were killed, wounded, displaced from their homes, kidnapped, or had their property destroyed in religion-related terrorist attacks.

III. DISCUSSION OF CHANGES IN GOVERNMENT RESTRICTIONS ON RELIGION

A. Changes in Some Key Types of Government Restrictions

During the most recent period studied (mid-2007 to mid-2009), 131 countries interfered with the worship or other religious practices of one or more groups in at least a few cases, up from 128 countries in the period from mid-2006 to mid-2008.²⁰ Such interference included instances when local officials refused to grant or made it difficult to obtain zoning permits to build places of worship, which happened in countries ranging from Switzerland to Swaziland. It also included more widespread instances of interference. Indeed, governments in fifty countries prohibited the religious or worship practices of one or more religious groups as a general policy. This type of restriction was up sharply from the period ending in mid-2008, when thirty-eight countries fell into this category.

In forty countries, officials at some level of government banned a particular religious group, up from thirty-eight countries in the period from mid-2006 to mid-2008.²¹ In more than half of countries, government officials cited security concerns as the rationale for banning the groups. In some cases, they cited nonsecurity reasons as well. The government of Tajikistan, for example, banned religious groups that it considered “extremist” organizations, including the Islamist movement known as Hizb ut-Tahrir (or “Party of Liberation”).²² In some instances, countries banned groups that they considered to be cults. In April 2009, for example, the Honduran government banned the Puerto Rican religious group *Creciendo en Gracia*, whose leader claims to be the Antichrist and speaks out against traditional organized religion. Jehovah’s Witnesses continued to be banned in several countries, including Syria and Singapore.

There was a notable increase in the number of countries that regulate religious symbols, such as head or body coverings for women or facial hair for men. The number of countries that had such restrictions rose

20. See *infra* Appendix: Summary of Results, GRI Q. 4.

21. See *infra* Appendix: Summary of Results, GRI Q. 16.

22. For more information on Hizb ut-Tahrir, see the Pew Forum’s September 2010 report *Muslim Networks and Movements in Western Europe*, PEW RESEARCH CTR., <http://pewforum.org/Muslim/Muslim-Networks-and-Movements-in-Western-Europe.aspx> (last visited Sept. 26, 2012).

from forty-two as of mid-2008 to fifty-three as of mid-2009.²³ There was a particularly sharp increase in the number of countries that regulate face, head, or body coverings for women, which rose from thirty-one to forty-two, a thirty-five percent increase. In Canada, for instance, an Ontario Superior Court judge ruled in May 2009 that Muslim women do not have a blanket right to wear a face-covering veil, the niqab, while testifying in court; the judge stated that judges should decide the issue on a case-by-case basis. Several countries, including Oman and Algeria, appeared to step up their enforcement of restrictions on wearing face-covering veils. In Oman, women are permitted to wear the hijab headscarf in passport and other official photographs, but they are not allowed to wear veils that fully cover the face in official photos. Algeria allows female government employees to wear headscarves or crosses at work, but it forbids them from wearing the niqab.

In France—which in 2004 banned the wearing of conspicuous religious symbols, including head scarves and large crosses, in public schools—some politicians began calling for the establishment of a commission to study the effect on French society of head-to-toe burqas and face-covering Islamic veils. French President Nicolas Sarkozy appeared to endorse the idea in his first state of the nation address on June 22, 2009, saying “the burqa is not welcome in France.”²⁴

The number of countries where the government limits religious literature or broadcasting rose from eighty as of mid-2008 to eighty-seven as of mid-2009.²⁵ In Germany, for instance, the Federal Ministry of the Interior announced on Oct. 12, 2008, that it was banning broadcasts of Al-Manar TV, a television station based in Beirut, Lebanon. The German ministry said it banned the broadcasts because they contained anti-Semitic propaganda. But governments sometimes restricted religious broadcasting or literature in less direct ways. In April 2009, for example, the Catholic Church reportedly was pressured by the Zambian government to relieve a priest of his duties after he strongly criticized the government on his popular radio program.

Certain government policies that on the surface appear to be neutral can, in practice, result in restrictions on religion. For example, most countries or territories, 181 during the period ending in mid-2009,

23. See *infra* Appendix: Summary of Results, GRI Q. 10.

24. The French Parliament voted to ban burqas and full-face veils in public places in 2010, outside the period covered in this report. The ban took effect in April 2011.

25. See *infra* Appendix: Summary of Results, GRI Q. 8.

required religious groups to register with the government for one purpose or another, such as to obtain tax-exempt status.²⁶ But these registration requirements resulted in major problems for, or outright discrimination against, certain groups in eighty-six countries as of mid-2009, up from seventy-nine countries in the period ending in mid-2008. For example, because the Serbian government did not allow some religious groups to register—including the League of Baptists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Hare Krishna movement, the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement, and several evangelical Protestant churches—such groups could not air programming on public media; the code of conduct of the state’s Republic Broadcasting Agency restricts public media access to registered religious groups.

There was no major change in the number of countries that allow foreign missionaries to operate,²⁷ allow proselytizing,²⁸ or allow public preaching by religious groups²⁹ But one or more of these activities was limited by governments in 110 of the 198 countries and territories during the period from mid-2007 to mid-2009.

B. Countries with Substantial Increases in Government Restrictions

Over the entire three-year period covered in this study, mid-2006 to mid-2009, government restrictions on religion increased substantially in fourteen of the 198 countries or territories. Seven of the fourteen countries already had high or very high government restrictions. Egypt and Malaysia began with very high restrictions, while Algeria, Libya, Tajikistan, Syria, and Yemen had high levels of restrictions. By contrast, government restrictions increased substantially in only one country where restrictions were low to begin with—Hong Kong. Despite the increase, Hong Kong remained in the low-government-restrictions category as of mid-2009.

The level of government restrictions in Egypt was increasing well before the recent uprising that led to the resignation of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in February 2011. During the period ending in mid-2009, the government maintained a longstanding ban on the Muslim Brotherhood, an influential Islamic organization.³⁰ Although some of the

26. *See infra* Appendix: Summary of Results, GRI Q. 18.

27. *See infra* Appendix: Summary of Results, GRI Q. 9

28. *See infra* Appendix: Summary of Results, GRI Q. 6

29. *See infra* Appendix: Summary of Results, GRI Q. 5

30. For more information on the Muslim Brotherhood, see the Pew Forum’s September 2010

group's activities tacitly were tolerated by the government, members of the Brotherhood reportedly were subject to arbitrary detention and other pressure. The Egyptian government also continued to discriminate against Christians in public-sector hiring, including staff appointments at public universities, and continued to bar Christians from studying at Al-Azhar University, a publicly funded institution widely known as a seat of Islamic learning.

Many of the restrictions in Egypt were directed at Coptic Christians, who form one of the largest Christian populations in the Middle East and North Africa.³¹ At the local level, government officials often tried to prevent Coptic Christians from improving existing churches or constructing new ones. Officials in the Arbaeen District of the Assiut governorate in Upper Egypt, for example, have long refused to grant a building permit for a new Coptic church even though Egypt's president and the Ministry of the Interior approved the project many years ago.

Government restrictions also increased substantially in Malaysia, which, like Egypt, already had very high restrictions to begin with. Although the country's constitution recognizes freedom of religion, Malaysia restricts the observance of Islamic beliefs and practices that do not conform to Sunni Islam. Indeed, the Malaysian government monitors more than fifty Muslim groups that it considers unorthodox, including the Ahmadiyya movement, which some Muslims view as heretical. In some instances, the government sends people who practice "deviant" forms of Islam to religious "rehabilitation" centers. According to the State Department's 2009 International Religious Freedom report, the "[g]overnment denies individuals the freedom to leave such centers until they complete the program."³² The report states the Malaysian government did not release statistics on the number of people sentenced to religious rehabilitation centers during the reporting period.³³

Five of the countries with substantial increases had high government restrictions to begin with: Algeria, Libya, Tajikistan, Syria, and Yemen.

report *Muslim Networks and Movements in Western Europe*, <http://pewforum.org/Muslim/Muslim-Networks-and-Movements-in-Western-Europe.aspx> (last visited Sept. 26, 2012).

31. The best available census and survey data indicate that Christians now number roughly five percent of the Egyptian population, or about 4 million people. See Pew Research Center, "Ask the Expert" (Feb. 16, 2011), <http://pewforum.org/Christian/Ask-the-expert.aspx>.

32. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, *International Religious Freedom Report 2009: Malaysia*, U.S. DEP'T OF STATE (Oct. 26, 2009), <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2009/127277.htm>.

33. *Id.*

The increase in restrictions in these countries often involved religious minorities or minority sects of the country's majority faith. In Yemen, for instance, both Baha'is and Christians were subject to increased government harassment, including imprisonment. Several Yemenis who had converted from Islam to Christianity were arrested in the cities of Sana'a and Hodeida in 2008. They reportedly were arrested for promoting Christianity and distributing Bibles rather than for apostasy, which is a crime punishable by death in Yemen. Members of Yemen's small Jewish population were threatened on a number of occasions and did not always receive protection from the government. The State Department reported, for example, after a prominent member of the Jewish community in Reyda was killed in December 2008, the government "appeared unwilling or unable to increase security for the remaining Jewish population."³⁴

In the spring of 2009, the Tajikistani government arrested hundreds of members of the Islamic missionary movement Tablighi Jama'at, reasoning the group represented a potential threat to the country's stability and security. In June 2009, the government also detained forty people suspected of being members of the Salafi school of Islam, which the government had formally banned in January 2009.³⁵ The arrests and detentions were supported by a 2009 religion law that expanded government controls over religious groups. Among other things, the new law made it more difficult for religious groups to comply with the government's registration requirements.

Six countries with substantial increases in government restrictions started out with moderate levels of restrictions: Somalia, Qatar, Kyrgyzstan, France, Serbia, and Uganda. In Uganda, for example, police in February 2008 detained the head of the New Malta Jerusalem Church, Severino Lukoya, and three of his employees for operating an unregistered church. Lukoya is the father of a former rebel leader, and the government has cited national security concerns as the reason for prohibiting the church from registering.

In several countries with moderate levels of restrictions,

34. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, *International Religious Freedom Report 2009: Yemen*, U.S. DEP'T OF STATE (Oct. 26, 2009), <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2009/127361.htm>.

35. For more information on the Tablighi Jama'at and Salafism, see Pew Forum on Religion & Pub. Life, *Muslim Networks and Movements in Western Europe*, PEW RESEARCH CTR., <http://pewforum.org/Muslim/Muslim-Networks-and-Movements-in-Western-Europe.aspx> (last visited Sept. 26, 2012).

governments appeared to expand those that were already in place. Qatar, for example, reportedly began enforcing restrictions on the length and content of sermons in mosques in order to monitor content that might incite listeners to violence.

Government restrictions also increased substantially in Hong Kong, which overall still has low government restrictions on religion. For example, practitioners of the spiritual discipline known as Falun Gong were often turned down by Hong Kong authorities when they asked to use public facilities or spaces for their functions, even though other religious groups were routinely granted such permission. Falun Gong practitioners also reportedly were attacked by security personnel employed by the liaison office of China's central government during an August 2008 protest. Furthermore, several people with ties to Falun Gong were prevented from entering the territory, including a U.S. citizen, Leeshai Lemish, who said he was denied entry on July 27, 2008. News reports suggested that Lemish was denied entry because he was serving as a translator and assistant to someone who was researching the persecution of Falun Gong.

C. Countries with Substantial Decreases in Government Restrictions

Government restrictions on religion decreased substantially in eight countries from mid-2006 to mid-2009. Seven of these countries had low levels of government restrictions to begin with. Only one, Greece, started out with high government restrictions.

The decline in government restrictions in Greece was not the result of any changes to the country's laws or policies. Rather, there were fewer reports of restrictive actions by various levels of the government. For example, while Greece continued to restrict proselytizing, there were fewer reported cases where the police detained people for doing so. Likewise, minority religious groups in Greece continued to face administrative hurdles when trying to obtain permits to operate houses of worship. However, during the latest reporting period, they faced fewer hurdles than they had in previous years.

In the seven countries that initially had low government restrictions, there were fewer reports of attempts to restrict the activities of certain sects or religions. For instance, during the period covered by this study, the attorney general of Guinea Bissau overturned efforts to ban the Ahmadiyya Muslim sect, declaring that the ban had no legal basis. In the Pacific island nation of Nauru, ministers and missionaries from minority Christian groups that once were banned from the country, including

Latter-day Saints and Jehovah's Witnesses, have been able to operate with less hindrance in recent years.

Restrictions on public preaching decreased in three of the eight countries that showed substantial declines in government restrictions: Nauru, Togo, and Nicaragua. None of the eight countries had an increase on this measure. In Catholic-majority Nicaragua, for example, the government stopped enforcing a 2006 law, known as the "noise law," that some evangelical Christian groups claimed was restricting their ability to organize outdoor worship services.

Religious groups faced fewer problems registering in four of the eight countries with substantial declines in government restrictions: Guinea Bissau, Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, and Togo. The government of Togo, for instance, did not reject any group's registration application in the latest period studied.

D. Use of Government Force Against Religious Groups or Individuals

One measure included in the Government Restrictions Index is the level of force governments used against religious groups or individuals. This measure tallies the number of countries in which individuals were killed, physically abused, imprisoned, detained, or displaced from their homes for religion-related reasons. It also counts incidents in which individuals had their personal or religious property damaged or destroyed as a result of government actions. The number of countries in which governments used at least some measure of force against religious groups or individuals rose from ninety-one (46%) in the period ending in mid-2008 to 101 (51%) in the period ending in mid-2009.³⁶

Although we calculated scores on the Government Restrictions Index based on the number of cases of government force in each country, our coders also examined the different types of force governments used. For instance, government force against religious groups led to individuals being killed in twenty-four countries (12%) in the period ending in mid-2009, about the same number of countries as in the previous reporting period.

In China, for example, police in Beijing stopped musician Yu Zhou and his wife, poet Xu Na, for speeding on Jan. 26, 2008. After finding Falun Gong materials in their car, the police detained the couple. Yu died in custody eleven days later. He was reportedly tortured, but the police

36. See *infra* Appendix: Summary of Results, GRI Q. 19.

refused to allow an autopsy. His wife was sentenced to three years in prison. In Laos, a Christian man died in July 2008 in the village of Katan in the province of Salavan after authorities reportedly forced him to drink alcohol. His relatives were later fined for conducting a Christian burial service. In Iran, security officers in Isfahan Province on July 17, 2008, raided the home of two Iranian Christians, who later died of injuries inflicted during the raid. And in Syria, human rights activists said at least nine Islamist inmates were killed by prison guards during riots at Sednaya Military Prison near Damascus in July 2008.

Detentions or imprisonments for religious reasons were reported in seventy-eight countries (39%) during the most recent period studied, up from seventy countries (35%) in the period ending in mid-2008. In the East African country of Eritrea, for example, police arrested twenty-two Jehovah's Witnesses on June 28, 2009, for holding an unapproved worship service in the city of Asmara. Jehovah's Witnesses are frequently imprisoned or detained in Eritrea for refusing compulsory military service, which is against their religious beliefs. In Afghanistan, where misinterpretation of Islam is a punishable offense, two people were sentenced by a Kabul court in September 2008 to twenty years in prison for publishing a Dari-language translation of the Koran that did not include the parallel Arabic verses for comparison purposes. The court's decision affirmed arguments made by religious scholars in Afghanistan that the translation misinterpreted verses in the Koran about alcohol, begging, homosexuality, and adultery.

Religious groups or individuals had their personal or religious property damaged or destroyed as a result of government actions in fifty countries (25%) in the period ending in mid-2009, up from twenty-nine countries (15%) as of mid-2008. In Vinh Long, Vietnam, for instance, the government tore down the Catholic convent of the Sisters of the Congregation of St. Paul of Chartre in January 2009 and converted the property into a park. In the Iranian city of Isfahan, government authorities used bulldozers to raze the house of worship of a group of Gonabadi (or Sufi) dervishes in February 2009.³⁷ The authorities arrested all of the Sufi Muslims who were present and destroyed all Sufi books and publications on the premises. In Brazil, the municipal government of Salvador de Bahia in 2008 destroyed an Afro-Brazilian Candomblé

37. For more information on Sufism, see Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, *Muslim Networks and Movements in Western Europe*, PEW RESEARCH CTR., <http://pewforum.org/Muslim/Muslim-Networks-and-Movements-in-Western-Europe.aspx> (last visited Sept. 26, 2012).

temple that had been illegally constructed on public land. After reviewing the case, the mayor of Salvador publicly apologized, dismissed the official responsible and had the temple rebuilt.

Tens of thousands of people remained displaced from their homes at least in part because of government policies toward religious groups. Displacements were reported in forty-five countries (23%) in the period ending in mid-2009, up from thirty-eight countries (19%) as of mid-2008. In some cases, the number of people displaced reflected the continuing effects of earlier conflicts. In India, for example, an estimated 55,000 Kashmiri families, most of them Hindu, remained in refugee camps as a result of the long-standing conflict in Jammu and Kashmir. Many Hindus reportedly were reluctant to return to their homes because they were afraid they would not be protected by the police, who are primarily Muslim.

E. Constitutional Protections for Religious Freedom

Nearly all of the 198 countries included in this study either call for freedom of religion in their constitutions or basic laws (143 countries) or protect at least some religious practices (an additional 48 countries). But not all governments fully respect the religious rights written into their laws. More than half of the countries (111, or 56%) include stipulations in their constitution or basic laws that appear to substantially contradict the concept of religious freedom. Afghanistan's Constitution, for instance, appears to protect its citizens' right to choose and practice a religion other than Islam. But the constitution also stipulates that "no law can be contrary to the sacred religion of Islam"³⁸ and instructs judges to rule according to sharia law if no specific Afghan law applies to a case.

Seven countries—Algeria, Eritrea, Libya, Maldives, Mauritania, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen—do not include any provisions for religious freedom in their constitutions or basic laws.³⁹ The Algerian Constitution, for example, establishes Islam as the state religion and forbids practices that are contrary to Islamic ethics.⁴⁰

There appears to be at least some relationship between constitutional

38. AFG. CONST. ch. 1, art. 3.

39. The Eritrean Constitution that was ratified by the National Assembly in 1997 provides for religious freedom, but the government has not yet implemented the constitution. Therefore, there is no effective constitutional protection for religious freedom in Eritrea.

40. ALG. CONST. ch. 1, art. 2.

protections for religious freedom and overall changes in government restrictions on religion. Among the countries with the least robust constitutional protections for religious freedom—that is, countries whose constitutions contain one or more substantial contradictions concerning religious freedom or provide no protection for it at all—index scores increased in eleven and decreased in only two (more than a five-fold difference). In contrast, among the countries whose constitutions provide for religious freedom without substantial contradictions (including those with limited qualifications), index scores increased in three countries and decreased in six (a two-fold difference).

More specifically, among the countries whose constitutions or basic laws do not provide for religious freedom, government restrictions on religion substantially increased in three (Algeria, Libya and Yemen) and did not decrease in any. In the 111 countries that provide for religious freedom but have substantial contradictions in their constitutions or basic laws (such as limiting religious freedom in order to protect “public morals” or making the nation’s laws conform to one particular religion), government restrictions substantially increased in eight countries (Somalia, Syria, France, Malaysia, Egypt, Qatar, Hong Kong, and Serbia) and substantially decreased in two countries (Greece and Nauru).

But the pattern is reversed among the forty-one countries whose constitutions or basic laws provide for religious freedom without qualification or contradiction. Among these countries, government restrictions decreased in three (Timor-Leste, Equatorial Guinea, and the Republic of Macedonia) and increased in one (Kyrgyzstan). This pattern is also seen, though more faintly, among the thirty-nine countries whose constitutions or basic laws provide for religious freedom but include limited qualifications, such as the right to limit religious freedom to protect “public order.” Restrictions decreased in three of these countries (Togo, Guinea Bissau, and Nicaragua) and increased in two of them (Uganda and Tajikistan). The level of government restrictions stayed roughly the same in the vast majority of cases.

F. Government Restrictions on Religion by Region

There are major differences among the five regions of the world—Asia-Pacific, Middle East–North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, Europe, and the Americas—in terms of government restrictions on religion. On average, government restrictions are highest in the Middle East–North Africa region. The median score on the Government Restrictions Index for the twenty countries in the region rose from 5.0 as of mid-2008 to 5.4

as of mid-2009. Sixteen of the twenty countries in the region (80%) had high or very high government restrictions as of mid-2009, and no country had low government restrictions. Six countries in the region (Egypt, Algeria, Libya, Syria, Yemen, and Qatar) had substantial increases in government restrictions from mid-2006 to mid-2009, and no country had a substantial decrease.

The situation in the Asia-Pacific region was more varied. Overall, the region's median score on the Government Restrictions Index was 3.7 as of mid-2009, up from 3.3 as of mid-2008. Nineteen of the fifty-one countries in the region (37%) had high or very high restrictions as of mid-2009, while twenty-three countries (45%) had low government restrictions. Government restrictions increased substantially in four countries in the region (Hong Kong, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, and Tajikistan) and decreased substantially in two (Nauru and Timor-Leste).

Seven of the ten countries in the world with very high government restrictions as of mid-2009 were in the Asia-Pacific region: Burma (Myanmar), China, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Maldives, and Uzbekistan. Twelve of the thirty-two countries in the world with high government restrictions also were in this region (Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei, India, Laos, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, and Vietnam). At the same time, some of the least restrictive governments in the world also were found in the Asia-Pacific region, including Japan, Taiwan, and Australia.

Europe's median index score for the period ending in mid-2009 (1.9) was slightly higher than its median score for the period ending in mid-2008 (1.8). Europe's median score also remained higher than the scores for sub-Saharan Africa or the Americas. This was due in part to the former Communist countries in Europe that have replaced state atheism with state-favored religions that are accorded special protections or privileges. All of the European countries with high government restrictions as of mid-2009 were in the East, including Belarus, Bulgaria, Moldova, and Russia. No European country had very high restrictions. France and Greece had the highest levels of government restrictions in Western Europe, and both fell in the moderate category. France and Serbia were the only European countries to have substantial increases in government restrictions from mid-2006 to mid-2009.

The median level of government restrictions in sub-Saharan Africa is the next-to-lowest of the world's five major regions. Overall, the median level of government restrictions in sub-Saharan Africa dropped from 1.4 in the period ending in mid-2008 to 1.2 in the period ending in mid-2009.

Government restrictions in the region decreased substantially in three countries (Equatorial Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, and Togo) and increased substantially in two (Somalia and Uganda). Eritrea had the highest level of restrictions in the region; it was the only sub-Saharan African country with very high restrictions as of mid-2009.

Of the five regions, the Americas had the lowest median level of government restrictions on religion. Nearly ninety percent of the countries in the region (31 of the 35 countries) had low government restrictions as of mid-2009. Four countries in the region (Cuba, Mexico, Venezuela, and Costa Rica) were in the moderate category. No country in the region had a substantial increase in restrictions from mid-2006 to mid-2009, and restrictions decreased substantially in Nicaragua. Cuba, which continued to have the highest level of government restrictions in the Americas, had a slight but not substantial drop in its score. Canada, the United States, and Brazil all continued to have relatively low government restrictions on religion.

IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

There are several intriguing patterns in the changes discussed in this report. First, the substantial increases in restrictions and hostilities tend to be in countries where restrictions and hostilities are already high, while the decreases tend to be in countries where restrictions and hostilities are already low. This pattern suggests that a gradual polarization could be taking place, with restrictive countries growing even more so. Whether this is a long-term trend or a short-term phenomenon is not yet clear. Our report does not study the causes of the polarization; it merely provides context. But there are conditions that might contribute. For instance, there was a rise in government restrictions in countries where constitutions do not protect religious freedom. In addition, countries that have anti-blasphemy laws also tend to have higher restrictions.

Second, both Christians and Muslims, the world's two largest religious groups, were harassed in the largest number of countries—with incidents of either government or social harassment reported against Christians in 130 countries (66%) and against Muslims in 117 countries (59%). Harassment of Christians, Muslims, and Jews was highest in the Middle East–North Africa. Although this is a predominantly Muslim region, followers of Islam were harassed in an even higher percentage of countries in the region than were Jews or Christians. But these findings don't necessarily prove that Christians and Muslims are the most persecuted, because the count does not take into consideration the

severity of harassment or the number of people who were harassed. But it does indicate how widespread religious persecution is. Comparatively, Buddhists and Hindus, who together account for roughly one-fifth of the world's population, faced harassment in fewer places: sixteen countries (8%) for Buddhists and twenty-seven countries (14%) for Hindus. In relationship to their global population, however, harassment of Jews was widespread. While Jews comprise less than one percent of the world's population, harassment was reported in seventy-five countries (38%).

Third, Europe actually had the largest proportion of countries in which social hostilities related to religion were on the rise from mid-2006 to mid-2009. Indeed, five of the ten countries in the world that had a substantial increase in social hostilities were in Europe: Bulgaria, Denmark, Russia, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. So the kinds of social hostilities that recently erupted in shootings in Norway reflect a growing trend among certain European countries with growing Muslim immigrant communities. As indicated by our January 2011 study, *The Future of the Global Muslim Population*, the number of immigrant Muslims has and will continue to increase in Europe. The countries where there have been an increase or projected to have an increase in the Muslim population, such as the U.K. and France, are countries where we see increases in social as well as government restrictions. It is important to note that hostilities are directed not only at Muslims but also at minority immigrant groups in general. For groups trying to integrate, this is not always an easy task.

Fourth, the level of government restrictions in Egypt was increasing well before the February 2011 uprising and continuing unrest. Indeed, as of mid-2009, Egypt ranked in the top five percent of all countries on both government restrictions and social hostilities involving religion. Some of the factors contributing to these intense social hostilities include the government's longstanding ban on the Muslim Brotherhood, an influential Islamic organization, and its discrimination against Coptic Christians, who form one of the largest Christian populations in the Middle East and North Africa.

In conclusion, this study identifies at least three important recent trends. First, one-in-three people live in a country where restrictions on religion are on the rise, either from increasing government restrictions or social hostilities. Second, government restrictions were increasing in the Middle East and North Africa before the recent unrest that continues in the region. Third, social hostilities were increasing in Europe before the

July 22, 2011, massacre in Norway.⁴¹ Given these trends, it is unarguable that changes in religious restrictions are a part of the larger social and political forces shaping the world today in countries as diverse as Egypt and Norway.

41. The BBC summarized the massacre in Norway as follows:

On 22 July [2011, Anders Behring] Breivik disguised himself as a police officer to plant a car bomb that exploded close to government offices in the capital Oslo, killing eight people. Still in uniform, he then drove to the island of Utoeya, where a summer youth camp of Norway's governing Labor Party was being held. In a shooting spree that lasted more than an hour, he killed 69 people—mostly teenagers. In a manifesto he published online, Breivik said he was fighting to defend Europe from a Muslim invasion, which was being enabled by what he called "cultural Marxists" in Norway's Labor Party, and the EU.

Norway Massacre: Breivik Declared Insane, BBC NEWS, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-15936276> (last updated Nov. 29, 2011).

IV. APPENDIX: SUMMARY OF RESULTS

To assess the level of restrictions on religion by governments around the world, we selected the following twenty questions for the Government Restrictions Index (GRI). To assess the level of social hostilities involving religion around the world, we used the following thirteen questions for the Social Hostilities Index (SHI). Our staff then combed through eighteen published sources of information, including reports by the U.S. State Department, the United Nations and various nongovernmental organizations, to answer the questions on a country-by-country basis.

This short summary shows each question, followed by a dichotomous (yes/no) answer. This summary covers the period of July 1, 2007, through June 30, 2009. The summary shows whether particular religious restrictions occurred at any time during the period according to the multiple sources we analyzed. But note that this is a short summary of the results; many questions had multiple possible answers. For example, for GRI Question No. 5—"Is public preaching by religious groups limited by any level of government?"—the study found that for the period ending in mid-2009, 135 countries (68%) had no reported limits on preaching, thirty-nine countries (20%) had limits on preaching by some religious groups, and twenty-four countries (12%) had limits on preaching by all religious groups. Similarly, for SHI Question No. 12—"Were there incidents of hostility over proselytizing?"—the study found that for the period ending in mid-2009, 127 countries (64%) had no reported incidents of hostility over proselytizing, thirty-nine countries (20%) had incidents that fell short of physical violence, and thirty-two countries (16%) had incidents involving violence.⁴² To see how each country scored on each question, see the Results by Country.⁴³

42. For full details on each question including results for the first time period (July 1, 2006, through June 30, 2008), see Pew Forum on Religion & Pub. Life, *Summary of Results*, PEW RESEARCH CTR., [http://pewforum.org/Government/Rising-Restrictions-on-Religion% 288%29.aspx](http://pewforum.org/Government/Rising-Restrictions-on-Religion%288%29.aspx) (last visited Sept. 30, 2012).

43. For country results, see Pew Forum on Religion & Pub. Life, *Results by Country*, PEW RESEARCH CTR., [http://pewforum.org/Government/Rising-Restrictions-on-Religion% 289%29.aspx](http://pewforum.org/Government/Rising-Restrictions-on-Religion%289%29.aspx) (last visited Sept. 30, 2012).

Government Restrictions on Religion, mid-2007 through mid-2009		
Types of Restrictions	Yes, # Countries	Yes, % Countries
1. Does the constitution, or law that functions in the place of a constitution (basic law), specifically provide for "freedom of religion" or include language used in Article 18 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights?	143	72%
2. Does the constitution or basic law include stipulations that in any way qualify or contradict religious freedom?	157	79%
3. Taken together, do national laws and policies provide for religious freedom, and does the national government respect religious freedom in practice?	75	38%
4. Does any level of government interfere with worship or other religious practices?	131	66%
5. Is public preaching by religious groups limited by any level of government?	63	32%
6. Is proselytizing limited by any level of government?	75	38%
7. Is converting from one religion to another limited by any level of government?	38	19%
8. Is religious literature or broadcasting limited by any level of government?	87	44%
9. Are foreign missionaries allowed to operate without restrictions?	105	53%
10. Is the wearing of religious symbols, such as head coverings for women and facial hair for men, regulated by law or by any level of government?	53	27%
11. Has there been any harassment or intimidation of religious groups by any level of government?	127	64%
12. Has the national government displayed hostility involving physical violence toward minority or non-approved religious groups?	61	31%
13. Were there instances when the national government did not intervene in cases of discrimination or abuses against religious groups?	54	27%
14. Does the national government have an established organization to regulate or manage religious affairs?	105	53%
15. Did the national government denounce one or more religious groups by characterizing them as dangerous "cults" or "sects"?	24	12%
16. Did any level of government formally ban any religious groups?	40	20%
17. Were there instances when the national government attempted to eliminate an entire religious group?	26	13%

18. Did any level of government ask religious groups to register for any reason, including to be eligible for benefits such as tax exemption, and the process adversely affected the ability of some religious groups to operate or clearly discriminated against some religious groups?	113	57%
19. Did any level of government use force toward religious groups that resulted in individuals being killed, physically abused, imprisoned, detained, or displaced from their homes, or having their personal or religious properties damaged or destroyed?	101	51%
[nested]19-1. Countries with incidents in which individuals were killed:	24	12%
[nested]19-2. Countries with incidents in which individuals were physically abused:	48	24%
[nested]19-3. Countries with incidents in which individuals were detained or imprisoned:	78	39%
[nested]19-4. Countries with incidents in which individuals were displaced from their homes:	45	23%
[nested]19-5. Countries with incidents in which individuals had their personal or religious properties damaged or destroyed:	50	25%
20. Do some religious groups receive government support or favors, such as funding, official recognition or special access?	191	96%
[nested]20-1. Does the country's constitution or basic law recognize a favored religion or religions?	88	44%
[nested]20-2. Do all religious groups receive the same level of government access and privileges?	20	10%
[nested]20-3. Does any level of government provide funds or other resources to religious groups in the country with obvious favoritism to a particular group or groups?	152	77%
[further nested]20-3.a. Does any level of government provide funds or other resources for religious education programs and/or religious schools with obvious favoritism to a particular group or groups?	114	58%
[further nested]20-3.b. Does any level of government provide funds or other resources for religious property (e.g., buildings, upkeep, repair or land) with obvious favoritism to a particular group or groups?	88	44%

[further nested]20-3.c. Does any level of government provide funds or other resources for religious activities other than education or property with obvious favoritism to a particular group or groups?	112	57%
[nested]20-4. Is religious education required in public schools?	80	40%
[nested]20-5. Does the national government defer in some way to religious authorities, texts or doctrines on legal issues?	55	28%

Social Hostilities Involving Religion, mid-2007 thru mid-2009		
Types of Hostilities	Yes, # Countries	Yes, % Countries
Q1a-Q1f. Were there crimes, malicious acts, or violence motivated by religious hatred or bias? [Summary]	142	72%
[nested]Q1a. Was there harassment motivated by religious hatred or bias?	132	67%
[nested]Q1b. Was there property damage motivated by religious hatred or bias?	85	43%
[nested]Q1c. Were there detentions or abductions motivated by religious hatred or bias?	21	11%
[nested]Q1d. Were people displaced from their homes due to religious hatred or bias?	24	12%
[nested]Q1e. Were there physical assaults motivated by religious hatred or bias?	77	39%
[nested]Q1f. Were there killings motivated by religious hatred or bias?	36	18%
Q.2 Was there mob violence related to religion?	53	26%
Q.3 Were there acts of sectarian or communal violence between religious groups?	27	14%
Q.4 Were religion-related terrorist groups active in the country?	74	37%
Q.5 Was there a religion-related war or armed conflict in the country?	25	13%
Q.6 Did violence result from tensions between religious groups?	133	67%
Q.7 Did organized groups use force or coercion in an attempt to dominate public life with their perspective on religion, including preventing some religious groups from operating in the country?	127	64%

Q.8 Did religious groups themselves attempt to prevent other religious groups from being able to operate?	98	49%
Q.9 Did individuals or groups use violence or the threat of violence, including so-called honor killings, to try to enforce religious norms?	47	24%
Q.10 Were individuals assaulted or displaced from their homes in retaliation for religious activities, including preaching and other forms of religious expression, considered offensive or threatening to the majority faith?	67	34%
Q.11 Were women harassed for violating religious dress codes?	33	17%
Q.12 Were there incidents of hostility over proselytizing?	71	36%
Q.13 Were there tensions in society over conversion from one religion to another?	60	30%