

Brian Grim

Thank you – I appreciate the opportunity to come and for your hosting this, it's my first time here. For my talk today I have quite a number of slides, I hope you can all view them. The first several that I'll share come from a book that I just published with Cambridge University Press called "The Price of Freedom Denied"; most of my presentation, however, will be coming from a report which was just released last month in Washington with the Pew Research Centre.

Just to give some context about the world that we live in, in 1970 around 1 in 5 people in the world had no religion, and this was at the height of the Communist movement around the world. Since that time, we've seen a decrease in the number of people globally who express that they have no religion, falling to around 1 in 10: we're living in a much more religious world. So today about 89% of the global population expresses that they have some religion.

Thinking of religious freedom in a religious world, we did some polling at the Pew Research Centre and looked at the question "does religious freedom matter?" So the question was "is living in a country where I can practice my religion important?".

The percentage who say yes across all the world is very high, but there's a difference when you ask two different questions. If you say "is it very important to be where you can practice your own religion freely", about 76% of people answer yes, and say it is very important that I can practice my religion freely, but if you ask the same question but say "is it important that others can live in a country where they can practice their religion freely?" only about 62% say yes. This gap of 14 percentage points reflects what I have called in some places the religious intolerance gap – the difference between caring about religious freedom for me and religious freedom for others.

In our first study which we released in 2009 called "Global Restrictions on Religion", we did a global study of 198 countries looking for primary sources – we used these primary sources to do non-normative coding on two measures: government restrictions on religion, and social hostilities involving religion. I'll be talking about these; when I say non-normative coding, the research that I'll be presenting is not a public opinion survey, but more an analysis of actual events and policies that governments have, practices that governments use, as well as non-governmental social hostilities.

So what we found is that in a minority of countries there are very high restrictions on religion, but because these countries are very populous about 70% of the world's population lives in countries with high or very high restrictions on religion.

Looking first at how this affects religious groups themselves, Christians face some sort of harassment in about 130 countries out of the 198 that we studied; Muslims also face harassment or abuse in 117 countries – that's not particularly surprising given that they are the two largest collective religious groups.

Others also face problems or harassment in a large number of countries: looking at Jews in particular, there are some different patterns in the data. Jews face much less restriction and

harassment from governments than they do from societies – there are around 3 or 4 times the number of countries where they face social harassment rather than government harassment. For Christians and Muslims, we find there's a pattern where they're more equal, either facing harassment from governments or from society in general.

Looking at regions of the world, religious groups face some harassment in each region, but in the Middle East and North Africa it's the highest: in every country religious groups face harassment of some sort. The finding that's particularly interesting is that the second bar on the left, the percentage of countries in the Middle East and North Africa where Muslims face harassment – 95%. That's slightly higher than Christians or Jews face harassment in the Middle East and North Africa.

When I'm talking about religious groups facing harassment it's usually the minority group within a country, so in Saudi Arabia it would be the Shi'a facing problems; if it's in Iran it would be the Sunnis, because Iran has a Shi'a majority.

Now, in the latest study, the one that you have a copy of, we looked at the changes in religious restrictions over the period mid-2006 and mid-2009. In terms of breaking news, I was talking to a couple of reporters today, and it got a fair amount of coverage in the press when it came out. Usually something that happened in mid-2009 seems like old news, but in social science terms, it's new news, since it takes quite a long time to gather the data, vet the data, and carry out the analysis.

So this goes up to mid-2009, and what we've found is that there's a minority of countries in which restrictions have gone up or down, but we found that the number of countries where restrictions rose was about twice the number of countries where restrictions declined: in about 23 countries they went up; in about half that number they went down.

Again because the countries where restrictions or social hostilities involving religion – and we're talking about both here – went up were more populous than those in which they went down, 32% of the world's population experienced an uptake in religious restrictions, but only 1% experienced a decline. The 6% of countries where they declined only accounted for 1% of the world's population.

Now this is not where they went up or down but the countries with the highest government restrictions on religion are on the left hand side, so Egypt jumped in this period to the number one spot, so having higher government restrictions on religion than Iran or Saudi Arabia by the measures that we used – looking both at constitutional protections and then policies that the government used such as conversions, protection of minority rights, using force against religious groups, controlling proselytisation, and controlling religious activities.

Egypt jumped to the head of the queue, where also Malaysia joined this time. One of the leading newspapers in Malaysia, when they covered this story, said that for once Malaysia is now one of the top ten countries of the world – but regrettably it's on this list.

One of the aspects of this report which we found was different to our first report was that a number of countries where restrictions were on the rise or high covered the story. So in Turkey it was covered, and even though Turkey has high – though not in the top list – government restrictions, their press covered it, and said good news: Turkey didn't increase!

We do find that this kind of study is something different: it's not talking about religious freedom per se, though I think many of you here today have a concern for religious freedom, but it's talking about measuring restrictions on religion, and I think that's something that's easier to talk about. China is on this list, and I find I can talk about these issues in China very objectively, because the Chinese say yes we should have high restrictions on religion because we think it's a danger to our country.

On the right-hand side are countries which have high social hostilities – no surprises Iraq, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Somalia, Indonesia (which might be surprising), and Nigeria, which showed a significant increase during the time of our study.

Now this is the list of countries where government restrictions rose: Egypt, France, Algeria, Uganda, Malaysia, Yemen, Syria, Somalia, Serbia, and others. The bubble shows their relative population size. On the right you see where social hostilities increased, and again the Chinese are very concerned about this because of an uptake there.

Nigeria also had an uptake, as did Russia, Vietnam, Thailand, and the UK – remember that this is the period ending in mid-2009 when former Prime Minister Gordon Brown mentioned that he was greatly concerned by the uptake in anti-Semitic violence in 2009 which followed the Israeli action in Gaza. That was part of what went into this; that was also the time period when of the killing of some British soldiers in Northern Ireland, there was street action in the UK which I'll talk about a little bit later between Christians and Muslims centring on various protests. In fact, Sweden, Denmark, and a number of other countries across Western Europe, and Eastern Europe, saw an increase in social hostilities, and it was primarily owing to tensions accommodating new religious minorities, primarily Muslim populations in the countries.

On BBC Radio 4, I was interviewed, and Edward Stourton asked this question – how come the UK is on a list with Russia and China? This doesn't make any sense. We talked about it: the list was where we saw a substantial uptake in terms of social hostilities involving religion, it wasn't who had the highest.

The next slide – page 11 of the report you have – has what's called, I think, a velum paper, showing social hostilities today. So you can see that China was lower in social hostilities; the further up the chart the higher the social hostilities involving religion, the further to the right the higher the government restrictions on religion.

So the UK, Germany, Italy, France are all towards the bottom left-hand corner. If we go to the next slide, the place that has the highest restrictions on religion would be in areas that have simultaneously high social hostilities involving religion and high government restrictions on religion.

Each clip will show a different arrow – the countries that showed a substantial increase were Vietnam in social hostilities, China - that time was leading up to the 2008 Olympics, and the time period after that. Before then, in early 2008, there were no religion-related terrorist activities in that country that were independently verified, but by the time of the Olympics there were a series of bomb attacks across China involving a group that had some religious agenda.

Among the other countries that increased in this area was Nigeria, which continued to show a substantial increase in social hostilities involving religion – in Nigeria there are many conflicts which are usually ethnic-based but they sometimes involve religion. When I talk about religion-related hostilities, these aren't religious wars with people fighting over doctrine, but when your religious identity helps to identify who your group is and who the group that you have something against is.

That's what I mean by religion-related hostilities, and that's why we would still consider issues in Northern Ireland which have sometimes flared up, these sectarian issues, to be religion-related but not to have religion at its core. That's what we mean when we talk about social hostilities involving religion – they can loosely involve religion, but somehow religion will help identify who the enemy is. In Europe I talked about the UK's religious restrictions increasing.

Some of the issues we follow in this report, and you can read about them in the larger report, include the actual use of force by governments against religious groups. We see this in a substantial number of countries where property has been damaged: governments will come in and bulldoze to the ground monasteries – this happens in Vietnam – and will forcibly close mosques in Bedouin areas, as has happened in Israel, or will close other types of religious properties. Usually this is done when registration is impossible or very difficult to achieve, and religious groups try to meet: that's what draws these kinds of actions by governments. We also see deaths in around 25 countries.

The region of the world with the highest government restrictions on religion is the Middle East and North Africa, followed by Asia-Pacific, and then Europe which includes 50 countries in our study including Eastern Europe. Sub-Saharan Africa is a surprise – it has the lowest government restrictions on average aside from the Americas. Looking at a map of the world where government restrictions are highest expands that belt going from Morocco all the way through to China and Indonesia.

You can look in the back of the report, which goes through each of the questions, starting on page 98: it has the twenty-something questions we used for government restrictions. I'll just show a couple of examples here. This is the percentage of countries where governments prohibit worship as a general policy regarding one group or another. That increased from 19% to 23%. An example of that is in China, just this Easter, they closed down a house-church, one of the largest house-churches in Beijing. This continued to have repercussions, because when members of that church were found out to be a member, some of them that I've heard of lost their jobs, and this continued to be an issue.

In Eritrea, if you're not part of one of the four approved religions, you'll have a very difficult time registering. Any group that's not one of the official religions can face severe persecution,

for instance Seventh Day Adventists end up in gaol because they continue to meet despite prohibitions.

In countries such as Afghanistan where both the United Kingdom and the United States have military forces there continue to be problems with those who convert from Islam to another religion being sentenced to death. It is only through the high-level intervention of governments that these sentences of death have been either commuted or they've extracted the people to some neutral country.

Another question we monitor is the number of countries which limit religious literature and broadcasting. The first example is in Uzbekistan, where all literature is censored by the government, anything coming into the country is subject to being confiscated or censored; another example is that Germany, here in Europe, has banned Al-Manar broadcasts, a television station in Lebanon that is affiliated with Hezbollah and carries religious programming.

All of these programmes are banned coming into Germany but also the United States, I think the United Kingdom, and France – though I'm not sure about the UK. The reason they're banned is that they carry anti-Semitic rhetoric, so they're banned. Often these are the types of bans that you'll find – you don't like what they're preaching on the one hand, and the bans come into effect along with a more general ban on that group.

Then we've seen an uptake in the number of countries which regulate religious symbols: there are familiar examples in Iran where they have morality police who will go around; I used to live in Saudi Arabia, so my daughter who's here today always had to cover herself, and my wife too. In some countries you have morality police coming round.

In Europe, there's been a trend towards considering banning the burka: during the time period of our study, President Sarkozy made some speeches promoting the ban of the burka, and then eventually it was banned.

Moving into the social side, I'm going to shift gears here and look not at government restrictions but social hostilities. In Norway, and this is before the events that happened, the mass killing that happened in Norway this summer, there were groups of Muslims in Oslo performing this function of morality police. They would go through the Muslim neighbourhoods in Oslo and enforce a religious dress code among the Muslim population or at least in areas where there was a Muslim majority.

This is now looking at how groups in society can also try to enforce restrictions on religion, or at least restrictions on the religious freedoms of others. So we monitor actual events that happened in our report, harassment or intimidation of groups by other groups or individuals in society, property damage, and deaths: we find these types of events in a large number of countries around the world.

In terms of the highest region, where social hostilities are high, is in the Middle East and North Africa, which won't be too surprising; but Asia-Pacific, which in our study includes South Asia so Pakistan, Afghanistan, and that part of the world, is at the very high end. That bar shows that,

although across Asia the median level is 1.9 on a ten-point scale, it still goes up very high in some countries.

In Europe it's a much more compact bar, so that means there aren't very high social hostilities in Europe, compared with the Middle East and North Africa. In Sub-Saharan Africa we have higher social hostilities because of some countries such as Nigeria and Somalia.

Here's a map showing a bit more of the picture of social hostilities involving religion. The United States by our measure has a moderate level, which is above low, of social hostilities involving religion. We have around 1400 hate-crimes a year that have some religious bias or motivation that we track.

Now, looking at some particular measures that went up involving social hostilities, the percentage of countries where there was mob violence related to religion increased, and I'll show a few examples. I would show this video but it's very disturbing: this is after the government allowed a ban on Ahmadiyya Muslims, or rather Ahmadiyyas call themselves Muslims but orthodox Muslims do not consider them Muslims because they have a prophet who came after Mohammed. This is a video, which I won't play, of the beating to death of Ahmadiyya Muslims in Indonesia as the police just stood by and looked on.

These are the riots that occurred in 2009, where there was going to be an anti-Muslim protest by some right-wing groups, but some other Muslims joined in and there was a lot of street violence. This is an example of an increase in mob violence related to religion.

The next measure I'll look at is religion-related terrorism: so we find this has an extensive occurrence across the world, 74 countries had at least one religion-motivated terrorist group active in their country during the time of this study – that's one in three countries globally. In 37 or half of those countries it was limited to recruitment or fundraising, but in 37 countries, or about 1 in 8 globally, it involved actual acts of violence by religion-related terrorist groups.

I'll just flash by some examples – these types of events tend to be in the news, so you may be familiar with them. A bombing hits Iraq mosque; a church bombing in Kirkuk; a Baghdad church siege – another terrorist attack there; Nigeria just last month had the UN bombing, where the UN headquarters was attacked by Boko Haram. This is the Days of Terror in India which happened during the time period of our study: the Jewish centre in Mumbai was attacked, and this group also had Islamist objectives for their attack.

The incidents of religion-related terrorist violence in Russia doubled over the time period of our study. Part of this was because in the past when they were fighting for Chechnya it was a very political movement; now that the Russians have contained that virtual civil war, the groups that are left have tried to use Islamic rhetoric to expand a caliphate across that part of Russia and beyond. And then I've mentioned the attacks in China at the time of the Olympics.

This is a list of countries where there was religion-related activity: both the United Kingdom and United States are on that list during the time period of our study. In the UK it was in Northern

Ireland, and in the United States it was the Christmas bomber who had explosives sown into his underwear but fortunately wasn't able to detonate them.

Now I'd like to talk about some of the context within which religious restrictions can go up or down. The first point is that among those countries which have strong constitutional protections or where their basic laws have strong protections for religious freedom, the number of countries where we saw increases was half as many as where we saw decreases. So among countries with good, strong protections for religious freedoms with no contradictions in their protections for religious freedoms we saw a general decrease in religious freedoms.

Among those countries where there were either contradictions or didn't provide religious protections at all, we saw about double the number of countries increasing than decreasing. I can't say whether the good protections caused the decrease, or the poor protections caused the increase, but certainly there's an association between the laws of the land and increases and decreases both in social hostility and in government restrictions on religion.

Now another thing that we looked at in the study is that about a third of the countries of the world have anti-blasphemy laws, or laws that prohibit criticism of religion. These are common in Islamic countries but also in other countries; Denmark, for example, has a law that you cannot criticise the doctrines of an officially accredited religion. In Denmark those laws aren't generally enforced, so we took into account whether there's an enforcement of these laws, but in other countries where they are enforced such as Pakistan, if you blaspheme you can be sentenced to death.

Among countries that had these laws, the Middle East and North Africa had the largest, followed by Europe, and then Asia-Pacific. These laws are not very in the Americas or in Sub-Saharan Africa. The red shows where we had high restrictions or hostilities, and the two bars on the left are countries where there are blasphemy or anti-defamation type laws where you can't criticise religion.

In those countries that have these laws that are purportedly designed to protect religious sentiments, to keep social hostilities down because criticising religion is dangerous and will incite people, we still find that even though those laws existed those countries have high restrictions and they tended to get high. In countries which don't have these blasphemy laws social hostilities and government restrictions were low and they tended to get lower.

I have three slides here: in the first one, among the countries which have anti-blasphemy laws and enforce them, 23% of the countries showed an increase in restrictions or hostilities, and only 2% showed a decrease. In the next slide, there's a similar pattern for those who have such laws and don't enforce the policy – so the presence of those laws was associated with a greater increase.

But the somewhat opposite was true of countries which don't have those laws: an equal number of countries increased and decreased in these regions. Again, I can't say that this is causal – these laws come as a bundle package along with other restrictions on people in these countries.

I'm going to end with three or four last slides from the Cambridge University Press book that I mentioned. First, there's a clear correlation between legal and policy restrictions – that's coming across on the chart to the right – and religion-related violence – that's going up the chart.

In the EU and the Americas, there's very low, or tends to be lower, restriction on religion and there tend to be low social hostilities; but if you go to North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, and the Middle East, you have both high government restrictions and high violence related to religion.

You can say well, how do we analyse that, is it just coincidence, what came first. So in the next slide, a colleague of mine and I published a paper a few years ago that was well received in the social science community where we tried to tease this apart and we found that where there's high social hostility or high social restriction on religion – not social violence but social restriction, meaning where you push your own religion's point of view without consideration for others, as shown in Norway, enforcing one religion's morality on everyone – that tends then to push governments' restrictions on religion, because when you have a society that wants to operate a certain way they push the government to get behind it and support it.

Once you get a social disposition for intolerance and have that codified into law, that's when you find the restrictions on religion. Teasing that apart through regression analysis, even for such things as pluralism, Samuel Huntington's civilisation divide, these sorts of issues, and many other factors, we find that this was the largest explanation for religion-related violence.

Then the last slide I have there's again correlation not causation, but where we find religious freedom in the world, or low restrictions on religion, that tends to be in countries where they have political freedom, freedom of the press, civil liberties, gender empowerment for women, and also it tends to be correlated with a host of other measures on the health or the economic wellbeing of a country.