

Religious Freedom in a Pluralist Age: Trends, Challenges, and Practices The Case of Nigeria

- I. Gratitude to organizers for opportunity to present the perspective of a Nigerian Muslim to the apt. theme
- II. General Observation- Religious freedom is absence of persecution or oppression. Problems/challenges occur in:
 - a. Obvious/veiled targeting due to hate/lust
 - b. Inconsiderate dismissal of feelings/complaints of religious suppression
 - c. Globalisation of an hegemony of religious standards and characteristics which exclude particularities
 - i. Neutralisation of partisanship- dominance of Christianity and Judaism
 - d. Intolerance of minority by majority
 - e. Extension of religious freedom to infringement on public order and inalienable rights of others
 - f. Partisanship of the state towards particular religion which alienates others
- III. Islam & Pluralism
 - a. Islam has a theology of pluralism
 - i. Qur'an 49:13; 2:256; 109:6; 5:5
 - b. Islam in socio-political turbulence- presently
 - i. Israel-Palestinian conflict- Is it religious or political? Or both?
 - ii. Other places
 - iii. Islamic law to govern Muslims in Muslim majority just as Christianised common law is allowed in Christian majority states
 - iv. Terrorism is unacceptable as a tool for resolution fo conflict
- IV. Law & Religious Freedom in Nigeria
 - a. Constitutional Provisions
 - i. Sec. 10- prohibits state religion
 - ii. Sec. 15(2)- prohibits religious discrimination
 - iii. Sec. 38- entrenches freedom of religion
 - iv. Signatory African Chapter on H & Peop. Rights
 - v. Signatory International Convention on Civil and Political rights
 - b. Multireligious- not secular
 - i. State support of religions- pilgrimage, Sabbath
 1. Oath-taking
 - ii. Social involvement
 1. Represented on public commissions/boards
 2. Schools- (117 Univ.--over 40 Religious)
 3. Hospitals
- V. Religious Freedom: Peculiarities of Nigeria
 - a. Nigeria is uniquely pluralistic
 - i. Christianity/Islam almost (consciously) evenly distributed
 - ii. Of the over 152m = 40%, 45% 15% = Christians, Muslims, others
 - b. North said to be Muslim, but pred. Christian communities in North

- c. South said to be Christian, but pred. Muslim communities in South
 - d. Southwest is evenly pluralistic, as North Central is in concentrated mixed bags
 - e. Ethno- Economic differences
 - i. 300 ethnic groups
 - f. Exceedingly rich/poor groups
 - g. Political power manipulates religion/ethnic
- VI. Freedom/Infringement on others' rights
- a. Muslims object to Sabbath Sunday/Red Cross/Cross as Symbol
 - i. Hospital cross, Christianisation of public institutions e-g off cap in courts etc.
 - ii. Utilisation of public institutions to convert (historically)
 - b. Christians complain of Sharia Courts for Muslims, Islamic Banks are infringement
 - c. Mutual Complaints - Noise, use of public places- roads, media
- VII. Persecution- Allegations
- a. Muslims in SE/SS and in SW, NC complain of
 - i. denial of places of worship/ISS in public school/ lack of state support as for Christians
 - ii. Non teaching of Islamic Studies
 - b. Christians in NC, NW, and NC complain of the 3.
- VIII. Solution
- a. NIREC
 - i. NIFAAM- Malaria
 - ii. Anti-Corruption-IAAC
 - iii. NACA Aids
 - iv. Dialogue- theory
 - b. Justice
 - c. Good Government and poverty alleviation
 - d. Tolerance