



Australian Government
Refugee Review Tribunal

Country Advice

Israel

Israel – ISR38342 – Treatment of Muslim converts to Christianity – Forced marriage
– State protection – Apostasy
28 March 2011

- 1. Please provide background on the demographics of Israel with particular detail on the major religions in Israel and the relative proportions of the population who are considered to be followers of the main religions.**

According to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) *World Factbook*, as of July 2010 Israel had an estimated population of 7,473,052, excluding settlers in disputed or occupied territories.¹ Of these, an estimated 75.5% were Jewish, 16.8% Muslim, 2.1% Christian, 1.7% Druze, with other religions constituting the remaining 3.9%.²

The US Department of State (USDOS) *International Religious Freedom Report 2010* states Israel has 5.6 million Jews, 1.5 million Arab Muslims and Christians, and 320,000 classified as “other” – mostly people from the former Soviet Union “who immigrated under the Law of Return but who did not qualify as Jews, according to the Orthodox Jewish definition used by the government for civil procedures”.³ Of the Jewish population, 7% are identified as ultra-Orthodox, 10% Orthodox, 39% consider themselves as ‘traditionally religious’ or ‘traditionally non-religious’, and 44% consider themselves non-religious or secular Jews.⁴ According to the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Israel has over 1.2 million Muslim Arabs (mostly Sunni), 250,000 Bedouin Arabs, 123,000 Christian Arabs, 122,000 Druze and 4,000 Circassians.⁵

The Israeli Basic Law on Human Dignity and Liberty indirectly provides for freedom of religion through reference to the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel, which explicitly provides for the protection of religious freedom. Although Israel has no

¹ Central Intelligence Agency 2011, *The World Factbook - Israel*, Central Intelligence Agency website, 8 March <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/is.html> – Accessed 16 March 2011 – Attachment 1

² Central Intelligence Agency 2011, *The World Factbook - Israel*, Central Intelligence Agency website, 8 March <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/is.html> – Accessed 16 March 2011 – Attachment 1

³ US Department of State 2010, *International Religious Freedom Report – Israel*, 17 November, Section 1 – Attachment 2

⁴ US Department of State 2010, *International Religious Freedom Report – Israel*, 17 November, Section 1 – Attachment 2

⁵ ‘People: Minority Communities’ 2010, Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, 28 November <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/facts%20about%20israel/people/society-%20minority%20communities> – Accessed 15 March 2011 – Attachment 3

constitution, government policy and the Supreme Court contribute to the generally free practice of religion.⁶

2. Please provide information about the acceptance and rejection or tolerance generally of Christianity in a Muslim culture. Is Israel a “Muslim culture”?

Christians have been present in the Middle East, and indeed Israel, since the first century. Following the two world wars of the 20th century, European colonial powers withdrew from the region, and Muslim Arabs regained political control, the notable exception being the 1948 establishment of the Jewish State of Israel.⁷ The 1950s saw mass migration to Israel of Jews from Arab countries such as Morocco, Yemen and Iraq, as well as tens of thousands from around the world, all bringing their own languages, national heritages and cultural histories.⁸

Israeli culture is therefore different things to different people. According to everyculture.com, Palestinians are Arabs whose traditions are founded in Muslim culture, while the Jews define their culture largely around Judaism. Each group is part of a larger, international religious and cultural community, and each has a history in the region going back for hundreds of years.⁹ Arab Christians living in Israel are in a unique position where they hold a quadruple identity – Arab, Palestinian, Christian, and Israeli. According to the Christian website linga.org, Christian Arabs were cut off from their cultural and national roots following the establishment of the State of Israel. They are Palestinians, and although they share language and culture with Palestinian Muslims, they are separated by their respective faiths.¹⁰

According to Islamic Web, the Qur’an condemns other religions as false, and dictates no other way of life is acceptable except Islam. However, Muslims are instructed to be tolerant of people who espouse other creeds. To wit, Islam is intolerant of false ideas, but is tolerant of the people who hold to those ideas.¹¹ In practice, however, this is not always necessarily the case. It is widely accepted that in many parts of the world, particularly South Asia and parts of the Middle East, Islamic extremist intolerance of other religions such as Christianity has led to harm, displacement, forced conversion and repression.

According to the Council of Europe’s Parliamentary Assembly, Christians in the Middle East have been the targets of an increasing number of violent attacks. Intolerance and

⁶ US Department of State 2010, *International Religious Freedom Report – Israel*, 17 November, Introduction – Attachment 2

⁷ ‘What has happened to Christians living in Israel and neighbouring areas?’ 2007, Palestine Facts website http://www.palestinefacts.org/pf_current_christians.php – Accessed 22 March 2011 – Attachment 4

⁸ Well, A. 2000, ‘Culture in Israel’, Jewish Virtual Library website, June http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsources/Society_&_Culture/culture1.html – Accessed 22 March 2011 – Attachment 5

⁹ ‘Culture of Israel’ (Undated), Every Culture website <http://www.everyculture.com/Ge-It/Israel.html> – Accessed 22 March 2011 – Attachment 6

¹⁰ ‘Arab Christians in Israel: in Search of an Identity’ (Undated), linga.org website <http://en.linga.org/article?aid=18> – Accessed 22 March 2011 – Attachment 7

¹¹ ‘Is Islam Intolerant of Other Religions?’ (Undated), Islamic Web website <http://www.islamicweb.com/begin/myth10.htm> – Accessed 22 March 2011 – Attachment 8

violence against Christians has led to exponents of the religion accounting for an estimated 75% of worldwide victims of religious violence.¹²

3. Please provide general information on the treatment of sons (or close family member) of strict Muslims in Israel where the son has turned away from Islam and become a Christian.

While no information was found regarding the treatment of Muslim children in Israel who have converted to Christianity by their families, there were reports of harm and mistreatment occurring in other countries around the world, both in the Middle East and the West. Please refer to [Question 5](#) for additional information on treatment of apostates.

4. Is there information to suggest that Muslim Bedouin families are any stricter in their observance of Islam, and less tolerant towards Christianity than other Muslim families?

No specific information was found to suggest Muslim Bedouins are any more austere in their observance of Islam, or less tolerant towards Christianity, than other Muslims.

According to an article at myjewishlearning.com, Islam has not traditionally been a prevalent factor in Bedouin life, as the religion stresses allegiance to Allah, while primary Bedouin allegiance has always been to the tribe. Radical Islamists, however, have reportedly seen the growing Bedouin population as an opportunity to expand their reach within Israel's borders.¹³

It is noteworthy that according to the *BBC*, thousands of Muslim Bedouin serve in the Israeli army, despite Muslims being exempt from compulsory military service. Although Bedouins were once considered part of the Palestinian nation, many of them now consider themselves Israelis, with a duty to serve their country.¹⁴ According to one Bedouin who served in the army, however, military service can be a disadvantage when seeking later employment; some Muslims wouldn't hire him as he had been in the army, while some Jews prefer to give jobs to other Jews.¹⁵

5. What is the consequence, from the perspective of Islam as a religion and Islamic doctrine, of turning away from Islam and becoming a Christian?

According to *Understanding Islam*, the Shari'ah has no prescribed punishment for apostasy, despite reported broad consensus among Islamic scholars that an apostate should be killed. According to the author, the Qu'ran makes no mention of apostates receiving the death penalty; rather, the practice can be attributed to a statement ascribed to the

¹² 'Violence against Christians in the Middle East' 2011, Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly website, 25 January <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta11/EREC1957.htm> – Accessed 22 March 2011 – Attachment 9

¹³ Balint, J. L. (undated), 'The Bedouin in Israel', My Jewish Learning website, http://www.myjewishlearning.com/israel/Contemporary_Life/Society_and_Religious_Issues/Arab-Israelis/The_Bedouin.shtml – Accessed 15 March 2011 – Attachment 10

¹⁴ 'Bedouin who serve in Israel's army' 2009, *BBC News*, 20 October http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8303634.stm – Accessed 15 March 2011 – Attachment 11

¹⁵ 'Bedouin who serve in Israel's army' 2009, *BBC News*, 20 October http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8303634.stm – Accessed 15 March 2011 – Attachment 11

Prophet Mohammed, who reportedly said “[w]hoever changes his Religion, kill him”.¹⁶ Apostasy, however, is illegal and punishable by death in Afghanistan, Comoros, Iran, Mauritania, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Yemen.¹⁷

In Western countries, however, apostates are at risk not from the state, but from individuals, such as family or community members, who take punishment into their own hands. Some Imams in Britain have called for apostates to be killed if they criticise Islam, while some converts around the world have been kidnapped, detained and allegedly killed by family members.¹⁸

In 2009, *Israel National News* reported that a 17 year-old girl in Ohio ran away from her family to Florida in order to practice Christianity without fear of being killed by her father for abandoning Islam. A court was due to decide whether the girl could remain in Florida, or if she had to return to her parents. Her father denied the suggestions that he would kill his daughter.¹⁹ According to *CNN*, a judge ruled she would be returned to emergency custody in Ohio once her immigration status was determined.²⁰ In 2008, *Israel Today* reported a young girl in Saudi Arabia was executed by her Muslim father after he learned she had converted to Christianity.²¹

An 18 year-old British-Pakistani girl was taken ‘on holiday’ by her family to Pakistan after they discovered she had been hiding a bible in her room, and had been secretly visiting a church. Three weeks later, she reportedly drowned after she “went out in the middle of the night and slipped in the river.”²² Another Christian convert of Pakistani origin was taken to a secluded village in Pakistan for several years, where she claims to have endured mental and emotional suffering while her father pressured her to renounce her Christian faith, and threatened to take her life.²³ A former mosque teacher from Pakistan who became an atheist after settling in Britain claims he has had 18 fatwas against him, after criticising Islam in a series of books.²⁴

In 2006, Afghan Abdul Rahman was arrested when he was found carrying a bible, and was charged with rejecting Islam, a capital crime in Afghanistan. Rahman reportedly converted to Christianity in 1990 as an aid worker helping refugees in Pakistan, and at the time was denounced by his estranged family. The presiding judge said Rahman would be asked to reconsider his conversion, which would result in forgiveness. If he refused to

¹⁶ ‘Punishment for Apostasy’ 1998, Understanding Islam website, 7 December <http://www.understanding-islam.com/q-and-a/islamic-beliefs/punishment-for-apostasy-5019> – Accessed 16 March 2011 – Attachment 12

¹⁷ ‘When Muslims Convert’ 2005, Assyrian International News Agency website, 2 February <http://www.aina.org/news/20050202111020.htm> – Accessed 16 March 2011 – Attachment 13

¹⁸ ‘Muslim apostates cast out and at risk from faith and family’ 2005, *The Times*, 5 February <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article510589.ece> – Accessed 18 March 2011 – Attachment 14

¹⁹ ‘In Defence of Muslim Convert to Christianity’ 2009, *Israel National News*, 30 August <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/133164> – Accessed 16 March 2011 – Attachment 15

²⁰ ‘Runaway teen Christian convert must return to Ohio, judge rules’ 2009, *CNN*, 14 October http://articles.cnn.com/2009-10-14/us/florida.muslim.convert_1_rifqa-bary-mohamed-bary-immigration-status?_s=PM:US – Accessed 17 March 2011 – Attachment 16

²¹ ‘Saudi girl executed for becoming Christian’ 2008, *Israel Today*, 14 August <http://www.israeltoday.co.il/default.aspx?tabid=178&nid=16907> – Accessed 17 March 2011 – Attachment 17

²² ‘Muslim apostates cast out and at risk from faith and family’ 2005, *The Times*, 5 February <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article510589.ece> – Accessed 18 March 2011 – Attachment 14

²³ ‘Muslim apostates cast out and at risk from faith and family’ 2005, *The Times*, 5 February <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article510589.ece> – Accessed 18 March 2011 – Attachment 14

²⁴ ‘Muslim apostates cast out and at risk from faith and family’ 2005, *The Times*, 5 February <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article510589.ece> – Accessed 18 March 2011 – Attachment 14

convert, however, his mental state would be considered before he was dealt with under Shari'ah law.²⁵

6. What is generally required to occur for a person to become a Christian?

The requirements for becoming a Christian vary depending on which denomination of Christianity one wishes to practice. According to *christianity.net.au*, becoming a Christian begins with prayer, which is intended to repair the relationship between the individual and God based on Jesus' sacrifice; a person becomes a Christian by asking God to forgive them.²⁶ A Christian will: acknowledge that they have not lived or loved God as they should; trust that Jesus was not only a man but God who died to secure forgiveness of sins and rose from the dead; and seek to live as God wants them to.²⁷

According to the *Freedom in Christ* website, the Apostle Peter believed the requirements to become a Christian were to repent, be baptised, and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit: repentance is the decision to live the kind of life that Jesus taught; baptism, through submersion, is the symbolic laying down in death of the old sinful man and the rising of the new man dedicated to God, cleansed of his sins; and the Holy Spirit is believed to help overcome old habits, the influence of one's environment, and the influences of unclean spirits.²⁸

To become a Catholic, one must first arrange a meeting with a priest or pastoral associate, where an invitation may be offered to join the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults – this process may last between six to eighteen months. Alternatively, some parishes provide a Catechumenate programme, where people meet regularly with a priest and some local Catholics to listen and learn what it means to be a Catholic, and are gradually introduced into the life of the Church. If there is reasonable doubt about one's first baptism, a conditional baptism will be conducted. Once baptism is assured, the individual will be known as a Candidate, and will be free to receive the Rite of Reconciliation or Sacrament of Penance. At the Ceremony of Reception, the individual will be invited to make a Profession of Faith, followed by the Sacrament of Confirmation.²⁹

7. Please provide information on the consequences of an Arab Muslim man having a de facto relationship with a non-Muslim woman, from the perspective of the religion of Islam?

Little information was found regarding the consequences of such a relationship from an Islamic perspective. With regard to Christian-Muslim inter-faith marriage more broadly, according to the *Sunni Path Islamic Academy*, dating or any sort of physical affection are impermissible as long as a couple is not married. Any and all contact must be within the

²⁵ 'Afghan on trial for Christianity' 2006, *BBC News*, 20 March

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4823874.stm – Accessed 18 March 2011 – Attachment 18

²⁶ 'How to become a Christian' (undated), *christianity.net.au* website,

http://www.christianity.net.au/questions/how_to_become_a_christian – Accessed 15 March 2011 – Attachment 19

²⁷ 'Portrait of a follower of Christ' (undated), *christianity.net.au* website, <http://www.christianity.net.au/god/god-epilogue/> – Accessed 15 March 2011 – Attachment 20

²⁸ 'How to Convert to Christianity' 2006, *Freedom in Christ* website, <http://www.freedom-in-christ.com/convert-to-christianity.htm> – Accessed 16 March 2011 – Attachment 21

²⁹ 'How do I become a Catholic?' 2009, *Catholic Enquiry Centre* website,

<http://www.catholicenquiry.com/becoming-catholic/how-do-i-become-a-catholic.html> – Accessed 16 March 2011 – Attachment 22

boundaries of Islamic law.³⁰ While inter-marriage between Muslims and non-Muslims is prohibited in the Qur'an, Muslim men, in principle, may marry women from the 'people of the book' – that is, Christians and Jews.³¹ This is subject to the provisions that the children are raised Muslim, and that the head of the household is Muslim.³²

According to USDOS, families often disown Muslim and Christian women who marry outside their faith – local officials sometimes advise such women to leave their communities to prevent harassment.³³ Freedom House reported that marriages, although uncommon, do occur between Christian and Muslim Palestinians, but are generally frowned upon. Christian women have been killed “under the pretext of protecting family honour as a result of such marriages”.³⁴

8. Please provide information on what are considered the essential requirements/practices/rituals for a person to be considered to be a practising Muslim.

According to Islam 101, the Five Pillars of Islam are the foundation of Muslim life: Faith or belief in the Oneness of God and the finality of the prophet-hood of Mohammed; establishment of the daily prayers; concern for and almsgiving to the needy; self-purification through fasting; and the pilgrimage to Mecca for those who are able.³⁵

- *Iman (Faith)* – The declaration that “There is none worthy of worship except God and Mohammed is the messenger of God” is called the Shahadah, and signifies the belief that the only purpose of life is to serve and obey God.³⁶
- *Salah (Prayer)* – Obligatory prayers performed five times a day, these are a direct link between the worshipper and God. Prayers are said at dawn, midday, later afternoon, sunset and nightfall, and contain verses from the Qur'an.³⁷
- *Zakah (Charity)* – In Islam, everything belongs to God, and wealth is held in trust by human beings. Possessions are purified by setting aside a proportion for those in need and society in general.³⁸

³⁰ ‘Non-Muslim woman dating Muslim man’ 2007, Sunni Path – Online Islamic Academy website, 5 July http://qa.sunnipath.com/issue_view.asp?HD=12&ID=14775&CATE=146 – Accessed 21 March 2011 – Attachment 23

³¹ ‘Marrying non-Muslims: the legal ruling’ 2005, Sunni Path – Online Islamic Academy website, 3 July http://qa.sunnipath.com/issue_view.asp?HD=1&ID=2267&CATE=10 – Accessed 21 March 2011 – Attachment 24

³² ‘Christian-Muslim marriage’ 2005, Sunni Path – Online Islamic Academy website, 3 July http://qa.sunnipath.com/issue_view.asp?HD=12&ID=1802&CATE=10 – Accessed 22 March 2011 – Attachment 25

³³ US Department of State 2010, *Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2009 – Israel*, March 11, Section 2.c – Attachment 26

³⁴ Freedom House 2010, ‘Women’s Rights in the Middle East and North Africa 2010 – Palestine (Palestinian Authority and Israeli Occupied Territories)’, UNHCR Refworld, 3 March <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4b99011f.html> – Accessed 22 March 2011 – Attachment 27

³⁵ ‘Five Pillars of Islam’ (undated), Islam 101 website, <http://www.islam101.com/dawah/pillars.html> – Accessed 15 March 2011 – Attachment 28

³⁶ ‘Five Pillars of Islam’ (undated), Islam 101 website, <http://www.islam101.com/dawah/pillars.html> – Accessed 15 March 2011 – Attachment 28

³⁷ ‘Five Pillars of Islam’ (undated), Islam 101 website, <http://www.islam101.com/dawah/pillars.html> – Accessed 15 March 2011 – Attachment 28

- *Sawm (Fasting)* – In the month of Ramadan, all Muslims fast from dawn until sundown, abstaining from food, drink and intimate relations with their spouse. It is a method of self-purification and self-restraint, and being constantly aware of the presence of God.³⁹
- *Hajj (Pilgrimage)* – The pilgrimage to Mecca (the hajj) is an obligation only for those who are physically and financially able to do so. Pilgrims wear special clothes, so that all stand equal before God. The rites of the hajj include going around the Ka’bah seven times, and going seven times between the hills of Safa and Marwa. Pilgrims later stand together on the plains of Arafat and join in prayer for God’s forgiveness.⁴⁰

9. Please provide information on whether Muslim parents might force their son to marry a Muslim woman against his wishes.

According to Minhaj-ul-Quran International, Islam encourages arranged marriages but categorically prohibits forced marriages. It is preferred both morally and ethically that a boy and a girl should not go directly and give his or her offer of marriage to the second party; this arrangement should be done through a third party, preferably the family. The family needs to determine whether it is arranging a marriage with the full participation and consent of their children, or if it is imposing its own consent and views on their children, either by force, or by emotional blackmail.⁴¹

One of the conditions of marriage is the consent of both parties. While parents have no right to force their son or daughter to marry, according to the *Online Muslim*, the child should obey their parents if the person they have chosen is righteous. However, if obedience will lead to a future divorce, then the child does not have to obey as consent must be in accordance with the approval of one who is religiously committed and of good character.⁴² According to a 2008 *New Statesman* article, supposed Islamic ideals such as honour killings and forced marriages are not based on Islamic doctrine, but are, rather, subservient to customs from tribal areas in India, Pakistan and the Middle East.⁴³

10. Is there information or any relevant Christian doctrine which would either support or rebut the claim that a Christian convert would be treated differently to someone born into Christianity in Israel?

No information was found to suggest a Muslim convert to Christianity in Israel would live any differently to those born into Christianity in Israel.

³⁸ ‘Five Pillars of Islam’ (undated), Islam 101 website, <http://www.islam101.com/dawah/pillars.html> – Accessed 15 March 2011 – Attachment 28

³⁹ ‘Five Pillars of Islam’ (undated), Islam 101 website, <http://www.islam101.com/dawah/pillars.html> – Accessed 15 March 2011 – Attachment 28

⁴⁰ ‘Five Pillars of Islam’ (undated), Islam 101 website, <http://www.islam101.com/dawah/pillars.html> – Accessed 15 March 2011 – Attachment 28

⁴¹ ‘Why forced marriages?’ 2009, *Minhaj-ul-Quran International*, 17 June <http://www.minhaj.org/english/tid/8591/Why%20forced%20marriages?%20.html> – Accessed 18 March 2011 – Attachment 29

⁴² ‘Answer to query – forced marriage’ 2006, *The Online Muslim*, 4 December <http://theonlinemuslim.blogspot.com/2006/12/answer-to-query.html> – Accessed 21 March – Attachment 20

⁴³⁴³ ‘Forced marriages disgrace Islam’ 2008, *New Statesman*, 27 March <http://www.newstatesman.com/religion/2008/03/honour-killings-forced> – Accessed 21 March 2011 – Attachment 31

11. Please provide information on whether photos of those who have turned away from Islam or who have denounced the Islamic faith are posted on mosque walls in Israel or published in the local newspaper in Israel and if so what is the purpose and consequence of this action?

No information could be found regarding the public denigration of those who have abandoned or denounced Islam in Israel.

Similar practices, however, have reportedly been employed by Jewish ultra-Orthodox anti-missionary organisations such as Yad L’Achim, who harass individuals identified – often incorrectly – as missionaries. According to USDOS, in 2009 there were a number of complaints from Christian and Messianic Jewish leaders regarding posters displayed in their neighbourhoods containing their photographs, names, and addresses, and warning the public to “avoid the dangerous missionaries”.⁴⁴ Such practices led to the serious wounding of the 15 year-old son of a Messianic Jewish leader after explosives were left on his doorstep in 2008 following the posting of anti-missionary notices.⁴⁵

According to *Haaretz*, in 2010 posters naming and denouncing a long-time resident for renting an apartment to three Bedouin students were put up around the city of Safed as part of a campaign aimed at halting the influx of Arab students. Residents opposed to the campaign reportedly believed that the posters could incite an attack on the landlord.⁴⁶

12. Please provide information on any generally accepted standards (if they exist) that might be applicable whereby through the compliance thereof a person would be regarded as being a Christian.

There are no definitive global standards of compliance, attendance, or actions that determine whether or not an individual is a Christian. Please refer to [Question 6](#) for further information on Christianity.

13. Please provide information on any reports on incidents in Israel where a Muslim family has harmed a child who converted to Christianity.

While no specific information could be found regarding Muslim families harming children who have converted to Christianity in Israel, there were reports of this occurring in other countries around the world, both in the Middle East and the West. Please refer to [Question 5](#) for additional information on harm to apostates.

14. Please provide information on the effectiveness of the Israeli Police authorities in protecting Israeli citizens and especially Muslim converts to Christianity from religious discrimination and religious based violence.

No information was found regarding state protection of Israeli Muslims who have converted to Christianity.

⁴⁴ US Department of State 2010, *Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2009 – Israel*, March 11, Section 2.c – Attachment 26

⁴⁵ US Department of State 2010, *Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2009 – Israel*, March 11, Section 2.c – Attachment 26

⁴⁶ ‘Safed man harassed for renting apartment to Bedouin’ 2010, *Haaretz*, 3 November <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/safed-man-harassed-for-renting-apartment-to-bedouin-1.322561> – Accessed 16 March 2011 – Attachment 32

According to USDOS, “[s]ome individuals and groups committed abusive and discriminatory practices against Israeli-Arab Muslims, evangelical Christians, and Messianic Jews”.⁴⁷ Members of Jehovah’s Witnesses reported assaults, threats of violence and other crimes, and noted the difficulties convincing police to investigate or apprehend the perpetrators. Some members claimed that verbal assaults and threats were so common that they stopped reporting them, as police had failed to follow up on previous complaints.⁴⁸

According to *Compass Direct*, in 2010 an arsonist set fire to a Jerusalem church which had long been a focal point for anti-Christian sentiment in an ultra-Orthodox Jewish neighbourhood. The church pastor claimed that he routinely received threats from Orthodox Jews, militant Palestinians and some Orthodox Christian communities.⁴⁹ In 2010, a Christian of Jewish origin claimed police had been slow to investigate hate crimes allegedly committed against him by Jews, despite having been attacked a number of times. According to the victim, police were not serious about enforcing laws against violence, and had in fact threatened him with arrest.⁵⁰

In 2009, Christian worshippers were injured when a church in northern Israel was attacked by stone-throwing ultra-Orthodox youths. The church had reportedly also been attacked the previous week, when stones and rotten eggs were thrown during a wedding ceremony. The church priest filed a complaint at the police station, and received a document confirming this, as well as an undertaking that police would assist. However, the church was attacked again within 24 hours, and despite the close proximity of the police station, no police were present.⁵¹

15. Is there any information to suggest that some places within Israel are more tolerant of people who have converted from Islam to Christianity than other places?

No information was found to suggest that there are places within Israel that have greater tolerance of converts from Islam to Christianity than other places.

16. Please provide information on whether the Christian community in Israel provides protection for converts to Christianity from Islam.

No information was found regarding the Israeli Christian community’s provision of protection to Islamic converts.

Attachments

1. Central Intelligence Agency 2011, *The World Factbook - Israel*, Central Intelligence Agency website, 8 March <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/is.html> – Accessed 16 March 2011.

⁴⁷ US Department of State 2010, *International Religious Freedom Report – Israel*, 17 November, Section III – Attachment 2

⁴⁸ US Department of State 2010, *International Religious Freedom Report – Israel*, 17 November, Section III – Attachment 2

⁴⁹ ‘Church building in Israel set ablaze’ 2010, *Compass Direct*, 8 November – Attachment 33

⁵⁰ ‘Jewish Christian in Israel seeks protection from repeated attacks’ 2010, *Compass Direct*, 4 January – Attachment 34

⁵¹ ‘Church Showered with Stones in Northern Israel’ 2009, *Compass Direct*, 23 June – Attachment 35

2. US Department of State 2010, *International Religious Freedom Report – Israel*, 17 November.
3. ‘People: Minority Communities’ 2010, Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, 28 November <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/facts%20about%20israel/people/society-%20minority%20communities> – Accessed 15 March 2011.
4. ‘What has happened to Christians living in Israel and neighbouring areas?’ 2007, Palestine Facts website http://www.palestinefacts.org/pf_current_christians.php – Accessed 22 March 2011.
5. Well, A. 2000, ‘Culture in Israel’, Jewish Virtual Library website, June http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Society_&_Culture/culture1.html – Accessed 22 March 2011.
6. ‘Culture of Israel’ (Undated), Every Culture website <http://www.everyculture.com/Ge-It/Israel.html> – Accessed 22 March 2011.
7. ‘Arab Christians in Israel: in Search of an Identity’ (Undated), linga.org website <http://en.linga.org/article?aid=18> – Accessed 22 March 2011.
8. ‘Is Islam Intolerant of Other Religions?’ (Undated), Islamic Web website <http://www.islamicweb.com/begin/myth10.htm> – Accessed 22 March 2011.
9. ‘Violence against Christians in the Middle East’ 2011, Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly website, 25 January <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta11/EREC1957.htm> – Accessed 22 March 2011.
10. Balint, J. L. (undated), ‘The Bedouin in Israel’, My Jewish Learning website, http://www.myjewishlearning.com/israel/Contemporary_Life/Society_and_Religious_Issues/Arab-Israelis/The_Bedouin.shtml – Accessed 15 March 2011.
11. ‘Bedouin who serve in Israel’s army’ 2009, *BBC News*, 20 October http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8303634.stm – Accessed 15 March 2011.
12. ‘Punishment for Apostasy’ 1998, Understanding Islam website, 7 December <http://www.understanding-islam.com/q-and-a/islamic-beliefs/punishment-for-apostasy-5019> – Accessed 16 March 2011.
13. ‘When Muslims Convert’ 2005, *Assyrian International News Agency* website, 2 February <http://www.aina.org/news/20050202111020.htm> – Accessed 16 March 2011.
14. ‘Muslim apostates cast out and at risk from faith and family’ 2005, *The Times*, 5 February <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article510589.ece> – Accessed 18 March 2011.
15. ‘In Defence of Muslim Convert to Christianity’ 2009, *Israel National News*, 30 August <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/133164> – Accessed 16 March 2011.
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