



MINORITY NETWORK / REPORT 2 / 2018

# Inclusive citizenship and human rights

The global Minority Network aims to explore and support conditions for human rights-based inclusive citizenship in conflict-ridden societies through dialogue and cooperation between researchers and civil society experts. Iraq, Myanmar and the Balkans were the core cases addressed in 2018.

Coordinated by the Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies, the network projects receives financial support from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. All activities are organised in cooperation with international, national, and local partners, including researchers and civil society experts from the target countries with different ethnic, religious and national backgrounds.

Input from partners at the various network activities can be summed up in the following statement:

**Preventing mass atrocities and ensuring sustainable development where no-one is left behind requires:**

- protecting the human rights of persons with different ethnic and religious identities
- ensuring their participation in education, governance and in other parts of public life
- documentation and other processes ensuring justice and restoration after past atrocities

## MAIN ACTIVITIES 2018

### International workshops

Myanmar (6 and 10 February),  
Bangkok (14 February), Belgrade (3 May),  
Oslo (17 June), Tunis (1 October)

### Panel for younger scholars

Manila, 4–6 October 2018

### International conferences

Oslo, 18–19 June and 7 December

### Audio-visual online resource

PART 1 launched on 9 December

### Research project

Interviewing refugees from Iraq and Syria  
based in Norway (March–December)



“Minority rights are human rights,” says Fernand de Varennes, UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues at the opening of the Oslo Conference, 18–19 June 2018 (Photo: HL-senteret)

## Workshops and panels

Five international workshops were organised by the network in Myanmar, Bangkok, Belgrade, Oslo and Tunis in core issues addressed by the network:

- National identity and inclusive citizenship
- Inclusive citizenship in education
- Prevention of mass atrocities

**South-East Asia (SEA):** The two workshops in Yangon held on 6 and 10 February gathered young scholars and civil society experts from different “ethnic states”, including Kachin, Chin, Mon, Shan and Rakhine, who met for the first time to exchange experiences across state borders. Models for mother-tongue and bilingual education in the different states were explored as examples of approaches aiming to ensure diversity and cohesion at both regional and national levels. The participants wished to continue this comparative exchange in an informal network with regional follow-up in 2018.

The experiences from Myanmar were drawn into the discussion in the Southeast Asia regional round table at the Peace and Human Rights Center at Mahidol University on 14 February.<sup>1</sup> Some of the younger scholars who received feedback on their papers based on the Myanmar workshops also took part in the panel organised by the Minority Network at the SEAHRN *Fifth International Conference on Human Rights and Peace & Conflict* held on 4-6 October in Manila. Young scholars and civil society organisation (CSO) experts from Indonesia and Thailand participated in both events to provide a broader comparative scope.



The first of two workshops in Yangon on 'National identity, inclusive citizenship and minority rights in South-East Asia' (Photo: Henry Dam)



From the Tunis workshop on 'Early warning and prevention of mass atrocities in the MENA region' on 1 October, organised by the Minority Network in partnership with Minority Rights Group, MRG. (Photo: Silvia Quattrini)



Director of the Kachinland Humanity Institute, Dan Awng, was among the participants in one of the Yangon workshops in February 2018. He also presented papers at the Oslo Conference in June and in the panel for younger scholars in Manila in October (Photo: Ingvill Plesner)

**The Balkans:** The workshop in Belgrade on 3 May was organised together with the Helsinki Committee, and gathered scholars and CSO experts from Serbia, Bosnia and Kosovo, exploring challenges and sound models for inclusive citizenship, not least in relation to history and language education.

**Middle East/Northern Africa (MENA):** Two workshops were organised on the prevention of mass atrocities in the MENA region, one in Oslo on 17 June (so that participants from the region could also attend the conference on 18-19 June), and one in Tunis on 1 October. They addressed the role of civil society, based on historical and recent experiences from Iraq.

Participants at all workshops highlighted how stereotyped images of certain ethnic or religious groups as “the other” expressed in, for example, social and mass media, provided grounds for discrimination of religious and ethnic groups and even for mass atrocities. Participants also expressed concern that lack of documentation and impunity for past atrocities, such as the genocide of the Yazidi, influence current conditions for vulnerable groups and create obstacles to reconciliation.


All workshops are being followed up with network projects in 2019.

## Conferences<sup>2</sup>

The international conference on ‘Human Rights and Inclusive Citizenship: Conditions for Co-existence in Conflict-Ridden Societies’ took place in Oslo on 17-18 June at the Nobel Institute and the Fritt Ord Foundation. Organizer was the Minority Network/Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies in cooperation with Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) and the Norwegian Helsinki Committee. The conference gathered over 100 international and Norwegian scholars and CSO experts as well as participants from

Inclusive citizenship and human rights

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**New Online Resource**  
**Inclusive citizenship and human rights**  
 Every day human rights are violated because of religious or ethnic belonging. The ongoing genocide on the Yazidi people is the first main case in this new online audio-visual resource.

[Read more](#)

workshops and other partners from the main regions of the network activities: MENA, in particular Iraq, SEA, in particular Myanmar, and the Balkans. The Norwegian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ine Eriksen Søreide, gave the opening address and the UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues, Fernand de Varennes, the key note speech. Main questions from the regional workshops were re-addressed in the six interdisciplinary, comparative case-based panels. The participants particularly expressed the usefulness of such cross-regional comparisons and identification of good practices as well as the exchanges between international scholars and CSO experts from the regions.

An international conference was also organised by the Minority Network at the Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies in Oslo on 7 December 'Genocide on the Yazidi people: The role of documentation', together with Norwegian Peoples Aid, Norwegian Church Aid, Stefanus Alliance, the Yazidi Cultural House in Norway and other CSO partners and scholars affiliated with the network. More than half of the over 100 participants at the conference were Yazidi, some of them living in Norway or other European countries, others in Iraq. Many of them travelled to the conference at their own expense, which shows the importance of the conference topic to their situation. The panels consisted of experts who had taken part in UN investigations of genocide as well as CSO and Yazidi experts working in Iraq on documentation. The event was upscaled due to the interest in particular from the Yazidi community itself and due to the Nobel peace prize to Nadia Murad on 10 December.



At the conference on 7 December, some of the new documentaries produced by the Minority Network were screened as an introduction to various panels: e.g. the new interview with Baba Cawish Yazidi religious representative in Lalesh, their holy city in the Kurdish region of Iraq (Photo: Ingvill Plesner)

## Online resource

See: [www.inclusive-citizenship.no](http://www.inclusive-citizenship.no)

On Sunday 9 December 2018, the first part of a new open online resource on 'Inclusive citizenship and human rights' was launched at the Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies. The online tool is developed based on input from and in cooperation with local partners in the three selected regions and with international partners. This first part addresses the case of the Yazidi minority, the

religious group to which Nobel Peace Prize winner Nadia Murad belongs. It includes a 360degree virtual tour of Lalesh, the holy city of the Yazidi, and of a Yazidi refugee camp established after the 2014 ISIS genocide of the Yazidi started.

The website also presents interviews of leading international scholars, including the UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues, on the drivers of genocide and other mass atrocities, as well strategies to prevent them. It contains documentary films, image galleries, quizzes, other training material and links to other online resources addressing these issues. We have tested the existing resources and are now developing new material together with partners. The full online resource with more cases and resources will be launched by the end of 2019.



In one of the panels at the Oslo Conference June 18 at the Nobel institute researchers and NGO experts discussed approaches to inclusive citizenship in Iraq in general and in the Kurdish region in particular (Photo: HL-senteret)

## Research

A research project related to the network topics started up in 2018 at the Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies, exploring reasons for flight and for hope and fear for the future among refugees from Iraq and Syria living in Norway. The main question in the interviews deals with how their ethnic and/or religious identity and/or minority/majority position led them to flee their countries and how this influences their reflections on possibly returning. The researchers conducted most of the interviews, including with several Kurds and Yazidi from Iraq, during 2018. We will complete the report in 2019. Some main findings from the research regarding, in particular, the Yazidi will be presented in the exhibition that opens at the center on 12 June, where



documentary films and videos about the situation for Yazidi produced for the online learning resource will also be screened. The exhibition addresses and challenges notions of “the stranger” in general, and focuses on the plight of the Yazidis five years after ISIL began its genocide on 3 August 2014 with the massacre on Sinjar Mountain.

## Synergies and repercussions

Bringing together researchers and CSO experts from the various regions has opened arenas for exchange and cooperation, not least for Norwegian researchers and CSO experts with activities in the same countries, such as Iraq and Myanmar. Minority Network activities in 2018 have inspired a number of other activities. These synergies are adding value to the planned network activities and inspiring continued efforts. Just a few examples are given here.



The team of young Yazidi, Christian and Muslim youth that visited each other's religious sites, here in front of Lalesh, the holy site of the Yazidi. See more at [www.inclusive-citizenship.no](http://www.inclusive-citizenship.no) (Photo: Saher Mirza)

- Sriprapha Petcharamesree, Director of the PhD Program in Human Rights and Peace Studies at Mahidol University Center for Human Rights and Peace Studies, attending the workshop on inclusive citizenship in Myanmar in February, invited the Minority Network to organise a panel on the same topics for The Fifth International Conference on Human Rights and Peace & Conflict in Manila in October, giving an opportunity for new papers to be presented and for regional exchange between young scholars from Myanmar attending the workshop.

- Fernand de Varennes, UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues, who attended the Oslo conference, invited the Minority Network to participate together with Minority Rights Group (MRG) and others in assisting the planning of three regional forums he is organising in 2019, including the MENA and the SEA regions, in preparation for the UN Minority Forum in November in bilingual and mothertongue education. This will include participants from workshops organised by the Minority Network on this issue, like the one in Yangon February 6 in 2018.
- Two of the main speakers from Iraq at the June conference in Oslo – Saad Salloum and Jaje Ameer – were nominated by the Minority Network project manager for the Stefanus Prize 2018. They won the prize for their longterm efforts at the Inter-faith Council of Iraq. This contact also inspired new cooperation between the Stefanus Alliance and the award-winning scholars, such as promoting the heritage of diversity in Iraq.
- During the Tunisia workshop the Minority Network came into contact with a team of Yazidi students based in Iraq. The students were in the process of making a documentary film on student life in Yazidi refugee camps and on planning inter-faith excursions for Yazidi, Christian and Muslim youth to visit each other's religious sites. The documentary film is now available on the “Inclusive Citizenship” resource page along with photos from the inter-faith youth excursions.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See Minority Network report 1/2018: “National identity, inclusive citizenship and minority rights in South-East Asia”, Ingvill T. Plesner and Camilla Buzzi (eds), Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies

<sup>2</sup> The conferences were organized on the occasion of the 70 anniversary of the UN Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the UN Genocide Convention, both of 1948.

## The author

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## The project

The Minority Network is a network of researchers and practitioners addressing conditions for human rights-based protection and inclusive citizenship across ethnic and religious divides in conflict-ridden societies. The network is coordinated at the Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies (HL-SENTERET).

More information: [www.minoritynetwork.no](http://www.minoritynetwork.no)

**The Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies** is a research, education and documentation center in Oslo focusing on the Holocaust, other genocides and the situation of minorities in contemporary societies.



**HL-SENTERET**

The Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies