

REPORT 2019 / INCLUSIVE CITIZENSHIP

Leaving no-one behind due to their religion or language

2019 activities

The main activities of the network project on **Inclusive Citizenship and Human Rights** in 2019 included the following:

- Organising two international and three national workshops on minority issues
- Co-organising international conference on prevention and punishment of genocide
- Production of three short documentary films on minority issues
- Production of three 360 virtual learning tours on minority issues
- Production of an audio-visual exhibition on the Yazidi genocide
- Completing a pilot study on reasons for flight from Iraq and Syria

All activities were planned and organised in close cooperation with local and international partners. Among the main cases and questions addressed in 2019 were: religious diversity and coexistence in Iraqi Kurdistan; the challenges facing Yazidi women with children born of genocidal rape; the rights of linguistic minorities in education; and the vulnerable situation for Muslim communities in countries with a non-Muslim majority in South-East Asia, such as India (Assam), Myanmar (Rhakein) and Thailand (Deep south).

Main pillars

- The equal dignity of all human beings implies a duty to ensure equal human rights protection
- Equal human rights protection is also a foundation for an inclusive and stable democratic society
- Therefore, no one should be discriminated against, persecuted or excluded on the basis of their identity

Main aim

The main aim of the network project **Inclusive Citizenship and Human Rights** is to help improve conditions for individuals who are in a vulnerable position because of their affiliation with a specific religious, linguistic or ethnic group. Exclusion, persecution or discrimination on the basis of such criteria often corresponds with social and economic marginalisation in conflict-ridden societies.

Therefore, 'leaving no-one behind' (Agenda 2030/SDG) requires particular attention to be paid to the rights and inclusion of religious, ethnic and linguistic minorities. The project has a particular emphasis on the conditions for women and children belonging to groups that have been victims of ethnic cleansing, genocide or other mass atrocities.

Lessons learned and good practices

The project takes a two-fold approach. It addresses lessons learned from massive human rights violations of individuals because of their religious, ethnic and/or linguistic identity, and it emphasises good practices of coexistence across such divides in conflict-ridden societies in the Middle East/North Africa, South-East Asia and the Balkans. Iraq, Myanmar and Bosnia-Herzegovina are the main cases of the project in each of these regions.

One core strategy is to create dialogue forums for exchange of experiences and comparison of cases between the regions assessed. The round-table discussions involve academics and civil society experts and, not least, individuals belonging to different religious, ethnic and linguistic groups. Brief introductions are followed by open discussions among the participants. Some of the workshops or other forums in 2019 also involved dialogue with state representatives and representatives from local authorities.

Conferences

The project organized an expert panel at the international conference at HL-senteret in Oslo, 6 September on “Prevention and punishment of genocide: The Yazidi and Rohingya case”. The conference gathered international as well as Norwegian scholars and civil society experts on the issue. Some of the participants also took part in the Minority Network workshop on “Rights of children born of genocide” the day before (see column right).

The project supported the UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues and the Tom Lantos Institute in the planning of regional forums in Europe (Brussels, May), Asia (Bangkok, September) and the Middle East/Africa (Tunis, October) on the human rights of linguistic minorities in education, and participated in the opening panels of two of these forums. It also assisted in recruiting minority representatives and academic experts from the various regions to the forums, as well as to the UN Minority Forum (in Geneva, November).

Workshops

In 2019 we organised workshops on the following topics:

- ***The right of linguistic minorities in education (Erbil, 8 - 9 April)***
Organised with Alliance of Iraqi Minorities (AIM) and Norwegian People’s Aid Erbil office as local partners, and with participation from international partners, including the UN Special Rapporteur on minority issues and a representative from Minority Rights Group International (MRG)
- ***Inter-faith understanding (Dohuk, 12 - 13 April)***
Organised in collaboration with Norwegian Church Aid’s Dohuk office as local partner, and with cooperation from local Yazidi activists in recruiting participants. Among the participants were Christian, Muslim, Yazidi, Kakei and Sabaeen Mandaean youth
- ***Rights of children born of genocidal rape (Oslo, 5 September)***
Participants included several Yazidi, among them Lamiya, a Yazidi woman who had escaped from ISIS and a Yazidi professor from Dohuk University, as well as international experts on the issue and Norwegian civil society experts and researchers
- ***Hate speech and incitement to violence against minorities (Oslo, 6 November)***
Introduction by the UN Special Rapporteur on minority issues. Main focus of the round-table discussion was on hate speech in social media.
- ***Minorities and statelessness (Oslo, 8 November)***
Introduction by Dr. Sriprapha Petcharamesree, Mahidol University, Institute of Peace and Human Rights. The round-table discussion compared issues of citizenship and statelessness for Muslim minorities in the Assam province in India and for the Rohingya in Myanmar and in flight in Cox’s Bazar.



As part of the Dohuk workshop, the youth visited different religious sites, here from the Christian grotto church and monastery from 628 AC in Alqosh

New online learning resources

www.inclusive-citizenship.no

Another strategy is to produce audio-visual learning tools, including short documentary films, 360 virtual learning tours, video interviews, photo galleries, etc. These resources are made available online with open access for all, but with pedagogical adjustments to accommodate the needs of educators and students and for civil society organisations working on minority issues in the selected regions.

All resources are developed based on input from and in collaboration with local and international partners. For instance, the local partners in Iraqi Kurdistan tested the pilot version of the 360 virtual tours during the workshops in April and gave their feedback, which was implemented in the production of the final versions. They are now actively involved in the follow-up to ensure efficient use of the resources in their own context and related to their work.

360 virtual tours

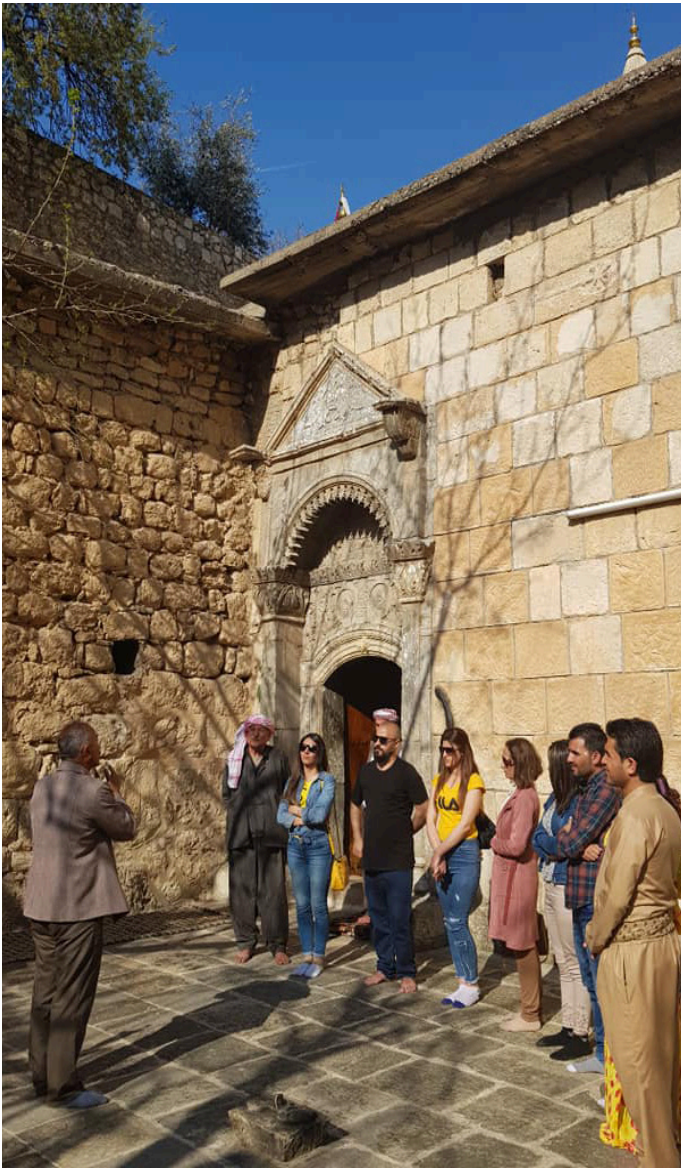
During 2019, more audio-visual elements were added to the new open online learning resource. Among other things, the project has produced three new 360 virtual learning journeys on religious diversity in Iraqi Kurdistan. One virtual tour goes to the city of Amediya, where you can visit a church, a mosque and an old Jewish burial chamber. Another goes to the old Christian town and the monastery of Alqosh. These complement the learning resources developed in 2018 where the genocide of the Yazidis was the main case.

Video interviews and short documentaries

In 2019, HL-senteret produced three new short documentaries as part of this project. One of the films were from the regional forums on the rights of linguistic minorities, produced in collaboration with the UN Special Rapporteur for minority issues and the Tom Lantos Institute. This film was shown as part of a panel discussion during the Geneva Minority Forum in November 2019. Another film was on the linguistic diversity in Iraqi Kurdistan, based on recordings from the Erbil workshop on that issue. A third film was about the situation for Yazidi refugees living in Norway and their relationship to their home country and in particular the holy city of Lalesh.



As a part of the inter-faith excursion organised as part of the Dohuk workshop, the youth visited one of the Christian churches in Alqosh. A film team was following the excursion to make a short documentary for the Inclusive citizenship project.



As part of the Dohuk workshop, on 12 - 13 April, the youth visited different religious sites, here from Laleh, the holy city for the Yazidi



Christian, Muslim, Yazidi and other youth participated actively in assessing preconditions and challenges for inter-faith understanding in the Dohuk workshop



Workshop on the rights of linguistic minorities in education 8 - 9 April 2019, Erbil, Iraqi Kurdistan. From left to right: Ingvill Plesner - project manager HL-senteret, Fernand de Varennes - The UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues, Hogr Chato - Executive Manager of AIM/Alliance of Iraqi Minorities, John Packer prof. Uni. of Montreal.

The minority network

The project Inclusive Citizenship and Human Rights (www.inclusive-citizenship.no) compiles as a main part of the activities of the Minority Network, which is coordinated at HL-senteret.

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 project manager, Ingvill Thorson Plesner, is researcher at HL-senteret.

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The Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies

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.