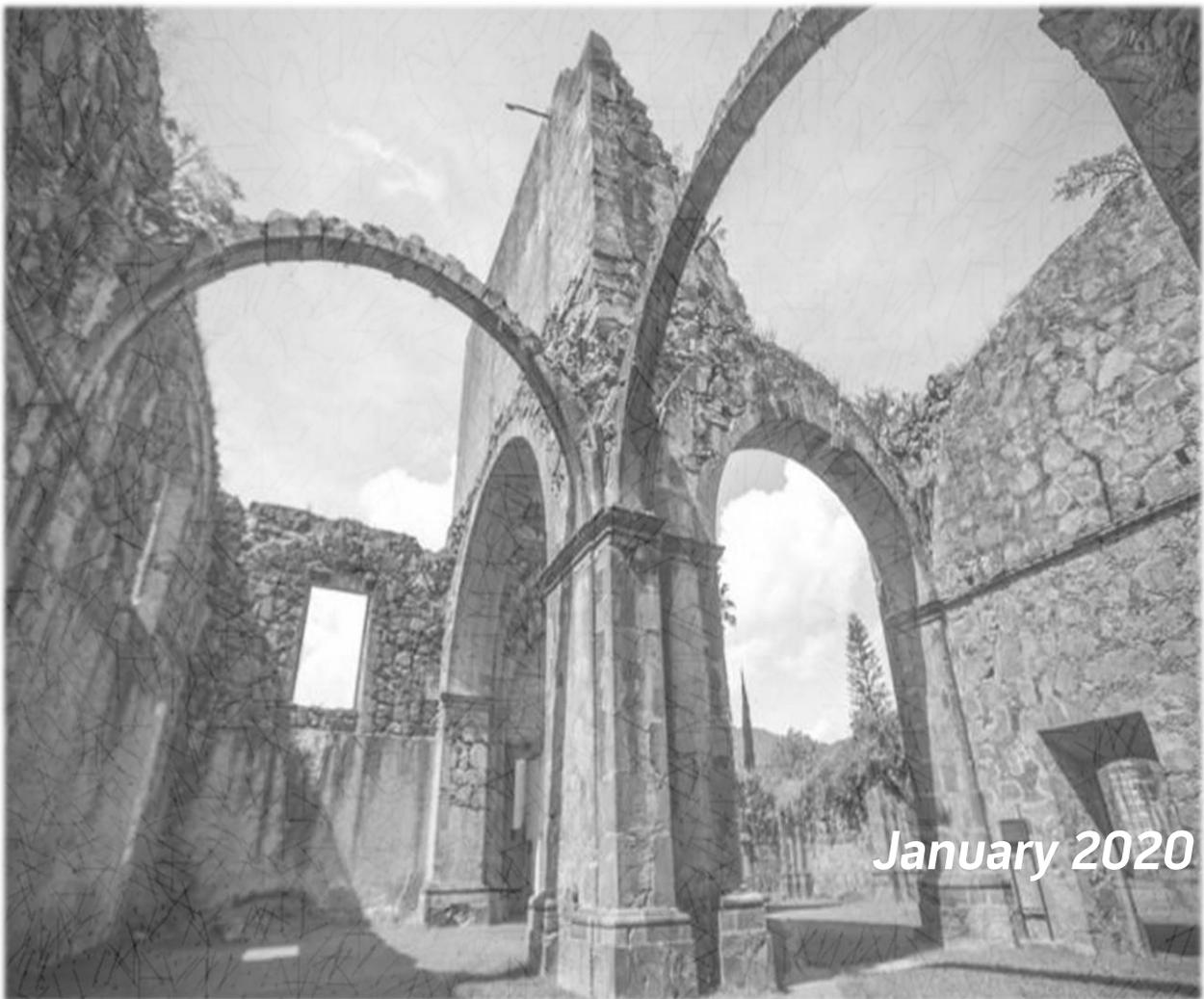




OBSERVATORY OF
RELIGIOUS FREEDOM
IN LATIN AMERICA

Annual Report 2019

The Multidimensionality of Religious Freedom



Contents

- Message from the Director 3
- The Role of the Inter-American System of Human Rights in the protection of the right to religious freedom..... 4
- About OLIRE..... 5
- Key events..... 6
- Incidents of physical violence as a violation of religious freedom 12
- Publications (English)..... 13
- Publications (Spanish) 14
- Indicators..... 15
- Presentations..... 15
- Impact opportunities..... 16

Message from the Director



In its second year of operations, the concept that perhaps best summarizes the work by the Observatory of Religious Freedom in Latin America – OLIRE – is “the multidimensionality of religious freedom.” With this concept, we allude to the fact that religious freedom has many dimensions that go far beyond political and academic debates on the relationship between religion and State, and conflicts between faiths. Religious freedom is also impacted by non-state actors, including certain illicit actors, peasant leaders, and social movements.

The OLIRE team, with support from its partners in the region, has been working on a titanic project, which analyses many of these dimensions, producing a large quantity of reports that have been presented at important academic forums, such as the *Red de Investigadores del Fenómeno Religioso* [Religious Researchers’ Network] in Mexico, and the International Studies Association. In addition, we have made contact with the representatives of various faith communities in the region, and provided them with our expertise and counsel. Our work has also made an impact on a political level. Our contribution to the report by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in the United Kingdom on the persecution of Christians was a great feat, as was our participation at the Schönblick Conference in Germany.

The outlook on religious freedom in the region is bleak, but there is hope. For example, we have taken note of the Public Policy on Freedom of Religion and Worship in the municipality of Manizales (Colombia), which functions as an effective regional example of the promotion of religious freedom. In addition, a legislative initiative for the promotion of religious freedom is being pushed forward in the state of Hidalgo, Mexico, and a compendium of best practices for the resolution and prevention of religious conflicts is being prepared.

In 2020 we will continue working towards the promotion of religious freedom in the region. Our goals include sustaining our efforts to document incidents of violation of religious freedom in our database of violent incidents, enhancing our knowledge of the dynamics that threaten religious freedom, and intensifying our interaction with the Inter-American System of Human Rights. In addition to this, we will be launching an online and face-to-face training about the operationalization of religious freedom.

I encourage you all to stay informed of our activities at OLIRE, and to actively contribute to the effort being made to document the state of religious freedom in the region.

Dr. Dennis P. Petri
Director
dpetri@olire.org

The Role of the Inter-American System of Human Rights in the protection of the right to religious freedom



Due to its status as a fundamental right, the right to religious freedom has a reasonably good protective framework in each country in the region and in various international instruments. In the inter-American context, the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man (1948), and the American Convention on Human Rights (1969) demonstrate that, inter alia, each person has the right to hold a religious belief freely, and to express and practice that belief in public and in private.

This inter-American framework includes the main protective agencies of fundamental rights, which have made reference to the right to religious freedom at different points in time. On the one hand, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights – the IACHR – has placed particular emphasis on producing recommendations, annual reports, and special reports. On the other hand, we have the I/A Court H.R., which may not have passed a judgement directly related to the right to religious freedom, but has indirectly developed, or mentioned in isolation, a judgement during the production of advisory opinions. In other words, in the majority of the indicated instances, and unlike the Universal System for the Protection of Human Rights, or the European System of Human Rights, both the IACHR and the I/A Court H.R. have alluded to the right to religious freedom, but without elaborating upon its content, scope, dimensions, or related rights.

As the body in charge of monitoring the general human rights situation, as well as the one responsible for the promotion and recommendation of appropriate measures which contribute to the protection of the Member States themselves, and also as the first agency to receive, analyses, and investigate individual requests, the analysis and improvement of visibility of the right to religious freedom in various contexts of human and social development in the region falls to the IACHR, as does the identification of the numerous scenarios within which the right to religious freedom could be restricted upon directly or indirectly.

Although it is undeniable that the recognition of the right to religious freedom as a human right is an accomplishment, relevant means are needed to make it effective. At the inter-American level, this right is usually considered from a limited perspective, neglecting its multidimensional character, and therefore implying that it is difficult for it to be taken into consideration in the framework of a comprehensive study of the core human rights in the region, which puts the improvement of the guarantees that allow their realization and effective enforcement at risk.

In this sense, one of the objectives of OLIRE is to promote an integrated approach to the right to religious freedom at an inter-American level, making the recognition of existing and potential infringements/violations of this right possible; so member States are encouraged to fully implement the national and international obligations undertaken by each of them, in all areas relating to the various aspects of the right to religious freedom.

Teresa Flores Ch.

About OLIRE

The Observatory of Religious Freedom in Latin America forms part of the Foundation Platform for Social Transformation, a non-profit organization registered in Voorburg, The Netherlands.

OLIRE is a platform for research, training, and advocacy, which has as its mission the promotion of religious freedom on the continent. It monitors and documents the position of vulnerable religious minorities whose rights are being infringed upon, looking to empower them so that they can increase their capacity for resilience in the face of hostilities and generate policy recommendations, which will enable them to improve their position when presenting them to decision makers.

We are therefore providing a space that allows an understanding and promotion of religious freedom from an academic, non-denominational, and non-partisan perspective, which makes it possible to strengthen the research of violations of religious freedom and the vulnerability of religious minorities in the region.

Our line of approach

Monitoring

OLIRE monitors the state of religious freedom in the region by documenting the incidents that violate religious freedom, and carrying out research related to the structural conditions that threaten it.

Empowering

Through the training of both people and organizations, particularly those that belong to religious minorities, we promote an improved understanding of the right to religious freedom, and an awareness of how to defend this right.

Influencing

We actively carry out advocacy work with the development of public policy recommendations for the effective protection of religious freedom, especially for religious minorities in different areas, and at all levels. We use means such as presentations to public and private organizations, podcasts, interviews, as well as other methods that enable us to inform decision makers.

Key events

- Training of the *Observatorio Ciudadano de Intolerancia Religiosa* [Citizen Observatory on Religious Intolerance], Pachuca, Mexico (08 January 2019)



- Workshop at the *Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social* [Centre for Research and Advanced Studies in Social Anthropology], Guadalajara, Mexico (15 January 2019)

EL CENTRO DE INVESTIGACIONES Y ESTUDIOS

EL CENTRO DE INVESTIGACIONES Y ESTUDIOS SUPERIORES EN ANTROPOLOGÍA SOCIAL (CIESAS) INVITA:

**SEMINARIO SOBRE RELIGIOSIDADES CONTEMPORÁNEAS
METODOLOGÍAS DE MONITOREO DE LA LIBERTAD
RELIGIOSA (QUINTA SESIÓN)**

PRESENTA:
Dennis P. Petri
(Director del Observatorio de Libertad Religiosa en América Latina)

COORDINAN:
Renée de la Torre
CIESAS Occidente
Cristina Gutiérrez Zúñiga
Universidad de Guadalajara
Rosario Ramírez
CIESAS Occidente
Arelly Medina
CIESAS Occidente

**MARTES 15 DE
ENERO DE 2019
17:00-20:00 HORAS**

**CIESAS
OCCIDENTE**
Auditorio Guillermo
de la Peña Topete
Av. España 1399
Colonia Moderna, 44190
Guadalajara, Mexico.

Informes y registro:
semreligiosidades@gmail.com

@CIESASOccide
f /CIESASOccidente
occidente.ciesas.edu.mx

CIESAS CONACYT



- Training of the *Centro para el Desarrollo del Liderazgo* [Leadership Development Centre], San Salvador, El Salvador (02 February 2019)



- Online training of the *Associação Reformada para Cultura e Ação Política*, [Reformed Association for Political Culture and Action], Recife, Brazil (07 February 2019)



- **Report for the Independent Review of the Bishop of Truro for the Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for persecuted Christians (12 April 2019)**

- **Commentary on the Public Policy for Religious Freedom in the municipality of Manizales, Colombia (26 July 2019)**



- Lecture at Hidalgo State Congress, Mexico (07 August 2019)




La bancada del Partido Encuentro Social Hidalgo de la LXIV Legislatura

Invitan a la:

Mesa Redonda

El Derecho Humano a la Libertad Religiosa en México, hoy.



Fecha: Miércoles 07 de Agosto, 2019
 Hora: 14:00 Horas
 Lugar: Congreso del Estado de Hidalgo
 Carretera México-Pachuca, Km. 84.5
 Colonia Carlos Roviroso
 Pachuca de Soto, Hgo.



- Training for the Inter-Religious Council in Hidalgo State, Mexico (08 August 2019)



- Refresher course training offered at the *Conferencia Episcopal Mexicana* [Episcopal Conference of Mexico], Cancún-Chetumal (07-08 October 2019)



- Participation in a session held at the Saint Toribio de Mogrovejo Catholic University, Chiclayo, Peru (29 October 2019)



- **Keynote lecture and workshop at the Schönblick Conference, Schwäbisch Gmünd, Germany (10-13 November 2019)**



- **Presentation of research report at the International Studies Association, St. Louis, United States (22-23 November 2019)**

Incidents of physical violence as a violation of religious freedom

The core mission of OLIRE is to monitor the state of religious freedom in the region. Our research into religious freedom can be divided globally into two areas. The first area is the documentation of incidents of physical violence of violation of religious freedom. The second area is the analysis of other types of violence, such as discrimination, social exclusion, and various forms of pressure.

The tool we are using for the documentation of incidents of physical violence as a violation of religious freedom, is the [Violent Incidents Database-VID](#). This database is updated regularly by the OLIRE team in collaboration with our partners in the region, in accordance with specified [reference criteria](#).¹

During 2019 a number of violent incidents were identified in the region, the majority of which involved members of Christian denominations (Catholic and/or Protestant). However, it is possible that there are cases linked to other religious denominations that were not reported.

Below, we detail the number of incidents registered on our platform. Given that this database is updated permanently, it is likely that other cases/countries in the region will be included subsequently:

Table 1: Incidents of violence (January to December 2019)

Countries	Murders	Destruction or attempts to destroy churches or Christian buildings	Closed churches or Christian buildings	Arrests	Sentences	Kidnappings	Sexual assaults
Argentina	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Chile	0	19	0	0	0	0	0
Colombia	16	40	0	0	6	7	10
Cuba	0	2	1	10	3	0	0
Guatemala	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mexico	7	12	1	20	2	7	0
Nicaragua	0	5	0	3	0	0	0
Venezuela	0	4	0	2	1	1	0

Source: OLIRE, Violent Incidents Database - VID

<https://olire.org/es/monitorear/base-de-datos-de-incidentes-violentos/>

¹ It is important to emphasise that the Observatory team does not have the means to verify each reported incident. If the users or our collaborators detect that the given information is incomplete or not entirely correct after it has been entered in the database, it can be removed and/or modified.

Table 2: Incidents of violence (January to December 2019)

Countries	Forced marriages	Other physical attacks	Death threats	Christian houses attacked	Christian shops or businesses attacked	Forced to flee from home	Forced to flee country
Argentina	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Chile	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Colombia	0	10	40	3	3	233	60
Cuba	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Guatemala	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mexico	0	8	9	2	5	105	15
Nicaragua	0	34	9	0	0	0	2
Venezuela	0	2	4	1	1	0	3

Source: OLIRE, Violent Incidents Database - VID

<https://olire.org/es/monitorear/base-de-datos-de-incidentes-violentos/>

Publications (English)

- [Policy Brief: Colombia](#) (Ensuring the Fundamental Rights of Faith Adherents)
- [Scores of Latin American Countries on Religious Freedom Assessment Tools](#)
- [Organized crime in Colombia: What does it mean for religious minorities?](#)
- [Manual for searching for incidents – Violent Incidents Database](#)
- [Country Overviews and Case Studies of Mexico, Colombia, and Cuba](#) (Briefing prepared for the Independent Review of the Bishop of Truro for the UK Foreign Secretary of Foreign and Commonwealth Office Support for Persecuted Christians)
- [Incident registration form](#)
- [Radiography of Christianity in Latin America](#)
- [The maras: violence, instability and religious conversion in El Salvador](#)
- [General overview of persecution of Christians in Latin America](#)
- [Cuba: New names, but the same approach](#)
- [Bolivia: Will new legislation criminalize missionary activity?](#)
- [L'élection présidentielle du Salvador de 2019 : questions pour le développement démocratique](#)
- [Religious Freedom in Latin America – Lecture at Regent's Park College, Oxford – 20 March 2017](#)
- [Revisiting Sphere Sovereignty To Interpret Restrictions On Religious Freedom](#)
- [Transcript – Challenges to Religious Freedom in the Americas – Hearing before the Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere of the Committee on Foreign Affairs – US House of Representatives](#)
- [“Challenges to religious freedom in the Americas” – Testimony before the Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, House Committee on Foreign Affairs](#)

Publications (Spanish)

- [Solicitud de audiencia temática ante la Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos \(CIDH\)](#) (Protección de los derechos fundamentales de líderes religiosos en zonas violentas y/o de conflicto en México)
- [La regulación de la religión por el crimen organizado: caso de Nuevo León y Tamaulipas](#) (Ponencia presentada en el XXII Encuentro de la Red de Investigadores del Fenómeno Religioso en México (RIFREM), Creel, Chihuahua, México, 5-8 de junio de 2019)
- [Violaciones a la libertad religiosa: Criterios para el reporte de incidentes](#)
- [Reporte sobre libertad religiosa en México](#) (Herramientas de evaluación y denuncia de violaciones de la libertad religiosa)
- [Libertad religiosa, libertad de culto y laicismo](#) (Lectura de la libertad religiosa en el contexto mexicano del siglo 21)
- [Libertad Religiosa: Marco Normativo Constitucional en América Latina](#)
- [Manual de búsqueda de incidentes](#)
- [Guía especializada sobre la protección a mi religión](#)
- [Guía especializada sobre la denuncia de la vulneración de derechos humanos por razones de fe](#)
- [Formato para denuncias](#)
- [Formato de registro de incidentes](#)
- [El narcotráfico como motor de persecución para los cristianos en México. Asunto pendiente para las autoridades gubernamentales](#)
- [Libro de códigos de Religión y Estado \[Religion and State, RAS\]: Ronda 3](#) (Traducido al español por el Observatorio de Libertad Religiosa en América Latina)
- [Radiografía del cristianismo en América Latina](#)
- [Incidentes violentos de persecución de cristianos en América Latina en el 2017](#)
- [Las maras: violencia, inestabilidad y conversión religiosa en El Salvador](#)
- [Visión general sobre la persecución de cristianos en América Latina](#)
- [Cuba: Nombres nuevos, pero la misma línea](#)
- [Bolivia: ¿Criminalizará la nueva legislación la actividad misionera?](#)
- [Notas para comprender la Libertad Religiosa en México: La libertad religiosa como derecho humano en el ordenamiento jurídico mexicano](#)
- [Notas para comprender la Libertad Religiosa en México: La protección de la libertad religiosa como límite a la influencia del crimen organizado](#)
- [Notas para comprender la Libertad Religiosa en México: Los pueblos indígenas como sujetos de derecho](#)
- [Estándares sobre la protección del Derecho a la Libertad Religiosa: Comunidades Indígenas en México](#)
- [Estándares Interamericanos de Protección de la Libertad Religiosa](#)
- [Estado laico vs Estado confesional](#)
- [Informe sobre la libertad de religión en América Latina](#)

Indicators

The Observatory of Religious Freedom in Latin America provides the following indicators describing the state of religious freedom in Latin America:

- A table of the scores of Latin American countries on the most used Religious Freedom Assessment Tools, which are quantitative tools that measure aspects of religious freedom. The table can be downloaded [here](#).
- A table of the constitutional provisions for religious freedom in Latin American countries. Available [here](#).
- Data from the Religion and State Project by Professor Jonathan Fox at Bar-Ilan University (Israel), which describes government involvement in religion. The codebook and dataset can be downloaded [here](#). OLIRE has translated its codebook into Spanish, which can be downloaded [here](#).
- Our own Violent Incidents Database, which records all known incidents of violations of religious freedom in Latin America. Read more [here](#).

Presentations

- [“Fazit Kongress „Christenverfolgung Heute” – Lateinamerika](#)
- [Curso-Taller sobre “Libertad religiosa en México”, 7-8 de octubre de 2019](#)
- [Breve comentario sobre la Política Pública de Libertad Religiosa de Manizales \(Colombia\)](#)
- [Seminario sobre Religiosidades Contemporáneas – Quinta sesión – Parte 1/3](#)
- [Seminario sobre Religiosidades Contemporáneas – Quinta sesión – Parte 2/3](#)
- [Seminario sobre Religiosidades Contemporáneas – Quinta sesión – Parte 3/3](#)
- [Entrevista sobre Libertad Religiosa en América Latina con Puertas Abiertas](#)
- [Director de Plataforma C habla de intolerancia religiosa en la Cámara de Diputados de México](#)
- [Uziel Santana – Foro Economía, Diplomacia e Integridad](#)
- [Dennis P. Petri – Religious Freedom Assessment Tools](#)
- [Subcommittee Hearing: Challenges to Religious Freedom in the Americas](#)
- [Dennis Petri about religious freedom in Mexico \(1/3\)](#)
- [Dennis Petri about religious freedom in Mexico \(2/3\)](#)
- [Dennis Petri about religious freedom in Mexico \(3/3\)](#)
- [Lecture of Dennis P. Petri at Regent’s Park College, Oxford](#)

Impact opportunities

- Presentation and discussion of paper “Monitoring instruments of religious freedom” at a meeting of the Seminario sobre Religiosidades Contemporáneas, Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social (CIESAS) Unidad Occidente, Guadalajara, Jalisco (Mexico), 15 January 2019.
- Presentation and discussion of paper “La regulación de la religión por el crimen organizado: caso de Nuevo León y Tamaulipas” at the XXII Meeting of the Red de Investigadores del Fenómeno Religioso en México, 5-8 June 2019 in Creel, Chihuahua, Mexico.
- Presentation on “Religious Freedom in Latin America”, The Bishop of Truro’s Independent Review for the UK Foreign Secretary of Foreign and Commonwealth Office Support for Persecuted Christians, 12 April 2019.
- Input provided for the independent review of the foreign policy of the United Kingdom regarding persecution of Christians (written and oral testimonies submitted April-June 2019)
- Lecture on “The human right of religious freedom in Mexico today”, Congress of the State of Hidalgo, Mexico, 7 August 2019.
- Keynote conference “The Declining Religious Freedom in Latin America – The increasing persecution of Christians” and workshop “The Persecution of Christians in Latin America – a practical and methodological investigation/What really helps?” at Schönblick Kongress, 10-13 November 2019 in Schwäbisch Gmünd, Germany.
- Presentation and discussion of paper “The regulation of religion by organized crime: conceptualization of an underexplored phenomenon based on empirical evidence from northeast Mexico” at the International Studies Association Midwest Conference, in Saint-Louis, Missouri, 22-23 November 2019.
- Publication of the book *Conceptual tools to assess religious freedom in Latin America* [working title], with J.B. Arauz Cantón (2020, forthcoming) at the Observatory of Religious Freedom in Latin America.
- Publication of book chapter “Revisiting Sphere Sovereignty to Interpret Restrictions on Religious Freedom”, in G. Buijs & S. Polinder (eds.). *Christianity and World Affairs* (pp. 240-262), Brill with Frans Veerman, 2020).
- Presentation and discussion of paper “La participación política de actores religiosos en América Latina: retos para la neutralidad del Estado” at the Latin American Studies Association, annual conference, in Guadalajara, Mexico, 13-16 May 2020.

<https://olire.org/es/>
<https://olire.org>

Contact email
info@olire.org

