

Social Science Baha

Thank you Madame Chair. On behalf of Social Science Baha, I will highlight interreligious relations in Nepal concerning the country's Muslim community. The Muslim community has long contributed to Nepal's social fabric. As artisans, scholars, and active participants in social and cultural life. These contributions have gone some way in encouraging reciprocal trust with the majority Hindu community, however, challenges persist. Although Nepal defines itself as constitutionally secular, the Muslim community, roughly 5.1% of the population, continues to face barriers to fully enjoying their right to freedom of religion, as protected under Article 18 of the ICCPR, to which Nepal is a party. For instance, the Muslim community continues to experience difficulty in securing land for burial. In the past, their religious needs have threatened coexistence in some areas of districts, like [inaudible]. Such and other challenges persist, despite the creation of constitutional bodies, such as the Muslim Commission and the Inclusion Commission. Tensions over religious spaces are situated within a broader context of interfaith dynamics, where initiatives, like community radio, that engage minority groups, including Muslims, have shown potential to incubate cohesion. In this context, I would like to offer two recommendations to Nepal. First, increase funding and capacity for the Muslim and Inclusion Commission. Second, ensure access to burial grounds by allocating land in consultation with local communities. Thank you.