

Activity Report – ILN Idraak (Second Session)

In continuation to the First Session of ILN-Idraak held on Sunday 24th April, 2022, the Second Session of ILN-Idraak held on Sunday 29th May, 2022. Mr. Fida Ur Rahman, ILN Alumnus, shared a brief and critical study about the status of religious freedom in Muslim-majority countries and raised few serious questions for further discussion.

A presentation was given on the following issues: -

1. Organized and systematic persecution of Shi'i community that is structurally imbedded in countries like Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Malaysia, Bahrain, Nigeria, Afghanistan etc.
2. The ongoing socio-economic marginalization and persecution of the *Ahmedi* community in Pakistan and Malaysia.
3. The discriminatory treatment, derogatory and intolerant attitude of masses towards the Christians and Jews that exist in countries like Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Egypt, Sudan etc.
4. The continuous state restrictions and limitations on religious activities, religious literature and religious festivals in Central Asian Republics like Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan etc.
5. The issue of Sunni persecution in Shi'i majority countries like Iran, Syria etc.
6. The religious restrictions and moral policing in the name of Public Order and Morality in Iran, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Nigeria etc. that restrict individual choices regarding dress, moral code in public space etc.

At the end of the presentation, the audience critically discussed the following issues: -

1. The relationship of state and religion, and its consequences in shape of restricted and limited religious freedom. Moreover, state's exploitation of religion for vested political interests just like it recently happened in Pakistan when the extremist organizations like *Tehreek-i-Labaik* Pakistan (TLP) was used for pressurizing an elected civilian government.
2. Impacts of colonization and decolonization on the religious freedom. The issue of blasphemy laws that was introduced and coded in the colonial era in the subcontinent and Arab countries and its dire consequences.
3. Role of Salafism in promotion of anti-Shi'i and anti-Semitic mentality in Muslim-majority countries and its intrinsic relationship with the power struggle between Saudi Arabia and Iran in the Middle East and beyond. The issue of dissemination of intolerant literature by both countries that estranges the relationship between Shi'i and Sunni communities.

Formation of Future Plan:

A consultative meeting was also conducted, in which Mr. Ali Salman, CEO Islam and Liberty Network, proposed the idea of extending the activities of ILN to educational institution ranging from conduction of seminars and workshops for students to teacher trainings and research workshops. It was unanimously decided to start contacting the heads of the educational and research institutions so that the idea is formally materialized after the summer vacations.