



## EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

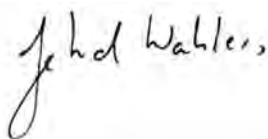
The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung's work around the world constantly provides us with first-hand experience of the situation regarding religious freedoms and the position of Christians in many countries. A recent survey on the situation of Christians which was carried out in around 40 of our field offices produced a very varied picture. The results of this survey are summarised in four articles in this edition of the International Reports.

In many countries, Christians are not only harried, but also harassed and at times persecuted. In communist countries such as China and Vietnam they are systematically policed and discriminated against. In Islamic countries such as Pakistan, Yemen or – in particular – Iraq, their religious freedom is undermined by Sharia law. They continually run the risk of paying for their religious beliefs with their lives. In Egypt there frequently are instances of extreme violence against Coptic Christians and their churches. In Turkey, where Christian churches have no legal status, the basic right to religious freedom is often a mockery. In many parts of India, Christians have long been subjected to the aggression of fanatical Hindu nationalists. And even in predominantly Buddhist countries such as Laos or Sri Lanka there have been many attacks on Christians.

However, we have also received positive reports of how Christians are an integrative factor within societies which are dominated by other religions. This is particularly noticeable in countries which are unable or unwilling to look after the welfare of their citizens. For many of these people, the work of the Christian churches and the personal commitment of countless Christians is often their last and only hope. And we should not forget that most attacks on Christians cannot be laid at the door of the country or population as a whole. They are usually the result of regional factors and are very often rooted in ethnic or

social issues. In large countries such as India or Nigeria it is often the case that Christians suffer violence in one place while in another area they are able to live peacefully alongside or amongst the general population. For example, after the New Year's Eve attacks which took place in Egypt, some Muslims positioned themselves in a way to protect their Coptic fellow citizens at prayer.

Freedom of belief and conscience cannot be guaranteed by countries which are unwilling to show tolerance towards other "foreign" religions and certainly not by those which believe they can run a theocracy. Religious freedom can only be guaranteed by countries which are based on the fundamental principles of a free democratic legal and constitutional structure. This is what we are working for around the world, motivated in part by the fact that it is only in countries which offer all their citizens equal religious freedoms that Christians can freely live and follow their faith.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gerhard Wahlers". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'G'.

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Deputy Secretary General

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