**Asian countries face rising threat of mass killings, warns new survey**

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Minorities in Afghanistan and China face a heightened risk of mass violence and persecution, according to this year's internationally acclaimed Peoples under Threat index, produced by Minority Rights Group International (MRG).

Pakistan and Burma also remained among the top ten countries where minorities are under critical threat. Some of the region’s most vulnerable communities include, non-Sunni Muslims and ethnic Hazaras in Pakistan and Afghanistan, Muslim Rohingyas in Burma and China’s persecuted Uighur minority.

‘This year saw a worrying spike in attacks on minorities in Afghanistan, where fighting between the Taliban and security forces continues to escalate,’ said Mark Lattimer, MRG’s Executive Director. ‘Hazara and Shi’a still face targeted killings on a mass scale, raising serious concerns about the future of Afghanistan’s minorities.’

**Afghanistan** climbed to number four on this year’s *Peoples Under Threat* index. Civilian casualties reached record levels in 2014, rising 22 per cent overall compared with the previous year and including nearly 3,700 deaths, according to the UN mission.

In another disturbing development, Asian superpower **China** jumped 15 places to number 29 in the index. This is largely a reflection of its treatment of the oppressed Muslim Uighur minority in the Xinjiang region, where there was a severe escalation in tactics used by militants calling for independence from China. Over 200 people were killed in terrorist attacks, hundreds were detained in mass arrests and dozens of death sentences handed down over the past year.

‘Unfortunately the Chinese government has refused to address the underlying legacy of discrimination and exclusion affecting its Uighur minority,’ said Lattimer. ‘Instead it has imposed fresh restrictions on free association and religious activities. The government’s insistence on labelling Uighur human rights activists as terrorists has further thwarted attempts to improve the situation.’

Intended as an early warning tool, the *Peoples under Threat* index seeks to identify peoples or groups that are most under threat of genocide, mass killing or violent repression in 2015. In previous years it has been widely used or cited by UN officials and other human rights and conflict prevention practitioners, and is available as an [**online map**](http://peoplesunderthreat.org/).

**Pakistan** kept its spot as number seven on the index, reflecting the government’s failure to curtail violence and hate speech towards religious minorities. Extremist groups continue to perpetrate mass killings with apparent impunity, with MRG reporting last June that some 700 Shi’a had been killed over the previous year. Ahmadis, Christians and Hindus have also been targeted.

**Burma**, a country emerging from decades of military rule, is close behind at number eight on the global ranking. Renewed conflict in northern Burma’s Kokang region has cast doubt on the government’s commitment to democratic reform, while Muslim Rohingyas face persistent threats of communal riots. The prospect of democratic elections, scheduled for later this year, has raised dim hopes for the country’s ethnic minorities.

The persecution of minorities across Asia has significant regional implications as thousands of people, including Muslim Rohingyas from Burma and Uighurs from China, are estimated to have fled their countries last year. Many fall into the clutches of unscrupulous trafficking networks, amplifying human rights and protection challenges for other Asian countries, including Thailand, Malaysia and Australia.

**Interview opportunities:**

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• Visit MRG's online map which visualizes data from the Peoples under Threat index at [www.peoplesunderthreat.org](http://www.peoplesunderthreat.org/). View the map by year or by country, and find links to reports, press releases and further information on the communities under threat.

• Download the full Peoples under Threat survey, with a description of how it is compiled.

• Minority Rights Group International is the leading international human rights organization working to secure the rights of ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities and indigenous peoples. We work with more than 150 partners in over 50 countries.

**For more information, to receive an embargoed copy of the Peoples under Threat index and map, or to arrange interviews please contact:**

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