

COMECE & Aid to the Church in Need (EU Office) online event

## Targeting vulnerable religious communities through sexual violence and exploitation of women

Wednesday 30 June 2021, 11.00-12.45 (CEST)

### Concept

Jihadist terrorism Jihadist terrorism has shifted the focus of its operations to sub-Saharan and Indian Africa, and to the regions of Asia bordering the equator, while continuing its presence in the Middle East. The domination and violent conquest of this wide strip of land by Jihadist extremism through terror and violence, destabilising fragile states and seizing of the territory of failed states, has a dimension that affects women as a group exposed to sexual violence and exploitation. In many cases, these women belong to vulnerable religious communities in places where Jihadist extremism abuses and accentuates religious differences, socio-economic conditions and the absence of the state to capture women, sell them or use them as sex slaves.

This is not just exploitation of women, but an attack on the entire community to which they belong. Article 7 of the International Criminal Court's Statute considers a crime against humanity, among others: forced pregnancy, rape, sexual slavery and enslavement, including human trafficking, as well as any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity, particularly when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, but also the persecution against any identifiable group on religious grounds.

This event wants to delve into the reality that women from vulnerable religious communities' experience, and the drama they suffer when they are subjected to such crimes because they are women and also members of a persecuted religious community.

### Programme

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| 11:00 – 11:10 | <b>Fr Manuel Barrios Prieto</b> , <i>General Secretary of COMECE</i> . Welcoming.   |
| 11:10 – 11:25 | <b>Eamon Gilmore</b> , <i>EU Special Representative for Human Rights</i>  |
| 11:25 – 11:40 | <b>Tabassum Youssaf</b> , <i>Lawyer, specialists in cases of abduction and sexual enslavement of women and girls, Karachi (Pakistan)</i> . Forced conversion and sexual enslavement of Hindu and Christian women in Pakistan. |
| 11:40 – 11:55 | <b>Fr Joseph Bature Fidelis</b> , <i>Clinical Psychologist, Maiduguri (Nigeria)</i> , The trauma of Christian women in Nigeria as victims of sexual exploitation by jihadists.  |
| 11:55 – 12:10 | <b>Maria Rumman</b> , <i>Talitha Khum Network, Damascus (Syria)</i> . Sold as sexual slaves: women of religious communities as commodities in the Middle East.  |
| 12:10 – 12:35 | Q & A   |
| 12:35 – 12:45 | Conclusions: <b>Marcela Szymanski</b> , <i>ACN (EU office)</i> . Editor of the <i>International Religious Freedom Report</i>  |

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