

The Reasons for the Growth of Interreligious Tension in Kenya

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Muslims in Kenya, according to various estimates account for about 11% of the population (about 4.3 million), while Christianity of different directions is professed by approximately 83 %. The Islamic community in Kenya has never characterized by the presence of conflict potential, trends towards radicalization. The only exceptions are the Pakistani movement "Tabligh" founded in Nairobi , among other cities in eastern Africa, and the Islamic Party of Kenya. Both organizations were quite few in number and existed since the mid 90's to early 2000's. However, now it becomes commonly known that Islam in Kenya is radicalising. In our opinion, this is due to two main internal and external reasons.

One of the decisive factors that have prevented the possibility of tension in Christiano - Muslim relationship was the formalization in the Constitution of Kenya 1963 (after independence) the legal status of Islamic Courts - " kadi courts " - for the Muslim population. However , the mechanism of functioning of these courts has caused disapproval on the part of some Muslims . Thus, it was assumed that these courts will be functioning only in the regions where the vast number of the population are muslims - in the north and north- east of the country. So other Muslims were not included in this system. In addition, there wasn't any demarcation between religious and civil status of these courts. During the 80s a number of attempts implemeted to limit the power of the Islamic Courts . It is interesting that at the level of distribution of senior positions, there was also a " inner-islamic conflict" : a small number of Shiites living in Kenya opposed the Sunni destination for all leadership positions .

In 2005, the President of Kenya, Mwai Kibaki tried to adopt a new Constitution , including again issues about restriction the jurisdiction of Islamic courts. At the same time began to appear the views of some Christian activists to abolish the Islamic courts as such. The document was rejected. It is worth saying that the main question on that referendum was not a question of Islamic Courts , but the question about the appearance of the post of prime minister. Until the spring of 2013 the political opposition was not in the sphere of the Christian- Muslim relations , but in the sphere of the confrontation between the two political forces led by Mwai Kibaki and Raila Odinga Amolo , graduated from the formation of a coalition government under the leadership of R.A. Odinga . Thus, the question of the status of the Islamic Courts became a sort of political tool in the struggle for the support of the presidential and parliamentary elections. And the implementation or non-implementation of the promises to increase or decrease their role has led in turn to increased negative rhetoric on the part of the Christian and Muslim communities. Against this background, the presence of unresolved legal gaps with respect to the Islamic Courts also doesn't tends to reduce social tensions.

As for the external factor, it is associated with the activation of the Islamist group " Al-Shabab " in the South Somalia. It is reflected in the increasing number of terrorist attacks in Kenya. And here it is important to note two main points. First, the negative image created by the Somali organization carries over to the perception of Kenyan Muslims, Christians. Secondly, we have to take into account the appearance of small armed groups , " Al-Shabab " in Kenya , in the which activities Kenyans take part in. Due to these issues we also can not speak about the positive future prospects .

Thus, within the framework of this report I'd like to provide a detailed analysis of these two factors decisively influence on the growth of interreligious tension in Kenya.