

Brussels, 20th March 2019

Visit of Jan Figel to India and debriefing with Indian Ambassador in Brussels

9th-12th of February 2019

Jan Figel attended from the 4th to 7 February 2019 two academic conferences in Bangalore and Mumbai. He then extended his visit to New Delhi from 7-9 February 2019 (see agenda in annex) where he held bilateral meetings with the [REDACTED] Ministry of State for Minority Affairs and with [REDACTED] of the National Commission for Minorities. Official meetings on a higher level (Minister or MoS) were not possible as these officials were out of Delhi.

Jan Figel visited places of worship and met with representatives of a number of religions and denominations including Hindu, Muslim, Catholic, Evangelical, Buddhist, Sikh and Jain faiths and with a representative of a Humanist organisation (IHEU). He also met a delegation of the Zoroastrians and representatives of the office of the Dalai Lama. He debriefed Ambassadors and Political Counsellors of EU Member State Representations.

[REDACTED]

Civil society and religious communities warmly welcomed the visit of the Special Envoy as this was a first in terms of an official EU visit dealing with Freedom of Religion or Belief. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The Special Envoy recommends to keep the dialogue running with authorities in India but also in Brussels, around FoRB for all. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The EU should consider to offer support to interreligious initiatives and dialogue, should seek avenues to engage with the police and contribute to develop capacity. Culture, youth and education are other areas where EU should invest to spread messages of respect and tolerance. Cooperation with the academia is another promising area, engaging teachers and the youth.

Details

National Commission for Minorities

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] The Commission is fully independent body and is itself multi-religious. The members are appointed by the government. Normally a decision by the Commission is final as they have “quasi-judicial” powers; however, if the grieving parties don’t comply, then it is referred to the courts. 18 States have constituted their own Commissions for Minorities. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

On the affirmative actions, the following points were made. In India 250 million people are considered minorities, the majority are Muslims. Among them very good results are registered in education. The drop out rate fell from 78% percent down to 32% . Muslim girls are encouraged to be educated and they do succeed. Muslims occupy an increasing number of posts in the Indian Administrative services. In India there is good mutual understanding between the communities.

[REDACTED], Ministry of Minority Affairs

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] The Ministry of Minorities deals with the welfare of the minorities and therefore focuses on education, livelihood, health, infrastructure etc . Special attention is put on women. The policy line is to "bring uniformity if there are disparities". The Cabinet Minister of this Ministry is also from a minority community. This Ministry consults with the respective communities prior to framing policies. It prepares welfare schemes (targeting hostels, hospitals, schools, skill centres etc). Communities are encouraged to approach this Ministry to dialogue and share their concerns. For the tribal community there is a separate Ministry handling their affairs.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Meeting civil society representatives - EU Residence

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

After listening to all the representatives, EU Special Envoy Figel highlighted the importance of ensuring the rule of law and guaranteeing justice to all people. He pointed out that all citizens should be treated as equal, in order to promote the participation of all, and the assimilation of none. In this sense, talking about communities instead of minorities could be a much more constructive approach. In front of a rise in radicalisation, allies become even more important: and India can count on the EU in this and other issues.

Discussion with EU Heads of Missions. J. Figel presented his mandate and his first assessment of the situation. There was agreement that the trends are negative and the number of small incidents is growing. Working with the Police – addressing their capacity to prevent and react - seemed an interesting entry point, noting that this was also part of the recommendations of the last Report of the EP Intergroup on FoRB. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Visit to a Jain temple and meeting with Jain leaders. A very articulated ceremony was organized to welcome the SE. Jain defined themselves as a ultra-minority, and presented the key elements of their ancient religion, noting that you cannot understand Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity without understanding Jainism. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Meeting with Rev. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Meeting with [REDACTED], professor and author. A promising exchange took place with this brilliant academic of Muslim affiliation, well known internationally . [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]