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Right to freedom of religion or belief in Nepal

The Constituent Assembly of Nepal is tasked with creating 'a political system that fully complies with universally accepted fundamental human rights'. This includes the drafting of a new Constitution which, when promulgated, will finalise Nepal's transition from Hindu monarchy to secular democracy. Accordingly, the right to freedom of religion or belief should be strongly protected in the new Constitution.

Nepal is a state party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Article 18 of which provides for 'the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion'. This includes a person's 'freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice', interpreted by General Comment 22 of the UN Human Rights Committee as necessarily including the right 'to replace one's current religion or belief with another or adopt atheistic views' (clause 5). General Comment 22 also narrowly restricts the permissible limitations to this right.

To what extent has the Commission engaged with the Constituent Assembly of Nepal on the Constitution-drafting process? Will the Commission urge the Government of Nepal to ensure that the new Constitution is promulgated in a timely manner and that it protects all fundamental human rights, including the right to freedom of religion or belief, in line with the ICCPR?