



Surveying the Landscape of International Religious Freedom Policy

2019

Religious Freedom Institute

The Religious Freedom Institute is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization committed to achieving broad acceptance of religious liberty as a fundamental human right, the cornerstone of a successful society, and a source of national and international security.

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Holding a PhD in History from the University of North Carolina, Farr is a senior fellow at the Institute for Studies of Religion at Baylor University. He serves as a consultant to the U.S. Catholic Bishops Committee on International Justice and Peace; on the boards of the Institute on Religion and Democracy, Christian Solidarity Worldwide-USA, and Saint John Paul the Great Catholic High School; and on the boards of advisors of the Alexander Hamilton Society and the National Museum of American Religion. Farr teaches regularly at the U.S. Foreign Service Institute.

Arguments from his 2008 book, *World of Faith and Freedom: Why International Religious Freedom is Vital to American National Security* (Oxford University Press), have shaped U.S. religious freedom legislation and foreign policy.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Freedom of religion was recognized as a fundamental human right in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966). It has begun to receive significantly more attention, however, since 1998 when the United States prioritized the promotion and defense of international religious freedom through its foreign policy with the passage of the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA). Since IRFA was enacted, violations of religious freedom have received greater attention by an increasing number of multilateral organizations such as the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU), and more than a dozen countries identify the promotion of international religious freedom as a core element of their foreign policy.

Despite over twenty years of international religious freedom policy actions, there has never been a comprehensive survey of these initiatives. This landscape report aims to fill this gap by presenting a picture of how extensive these efforts have become during this timeframe. The International Religious Freedom Policy Action Team at the Religious Freedom Institute (RFI) produced this report.

RFI is committed to achieving broad acceptance of religious liberty as a fundamental human right, the cornerstone of a successful society, and a source of national and international security. RFI aims to convince stakeholders in select regions that religious freedom can help them achieve their own goals—political, economic, strategic, and religious. Each regional action team has a

presence in its geographic area, which provides important proximity to key stakeholders who are vital to advancing religious freedom in their respective societies.¹

This report has three complementary goals:

1. To provide an account of current policy, advocacy, and programming efforts in support of international religious freedom;
2. To equip ministries of foreign affairs and multilateral organizations with relevant information to facilitate more effective coordination among them; and,
3. To inform RFI's research and development of new religious freedom training modules for diplomats, parliamentarians, and advocates.

This report provides a survey of the policy, advocacy, and programming activities by 18 countries and 5 multilateral bodies, both international bodies such as the UN and Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) as well as religious freedom-specific bodies, notably the International Contact Group on Freedom of Religion and Belief. The like-minded countries whose international religious freedom policy activities are illustrated in this report share a number of characteristics: they are broadly democratically oriented, committed to defending freedom of religion as expressed in international covenants such as the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) and International Convention of Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and actively advance international religious freedom to varying degrees through policy actions,

“ RFI is committed to achieving broad acceptance of religious liberty as a fundamental human right, the cornerstone of a successful society, and a source of national and international security. ”

In the next section titled, “What Do We Mean by Religious Freedom?” we explain how RFI understands religious freedom and the various approaches that international religious freedom policy actors can adopt to advance it.

This report provides an overview of diplomatic efforts undertaken to date, which have included a wide array of policy actions, such as establishing special envoys and ambassadors to advance religious freedom; advocacy efforts, such as bilateral and multilateral engagement with countries in which religious freedom is being undermined; and, on-the-ground programming with NGO partners that seeks to address some of the root causes of religious persecution as well as its immediate impact on the persecuted. The report also examines the degree to which various countries and multilateral bodies have incorporated training on religious freedom, and the role of religion in international relations, into their professional programs at their foreign service institutes and related academies.

Finally, the report focuses on the degree of multilateral engagement, both between countries and in concert with bodies such as the OSCE, UN, and EU. In examining these activities, a clear picture emerges of deepening collaboration between countries and within multilateral fora. This enhanced cooperation over the past 5-7 years is evinced by the emergence of a growing number of collaborative bodies including the

International Contact Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief (ICG), the International Panel of Parliamentarians on Freedom of Religion and Belief (IPPFoRB), and the Transatlantic Policy Network on Religion and Diplomacy (TPNRD).

The report examines international religious freedom policy through a governmental and foreign policy lens. It therefore does not include an array of important activities that non-governmental organizations, academic institutes, and research centers undertake. Such organizations are doing admirable work in fostering better understanding of international religious freedom policy and openly advocating for the advance of religious freedom around the globe. Though, beyond its general scope, we elected to include a summary of the activities of the IPPFoRB in the report. Our decision was based on the role parliamentarians have in shaping foreign policy, by proposing policy solutions to their own governments and undertaking their own diplomatic efforts, among others.

Note that this report is descriptive rather than analytical and illustrative rather than exhaustive. Given that any given country's foreign policy is advanced through an ever-evolving mixture of both public and private diplomacy and programming activities, RFI has necessarily focused on publicly available sources in determining the extent of international religious freedom policy promotion. Meaning, there are likely to be some omissions in our reporting, but in the interest of being illustrative we hope that the

picture this report paints is of value not only to foreign policy actors, but also to academics, parliamentarians, and religious freedom advocates.

The report does not offer any in-depth analysis of the value or efficacy of any of the policy, advocacy, or programmatic approaches employed by the governments and multilateral bodies surveyed. This is beyond its scope and is a task requiring more thorough qualitative and quantitative research at a future date, perhaps through a methodology employing multiple case studies.

As discussed in the methodology section below, we worked through the ICG to canvass its members on their government's international religious freedom policy activities. We asked ICG member governments to complete an online survey responding to research questions that would indicate the extent of their international

religious freedom policy, advocacy, and programming activities. The survey was active online from November 2018 through to the spring of 2019, and ICG members were prompted on several occasions to provide input, although a significant number failed to do so. This necessitated further follow-up, either through in-person interviews or via email, between January and June 2019 to request additional information from foreign ministry officials responsible for the international religious freedom policy file.

It is our intention that this will not be the last landscape report of its kind, but rather that it will be kept evergreen and serve as a valuable resource and record of international religious freedom policy activities worldwide. We hope that it meets its stated goals and proves to be a key resource for foreign ministries, multilateral bodies, parliamentarians, religious freedom advocates, academics, and all those who are committed to advancing religious freedom for everyone, everywhere.

Jeremy Barker
Andrew Bennett
Thomas Farr

Washington, D.C., July 2019.

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WHAT DO WE MEAN BY RELIGIOUS FREEDOM?

Drawn from *Religious Freedom: Why Now? Defending an Embattled Human Right*, a book written by RFI scholars,² this elaboration of the meaning and value of religious freedom is consistent with international law and norms as set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (see Appendix A for brief summaries of these and other key religious freedom documents).

RFI is motivated by the conviction that religious freedom is a natural, universal, and inviolable human right that is grounded in the inherent dignity of every human being. Accordingly, religious freedom is desirable for its own sake, but it is also an indispensable driver of a wide array of social goods, including democracy, civil liberty, stability, economic prosperity, equality of women, and security.

Religion is the way a person strives for harmony with an unseen order of reality. Religious freedom, thus, is the right to engage one's entire self in pursuit of this unseen order of reality. On this basis, a full account of religious freedom includes at least four main dimensions.

First, all people should be free to use their reason to seek the truth about ultimate reality—the religious freedom of intellectual and spiritual inquiry. Second, all people should be free to engage their conscience, intellect, and will in embracing the truths they discover about ultimate reality—the religious freedom of practical reason. Third, all people should be free to speak and act to express the truths they discover about ultimate reality, and to join with others of like mind and spirit—the religious freedom of sociality. Fourth, all people should be free to express religious beliefs, individually and in community with others, in civil society and political life on a basis no less favorable than is accorded to non-religious expression—the religious freedom of political and legal expression. Included here is the right to create and operate religious institutions such as schools, charitable organizations, hospitals, universities, and others.

In sum, while religious freedom is not an absolute right, it is a capacious and presumptive right that should be firmly protected in law and respected in culture.



METHODOLOGY & DEFINITIONS

METHODOLOGY

This Landscape Report was conducted by a systematic review of publicly available information about the diplomatic efforts of various countries and institutions to advance religious freedom. It was then supplemented both by informational interviews with relevant points of contact at foreign ministries and through qualitative data collected through a survey circulated to members of the ICG (see Appendix B).

While this landscape report does not aim to provide a comprehensive history, description, or assessment of the international religious freedom policy of any one country or institution, it does seek to provide a descriptive inventory of the existing (mainly) Western and multilateral foreign policy approaches taken to address violations of religious freedom around the world.

FORMAT

Each of the country and institutional profiles in this landscape report follows a similar format that includes the following sections: History of Religious Freedom Policy, Key Institutions, Policy and Programming Activities, Multilateral Engagement, and, where possible, Diplomatic Training Efforts.

A brief description of each of these sections is included below to assist the reader in understanding what is covered in each of the sections.

HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM POLICY

This section includes key dates, individuals, and legislation that are relevant for the development of a given country's international religious freedom policy. It may seek to highlight major accomplishments or shifts in approaches or activities that are relevant to current international religious freedom policy and practice. Additionally, this section aims to include some description of the definition of religious freedom as expressed or assumed by a particular government in legislation or other relevant documents, when available.

KEY INSTITUTIONS

This section will identify the key organizations, institutions, and positions within a given country that are relevant to its international religious freedom policy (e.g. Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief, Office of International Religious Freedom, etc.).

POLICY & PROGRAMMING INSTITUTIONS

There are a wide range of policy and programming actions that a given country might take to advance religious freedom. A variety of governments have also developed programmatic activities to address issues of religious freedom through direct actions or funding NGO or other civil society initiatives. The following categories represent broad descriptions for each of these areas.

POLICY ACTIVITIES

Punitive Diplomatic Actions

These may include actions such as financial restrictions or sanctions, development assistance restrictions, military assistance restrictions, travel restrictions, export or trade restrictions, or unilateral or multilateral démarches launched by a government or a coalition of like-minded governments.

Promotion through Diplomatic Actions

These may include engagement with government officials, legislators, members of the judiciary, NGOs, human rights organizations, faith-based organizations, or leaders or members of religious communities by diplomats in their capital or by locally-based embassy personnel.

Reports and Analysis of Religious Freedom Conditions

These may include specific references to religious freedom in human rights reports, authoring religious freedom-specific reports, disseminating academic research on religious freedom to foreign policy actors, or even maintaining lists of prisoners of conscience.

Public Statements and Diplomatic Engagement

These may include public statements by ministers or senior diplomats during country visits, holding bilateral meetings with governments, sponsoring legislative resolutions, supporting the development of various coalitions of parliamentarians or diplomats that seek to raise specific violations of religious freedom or to coordinate action on religious freedom violations.

PROGRAMMING ACTIVITIES

Governmental Direct Action – convening / supporting dialogue

These may include direct demarches or other forms of direct encouragement, hosting a summit or conference on religious freedom or a related issue, or supporting and participating in standing intergovernmental bodies dedicated to international religious freedom.

Governmental Direct Action – humanitarian / development / financial assistance

These may include offering direct government assistance to victims of religious persecution, or structuring development assistance to target religious freedom-related issues such as curriculum development or post-conflict stabilization.

Indirect Funding – convening / dialogue / monitoring / advocacy

This may include foreign assistance funding to non-governmental, civil society organizations, faith-based entities, or other organizations involved in dialogue, monitoring, or advocacy to advance of religious freedom.

Indirect Funding – humanitarian / development / financial assistance

This may include foreign assistance funding to NGOs or other organizations involved in advancing religious freedom or humanitarian or development work with victims of religious persecution.

MULTILATERAL ENGAGEMENT

Various multilateral fora represent an important venue for advancing religious freedom. For this report, multilateral engagement is divided into two categories: addressing religious freedom in broad multilateral settings (e.g. UN General Assembly, UN Human Rights Council, OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meetings, World Economic Forum, Organization of American States, Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Council of Europe, African Union, ASEAN, etc.) and participation in religious freedom-specific multilateral organizations (e.g. ICG, International Panel of Parliamentarians, etc.)

DIPLOMATIC TRAINING EFFORTS

Efforts taken by a given country to train its diplomats in understanding and advancing religious freedom are of particular interest for this report. Based on available information, the report describes discrete training on religious freedom as well as whether religious freedom is included as part of the broader human rights portfolio. These training efforts may be through formal instruction in the diplomatic training school of the foreign ministry or other instructional and personal development programs.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- AfriPAHR** – African Parliamentarians Association for Human Rights
- APPG** – UK All-Party Parliamentary Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief
- ASEAN** – Association of Southeast Asian Nations
- BMZ** - Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development)
- CAD** – Canadian Dollar
- CANFoRB** – Canadian Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief
- CDU** – Christlich-Demokratische Union Deutschlands (German Christian Democratic Union)
- CFSI** – Canadian Foreign Service Institute
- CHECK** - Information of the Minister of Foreign Affairs on Polish Foreign Policy Tasks
- CIFoRB** – Commonwealth Initiative on Freedom of Religion or Belief
- CNEWA** – Catholic Near East Welfare Association
- CoE** – Council of Europe
- COHOM** – European Union Working Party on Human Rights
- CORE Forum** – National Forum for Cooperation of Religions in Finland
- CPC** – Country of Particular Concern (US IRFP designation)
- CSU** – Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern (Christian Social Union in Bavaria)
- CSW** – United Nations Commission on the Status of Women
- CVE** – Finnish Countering Violent Extremism Program
- DFAIT** – Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade
- DFAT** – Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- Dfid** – UK Department for International Development
- DKK** – Danish Krone
- DMRU** – Dansk Missionsråds Udviklingsafdeling (Danish Mission Council Development Department)
- DPNFoRB** – Danish Inter-Parliamentarian Network on Freedom of Religion or Belief
- DPR** – Decreto Presidente Repubblica (Decree of the President of Italy)
- DRL** – Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor
- EAC** – Canadian External Advisory Committee on Religious Freedom
- EC** – European Commission
- ECHR** – European Convention on Human Rights
- ECLJ** – European Centre for Law and Justice
- EEAS** – European External Action Service
- EED** – European Endowment for Democracy
- EIDHR** – European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights
- EIP** – European Parliament Intergroup on Freedom of Religion or Belief and Religious Tolerance

EP – European Parliament
EPP – European People’s Party Group
EPRID – European Platform on Religious Intolerance and Discrimination
EU – European Union
FCO – UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FECRIS - Fédération Européenne des Centres de Recherche et d’Information sur le Sectarisme (European Federation of Centers for Research and Information on Cults and Sects)
FFIS – UNDP Funding Facility for Immediate Stabilization
FFS – United Nations Funding Facility Stabilization
FOIA – UK Freedom of Information Act, 2000
FoR – Freedom of Religion
FoRB – Freedom of Religion or Belief
FSI – U.S. Foreign Service Institute
FSO – U.S. Foreign Service Officer
GRPR – United States Genocide Recovery and Persecution Response Program
HDIM – Human Dimension Implementation Meetings (Function of OSCE)
ICCPR – International Convention of Civil and Political Rights
ICG – International Contact Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief
ICGFoRB – International Contact Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief
IHEU – International Humanist and Ethical Union
IHRA – International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance
IPPFoRB – International Panel of Parliamentarians on Freedom of Religion or Belief
IRF – International Religious Freedom
IRFA – International Religious Freedom Act, 1998
IRFP – International Religious Freedom Policy
ISIS – Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
ISPI – Italian Institute for International Political Studies
KAICIID – King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Center for Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue
MENA – Middle East and North Africa
MEP – Members of European Parliament
MFA – Ministry/Minister of Foreign Affairs
MFAIC – Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
MO – Multilateral Organizations
MP – Member of Parliament
NGO – Non-Governmental Organization
ODIHR – Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
OHCHR – Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OHRFI – Canadian Office of Human Rights, Freedoms, and Inclusion
OIC – Organization for Islamic Cooperation
OIRF – U.S. State Department Office of International Religious Freedom
ORF – Canadian Office of Religious Freedom
OSCE – Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OSCE HDIM – Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Human Dimension Implementation Meetings

R2P – Responsibility to Protect
RFF – Canadian Religious Freedom Fund
RGA – U.S. State Department Office of Religion and Global Affairs
RLS – Religious Literacy Series
SEN – Suomen Ekumeeninen Neuvosto (Finnish Ecumenical Council)
SOGI – Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity
TPNRD – Transatlantic Policy Network on Religion and Diplomacy
UDHR – Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN – United Nations
UNAOC – United National Alliance of Civilizations
UNDP – United Nations Development Program
UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA – United Nations Population Fund
UNGA – United Nations General Assembly
UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNHRC – United Nations Human Rights Council
UNICEF – United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund
UNSR – United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and Belief
UPR – Universal Periodic Review
USAID – United States Agency for International Development
USCCB – United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
USCIRF – United States Commission for International Religious Freedom
USD – United States Dollars
V4 (countries) – Visegrád Group



COUNTRIES

AUSTRALIA

AUSTRIA

CANADA

DENMARK

FINLAND

FRANCE

GERMANY

GREECE

HOLY SEE

HUNGARY

ITALY

MONGOLIA

THE NETHERLANDS

NORWAY

POLAND

TAIWAN

UNITED KINGDOM

UNITED STATES

AUSTRALIA



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HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM POLICY

Australia's commitment to the protection and promotion of freedom of religion is carried out primarily through the auspices of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). The Australian approach was articulated by DFAT in a submission to the Australian Parliament Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defense and Trade Inquiry into the status of the human right to freedom of religion or belief.³

Australia grounds its approach to freedom of religion and belief (FoRB) in the definition as articulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the

other seven core human rights treaties to which Australia is party, perhaps most explicitly in the ICCPR.⁴

As DFAT has expressed, "The Australian Government considers human rights an important component of Australia's overall foreign policy approach, both because the treatment of individuals is itself a matter of concern to Australians and because promoting and protecting human rights underpins Australia's broader security and economic interests."⁵

The status of religious freedom in Australia and abroad is a question that has garnered significant interest in recent years, in part led by parliamentary inquiries. A 2018-2019 parliamentary inquiry into the status

of religious freedom in Australia and abroad ultimately was not able to turn its attention to international issues, but as stated in its second interim report, the “Sub-Committee has received evidence that suggests that internationally, the human right to freedom of religion is under threat and as such, this area requires comprehensive investigation.”⁶

This effort sought to build on a 1998 inquiry led by the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the Australian Parliament following the passage of the International Religious Freedom Act in the United States. The inquiry concluded with an issue paper titled, “Australia’s Efforts to Promote and Protect Freedom of Religion and Belief.”⁷ The paper commended the work of the United States, affirmed the values of UDHR article 18, and called out several violators of religious freedom for that year. It concluded with the question: “what practical role may there be for Australia in promoting and protecting religious freedom?”

In the intervening years, Australia has developed some practical responses to address these challenges.

KEY INSTITUTIONS

DFAT is the primary agency leading on these efforts, which is exemplified through its missions to the United Nations in New York and Geneva. This work is done in consultation with other relevant government agencies to include: the Attorney-General’s Department (which has responsibility for the domestic implementation of Australia’s human rights obligations), the Department of Social Services (which leads Australia’s policy and programming

on multiculturalism and resettlement), the Department of Immigration and Border Protection, and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.⁸

Australia aims to advance FoRB in bilateral relations and through multilateral fora, such as the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), the United Nations General Assembly Third Committee, and active participation in mechanisms including the Universal Periodic Review process.

While freedom of religion issues are largely handled in the purview of the human rights work of DFAT, through “the Department’s network of geographic desks and posts, we monitor the enjoyment of FoRB and make representations on specific human rights cases of concern, including those motivated by religious intolerance.”⁹

POLICY & PROGRAMMING ACTIVITIES

The multilateral approach as described below represents the primary venues through which Australia promotes and protects freedom of religion or belief.

In addition to the monitoring of situations performed by those assigned to diplomatic posts and geographic desks, the Australian diplomatic corps conducts bilateral engagement on particular issues of interest, such as:

- ◆ The Australian High Commission in Dhaka has made representations to the Government of Bangladesh on a broad range of human rights issues, including in response to heightened levels of Islamist militant violence

against atheists, Hindus, Ahmadis, Buddhists, and foreigners since 2015.

- ◆ Australia regularly raises concerns about FoRB with China. They note China's restrictions on the religious and cultural practices of Uighurs and Tibetans exacerbate tensions in Xinjiang and Tibetan regions and raise concerns about China's treatment of Falun Gong practitioners. At its 2014 appearance before the Universal Periodic Review, China received 20 recommendations from 18 states pertaining to FoRB and the treatment of religious minorities, including two from Australia.
- ◆ Australia's human rights engagement with Egypt prioritizes engaging with the National Human Rights Council, Members of Parliament, other government officials, and NGOs to raise issues of civil society restrictions, political prisoners, restrictions on media freedoms, and police misconduct. The Australian Embassy in Cairo has taken an active role in monitoring the situation facing Coptic Christians in Egypt and has maintained high-level engagement with the Coptic clergy in Egypt and Australia.¹⁰

MULTILATERAL ENGAGEMENT

In 2015, Australia joined the "Contact Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief," an international forum set up by Canada to discuss best practices and emerging issues related to religious freedom.¹¹ The group defines itself by its informality and meets on an ad hoc basis.¹²

Australia has been an active proponent of religious freedom through the

multilateral mechanisms of the United Nations both in New York and in Geneva. FoRB was explicitly included as one of the core objectives of Australia's 2018-2020 membership on UNHRC.¹³

The Universal Periodic Review process represents another example of where issues may be formally addressed. During the second cycle of reviews for all UN Member States (2010-2016), Australia explicitly made FoRB recommendations to 14 states, including countries such as China, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Myanmar, Sudan, and Turkey.¹⁴

Australia is also a strong supporter of the special procedures process, including the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on FoRB. As stated in its submission, "DFAT regularly engages with the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, through our engagement in the UN Human Rights Council, demonstrating our support for this mandate and our willingness to engage in ongoing debate about this right."¹⁵

In its statement during the interactive dialogue with the UN Special Rapporteur on FoRB at the 37th Session of the UNHRC in 2018, Australia highlighted the abuse of blasphemy laws, including capital punishment, and the situation of religious minorities in the Middle East, as key issues to be addressed.¹⁶

Australia also attended and spoke at both the first Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom hosted by the U.S. Department of State in July 2018, highlighting its work at UNHRC and through the ICG as critical mechanisms for advancing freedom of religion for all people.¹⁷ Australia joined as a signatory to the Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom Statement on Blasphemy/Apostasy Laws.¹⁸

AUSTRIA

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Alexander Schallenberg

Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs

<https://www.bmeia.gv.at/en/>

HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM POLICY

As articulated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, freedom of religion is listed among the priorities for Austrian Human Rights Policy.¹⁹ Austria's efforts to advance religious freedom and protect religious minorities are rooted in initiatives promoting interreligious dialogue at the bilateral and multilateral levels, in following what the Foreign Ministry calls "the Austrian dialogue tradition."²⁰ These interreligious dialogues, which seek to "strengthen pluralism and eliminate stereotypes and prejudices," date back to the 1990s.²¹ However, Austria did not formally incorporate this initiative, which

is broadly related to religious freedom, as a component of its foreign policy until 2007 when Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik established the Task Force "Dialogue of Cultures."

This Task Force, which appears to be Austria's central foreign policy initiative related to religious freedom, focuses predominantly on Muslim countries and Muslim communities within Austria and Europe. The Foreign Ministry notes that the establishment of the Task Force has led to "the intensification of dialogue and the development, support, and implementation of national and international initiatives," but it provides few details regarding said national and

international initiatives. Further examples of “the Austrian dialogue tradition” in recent years are provided in the following section.

Austria understands freedom of religion to encompass “the freedom to change religion or belief and the freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship, and observance,” as laid out in the major human rights conventions of both the UN and EU. The Foreign Ministry states that Austria has increased its advocacy for the promotion of religious freedom and the protection of religious minorities as a result of “the global rise in violence and discrimination on the grounds of religious belief.”

KEY INSTITUTIONS

The Foreign Ministry suggests that Austria’s efforts to promote religious freedom and protect religious minorities are primarily focused on intercultural dialogue activities.²² The Task Force “Dialogue of Cultures” was established in the Austrian Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs in 2007 and serves as a contact point for and originator of various intercultural and interreligious dialogue activities. There is no ambassadorial post dedicated to religious freedom and little information detailing financial commitments to foreign policy initiatives related to religious freedom.

In 2012, the Austrian Government, in partnership with Spain, Saudi Arabia, and the Holy See, established the King

Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Center for Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue in Vienna. The Center’s mandate is “the promotion of the use of dialogue globally to prevent and resolve conflict and to enhance understanding and cooperation.” It adheres to the conception of religious freedom found in Article 18 of the UDHR. Representatives from the world’s major religions sit on the Center’s Board of Directors.²³

In May 2014, the Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration, and Foreign Affairs established a domestic interreligious dialogue initiative that brought together leaders from Austria’s 16 legally recognized religious communities to discuss religious freedom. The Foreign Ministry’s Division of Dialogue of Cultures and Religions currently leads this initiative.

POLICY & PROGRAMMING ACTIVITIES

In recognition of the increasing challenges to freedom of religion, the Austrian Government has sought in recent years to take a more active role through its bilateral and multilateral efforts. As expressed by the Foreign Ministry, these efforts “aim at prevention, dialogue, and constructive partnership, and use our experience and contacts from intercultural dialogue activities.”²⁴

The King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Center (KAICIID) is engaged in a series of projects centered around fostering dialogue, either in high-level forums or at the community level, to foster interreligious understanding and promote peaceful coexistence.

This programming is intentional about bringing religious leaders together, with a focus on the Muslim and Christian communities, as well as building connections between faith communities, elected officials, and NGOs. Examples of programming initiatives the KAICIID is currently engaged in include:

- ◆ Interreligious Dialogue for Peace: Promoting Peaceful Coexistence and Common Citizenship.
- ◆ Program for the Social Inclusion of People Seeking Refuge in Europe.
- ◆ United Against Violence in the Name of Religion (see below).

KAICIID runs programs to foster interreligious dialogue and community-building in Austria, including among refugees and asylum seekers, Burma, the Central African Republic, and Nigeria. KAICIID is also working to build a Network for Religious Christian and Muslim Faculties and Institutes in the Arab World.²⁵

The Foreign Ministry's Division of Dialogue of Cultures and Religion notes that it has hosted a number of bilateral dialogue initiatives in the last two decades, focused on reinforcing bilateral relations and promoting exchange between academics in Indonesia, Iran, Singapore, and Saudi Arabia. This Division also hosts the Task Force "Dialogue of Cultures," which "serves as a contact

point for and originator of various intercultural and interreligious dialogue activities, offers expertise on matters of dialogue and promotes the creation of national and international networks between dialogue partners, and supports the Austrian representations abroad with the identification, design and implementation of dialogue projects."²⁶ The Austrian Foreign Ministry provides few details about the Task Force's work since its founding, with the exception of its responsibility for awarding an annual Intercultural Achievement Award.



In 2013, Austria hosted the 5th Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), which resulted in the release of the Vienna Declaration. This document, co-signed by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the UNAOC Member States, praises Austria for its efforts to promote and protect "full enjoyment of the right to freedom of religion and belief in a context of religious pluralism."²⁷ The Foreign Ministry notes that "contributing to global trust-building and peaceful co-existence through intercultural and interreligious dialogue initiatives marks one of three central goals of Austrian foreign cultural policy."²⁸

As chair of the OSCE in 2017, Austria partnered with the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights to host a conference in Vienna on "Freedom of Religion or Belief:

Issues, Opportunities, and the Specific Challenges of Combating Anti-Semitism and Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians, Muslims, and Members of Other Religions.” The purpose of this meeting was to “assess the progress made in the implementation of relevant (FoRB) OSCE commitments, and explore the opportunities and challenges that exist to further strengthen the right to freedom of religion or belief for all within the OSCE area,” including “the role of interfaith and interreligious dialogue and cooperation in creating the conditions for lasting security.”²⁹

MULTILATERAL ENGAGEMENT

Austria is a member of the UNAOC, a global network dedicated to working toward “a more peaceful, more socially inclusive world, by building mutual respect among peoples of different cultural and religious identities, and highlighting the will of the world’s majority to reject extremism and embrace diversity.” One of the group’s primary activities is “interventions to defuse religious and cultural tensions by mobilizing third parties that can act as forces of moderation and understanding.” The UNAOC’s Vienna Declaration commended Austria for its efforts to promote and protect the “full enjoyment of the right to freedom of religion and belief in a context of religious pluralism.”

Austria “initiated the drafting of the EU Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of Freedom of Religion or Belief” in 2013. The Foreign Ministry’s webpage on Freedom of Religion notes that Austria “regularly addresses the issue of freedom of religion, not only with

countries facing religious conflicts or tensions, but also with partner countries in order to discuss the possibilities for joint initiatives at the international level.” It also notes Austria’s past advocacy and support for religious freedom and the protection of religious minorities in various multilateral forums, including the UN Human Rights Council, the Council of Europe, and the OSCE, including the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. While a member of the UN Human Rights Council, Austria demonstrated leadership in guiding and co-funding the work of the UN Forum on Minority Issues to focus for the first time on the topic of religious minorities.³⁰

CANADA

CANADA



HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM POLICY

The promotion and protection of human rights, including FoRB, is a critical aspect of Canada's foreign policy. The impetus for the institutional promotion of religious freedom was first proposed in 1998 by the then-Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade at the same time that the development of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom was underway. The Minister announced that the then-Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) would make the confrontation of religious persecution a foreign policy priority.

The former Office of Religious Freedom (ORF) was established in 2013, with the appointment of an Ambassador for Religious Freedom, Dr. Andrew Bennett, following a commitment by the Government of Canada in 2011. The ORF was established with a three-fold mandate that centered around: (1) protecting and advocating on behalf of religious minorities under threat, (2) opposing religious hatred and intolerance, and (3) promoting Canadian values of pluralism and tolerance abroad. The ORF was created by a decision of the Cabinet and not by a statute, as in the case of the U.S. Department of State's Office of International Religious Freedom. The Government of Canada, believing that "Canada was uniquely positioned to

protect and promote religious freedom worldwide as it is a pluralistic country with a diversity of cultures and religions,” committed to the creation of the ORF in June 2011.³¹

In June 2015, the Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time established an External Advisory Committee on Religious Freedom (EAC). The committee’s role was to advise the ORF on the exercise of its mandate to promote and defend religious freedom internationally. Following the establishment of the Office of Human Rights, Freedoms, and Inclusion (OHRFI) in 2016, former EAC members actively participate as part of a broader network of faith and belief communities engaged by the Democracy, Inclusion and Religious Freedom Division.

The initial three-year mandate of the ORF ended on March 31, 2016, at which time the new Liberal Party-led government closed the ORF and abolished the Ambassador of Religious Freedom.

The ORF was condensed into a division along with the pre-existing Human Rights and Indigenous Affairs Division, and the Democracy Division, establishing the OHRFI, which came into effect in May 2016.

The adoption in 2016 of the FoRB nomenclature is a shift away from the “freedom of religion nomenclature” previously in use and advocated by the ORF. In defending the use of “freedom of religion,” former Ambassador Bennett stated directly that “religious freedom

does not just mean freedom to worship as is reflected in Article 18 (referring to the UDHR and ICCPR),” and must also include the freedom to engage religion and employ religious arguments and ideas in the public square.³² Additionally, the ORF understood that while Article 18 does not specifically reference non-theistic belief, freedom of religion must necessarily include the freedom not to have a religious belief. Ambassador Bennett consistently employed this definition.

KEY INSTITUTIONS



The OHRFI promotes international FoRB within the broader frameworks of human rights – highlighting their universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated nature. The OHRFI is currently composed of: (1) the Human Rights and Indigenous Affairs Division, (2) the Democracy, Inclusion and Religious Freedom Division, (3) the International Centre for Digital Policy; and (4) the International Cyber Policy Division. The Democracy, Inclusion and Religious Freedom Division serves as the focal point for engagement with faith and belief communities to consult on issues of particular concern and to hear Canadians’ views on opportunities to advance FoRB and human rights more broadly around the world. The current Director-General of the OHRFI is Shelley Whiting and the Director of the Democracy, Inclusion and Religious Freedom Division is Giuliana Natale.³³ In the press release announcing the

creation of the OHRFI, the Government of Canada called the struggle for religious freedom “a struggle for the universal and inseparable freedoms Canadians cherish” and stated that the mandate of the newly-created office would expand on the work of the former Office of Religious Freedom by bringing its efforts “together under a comprehensive vision that includes all human rights.” The press release notes that all Canadian missions abroad will now make the promotion and advancement of human rights, including freedom of religion or belief, “part of their core objectives.” To elaborate, all Canadian Heads of Mission have the promotion of human rights, including FoRB, inclusion, and diversity, linked to their annual performance goals and assessments.³⁴ A number of missions have incorporated the protection and promotion of FoRB as a strategic goal within the context of human rights.

POLICY & PROGRAMMING ACTIVITIES

The Government of Canada states its adherence to the understanding of FoRB as defined in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This human right “includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.” The Democracy, Inclusion and Religious Freedom Division’s approach, which focuses primarily on advocacy on behalf of persecuted religious and belief communities, opposing religious discrimination, and supporting interreligious dialogue, is largely in line with the approach taken by most European countries that have

incorporated FoRB as a component of their respective foreign policies.³⁵

On October 27, 2018, the Minister of Foreign Affairs issued a statement on International Religious Freedom Day, in part, addressing issues of religious persecution:

“In many parts of the world, people of all faiths and beliefs continue to face repression, persecution, and violence. This includes deadly attacks on Christians in the Middle East and elsewhere, including Coptic Christians in Egypt and Christians in Pakistan, discrimination and persecution of Bahá’ís in Yemen and Iran, a deepening crackdown on Uyghurs and members of other religious minority groups in China, the appalling targeting of the Yazidis in Iraq, as well as the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar and other Muslim groups across the world, persecution of humanists and secularists, and the global rise of antisemitism.”³⁶

Additionally, Canada participated in the U.S.-hosted 2018 Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom, where the delegation was led by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Canada was the only country to co-sponsor, alongside the U.S., all six statements of concern generated by the Ministerial. The statements include responding to country-specific issues in China, Iran, and Myanmar. The thematic statements focus on blasphemy and apostasy laws; religious freedom repression by non-state actors, including terrorist groups; and counter terrorism as a false pretext for religious freedom repression.

Global Affairs Canada has a \$7.5 million funding envelope dedicated to a number of OHRFI’s issues of focus, including advancing human rights;

religious freedom; and respect for diversity, inclusion, and democracy, which is administered by the Peace and Stabilization Operations Programming Unit.

The OHRFI collaborates closely with partners to identify, evaluate, and select projects, including those that build on the work of the former ORF, the annual budget of which contained \$4.25 million for the Religious Freedom Fund (RFF). RFF funds were used to finance international projects that assisted religious communities facing intolerance or persecution, supporting projects in countries like Iraq, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan and Ukraine.

FoRB projects that have been successfully pursued through the OHRFI envelope include:³⁷

- ◆ OSCE, Increased Human Security through Respect for Human Rights, Diversity and Inclusive Governance, (CAD \$2,721,602), 2017-2019. Direct beneficiaries are OSCE participating states in Western Balkans, Eastern Europe, South Caucasus, and Central Asia.
- ◆ UNESCO, Five Year Joint Programme to Promote Education about the Holocaust and its Relevance to Other Genocides Worldwide, (CAD \$662,039), 2017-2019, in collaboration with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum to increase awareness and understanding of causes and consequences of the Holocaust, genocides, and atrocity prevention.
- ◆ Equitas, Promoting Human Rights, Inclusion and Religious Harmony in Sri Lanka and Beyond: Equipping

Communities to Resist Violent Conflict, (CAD \$825,000), 2016-2019, to help communities transcend divisions based on religion, ethnicity, gender, and socio-economic conditions in Sri Lanka and Myanmar.

- ◆ Article 19, Building Inclusive and Resilient Societies by Combating Hate Speech, (CAD \$726,000), 2017-2019, to help maintain international consensus on UN HRC Resolution 16/18 and to assist the governments of Tunisia, Myanmar, and Bangladesh to enact progressive legal reforms on hate speech and equip lawmakers to institute policies to open spaces for inclusive dialogue and debate.
- ◆ Internews, Building a Culture of Peaceful Pluralism in Myanmar and Sri Lanka, (CAD \$999,000), 2018-2019, to develop a core cadre of media professionals in conflict-sensitive journalism to help improve the quality of reporting on ethnic/religious diversity and influence public thinking on freedom of religion or belief in Myanmar.
- ◆ Ralph Bunche Institute, Reconciling FoRB and other rights for Peaceful, Inclusive and Pluralistic Societies, (CAD \$250,000), 2019-2020, to facilitate capacity-exchanges between the UN Special Rapporteur on FoRB and other relevant special procedure mandate-holders, civil society, human rights defenders, and academia to address tensions between FoRB and the rights of women and sexual orientation and gender identity minorities in the context of non-discrimination and gender equality.

The Democracy, Inclusion, and Religious Freedom Division engages with a broad network of stakeholders representing civil society organizations and faith or belief communities that are both in Canada and abroad. For example, on May 7, 2019, as part of his unofficial visit to Canada, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on FoRB participated in an Interactive Discussion on Freedom of Religion or Belief, hosted by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. This event was the sixth in a series of consultations with key civil society stakeholders and faith/belief communities, since the OHRFI's establishment in 2016.

MULTILATERAL ENGAGEMENT

The Democracy, Inclusion and Religious Freedom Division engages substantially with the multilateral human rights architecture, including the UN General Assembly and the UN Human Rights Council, including the Universal Periodic Review and special procedures mandate holders, as a reflection of Canada's dedication to a renewal and strengthening of the multilateral order.

Canadian parliamentarians helped to found and are actively engaged in the International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief (IPPFoRB) and Member of Parliament David Anderson is a member of the Panel's four-person Steering Committee. Canadian parliamentarians have also

signed the Oslo Charter for Freedom of Religion or Belief.

Canada continues to be an active member of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), a multilateral body comprised of government representatives and experts in the fields of Holocaust education and research. Canada actively campaigned in favor of the IHRA definitions of Holocaust denial and anti-semitism adopted in 2014 and 2016 respectively. Canada chaired IHRA from 2013-2014.³⁸

International Contact Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief



The Director of the Democracy, Inclusion and Religious Freedom Division, alongside the U.S. counterpart in the Department of State's Office of International Religious Freedom, co-chairs the International Contact Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief (ICG). The ICG was established by Canada through the ORF in June 2015. Together the co-chairs have worked in expanding its membership to 30 countries and establishing regular meetings of the ICG on the margins of the UN General Assembly and the UN Human Rights Council.

Since its inception, ICG participants have engaged in a number of cooperative actions, including: jointly lobbying governments to promote best practices to make progress on FoRB, including those impacting minority populations;

encouraging the reform of restrictive laws; and collaborating with a range of non-governmental partners, including religious organizations, civil society, and academia.

ICG members promote religious freedom by: initiating early warnings of a looming crisis, coordinating joint advocacy and programming activities, fostering exchanges of best practices, and creating Friends of Freedom of Religion or Belief groups in countries of engagement. Canada both leads on, and is engaged with, various Friends of FoRB groups around the world, which are networks of missions sharing information and providing an “early warning” role on issues related to religious freedom.³⁹

included sessions on Islam, Secularism/ Humanism, Indigenous Spirituality, Christianity, and Judaism.

DIPLOMATIC TRAINING EFFORTS

The Democracy, Inclusion and Religious Freedom Division’s training initiatives build upon the work of the former ORF by including religious freedom content in the Canadian Foreign Service Institute’s Advanced Human Rights course and, in March 2017, launching the Religious Literacy Series (RLS). The RLS helps Global Affairs Canada officials develop a better understanding of basic tenets of the world’s major religious and belief traditions; appreciate the diversity between and within these traditions; confront stereotypes concerning different religions and beliefs; raise awareness of the profound role of religion and belief in world affairs; and, broaden understandings of how to engage with and serve as a bridge to communities from a variety of religious and belief traditions, both within Canada and abroad. The RLS is ongoing and has

DENMARK



HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM POLICY

Denmark officially incorporated religious freedom as a component of its foreign policy on January 1, 2018, when the Danish Government created the Office of the Special Representative for Freedom of Religion or Belief.⁴⁰ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs states that Denmark's approach to international freedom of religion or belief is rooted in its adherence to Article 18 of the UDHR and Article 18 of the ICCPR.

KEY INSTITUTIONS

The Danish Government established the Office of the Special Representative for

Freedom of Religion or Belief on January 1, 2018. It aims to promote FoRB globally. Denmark's approach is informed by the understanding of FoRB stipulated in Article 18 of the UDHR and Article 18 of the ICCPR.

This office has a four-fold mandate: (1) promoting freedom of religion and conscience throughout the world as a fundamental human right, (2) assisting vulnerable and marginalized minorities of religion or conscience in upholding their rights, (3) assisting religious and human rights NGOs in promoting freedom of religion and conscience, and (4) encouraging strengthened international focus and reporting on violations of

FoRB. The first ambassador appointed in January 2018 was Ambassador Franz-Michael Skjold Mellbin. The position is currently headed by Ambassador Michael Suhr.⁴¹

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs notes the creation of a Contact Forum for Denmark's Efforts for Freedom of Religion or Belief on January 10, 2018. The Contact Forum was launched by Ulla Tornaes, the Minister for Development Cooperation. No additional information about the purpose or structure of the Contact Forum is provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or in other online sources.

In 2015, seven Danish parliamentarians established the Danish Inter-Parliamentarian Network on Freedom of Religion or Belief (DPNForB), with the goal of "strengthening freedom of religion or belief in Danish foreign and development policies." These parliamentarians founded the Network in conjunction with the Danish Institute for Human Rights, an independent state institution with a mandate to protect and promote human rights in Denmark and internationally, and the Danish Mission Council, "an umbrella organization for Danish churches and church-based organizations" that operates primarily in developing countries. The Network also serves to "bring together... scientists and researchers and civil society organizations in a common informed dialogue on how freedom of religion can be strengthened and how similar efforts are tackled in other national and international forums." The current Chairman of the DPNForB is Toft Jakobsen, MP.⁴²

POLICY & PROGRAMMING ACTIVITIES

The Office of the Special Representative for Freedom of Religion or Belief advances its activities through a five-track approach:⁴³

Track 1: Mobilization of the international community on the promotion of Freedom of Religion or Belief

Track 2: A thematic focus on the two intersections between Freedom of Religion or Belief and Gender Equality, and Freedom of Religion or Belief and Responsibility to Protect (R2P)

Track 3: A geographical focus on the immediate neighborhood of the EU, including the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)

Track 4: Collaboration on Freedom of Religion or Belief with specific countries
Track 5: Pursuing of a number of cases of individuals persecuted for religious reasons

In February 2019, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs published a status report documenting the government's efforts to implement this vision, some of which are outlined below.⁴⁴ In addition, the Danish Parliament also formally made the implementation of the effort to advance Freedom of Religion or Belief an agenda item for parliamentary debate in February 2019.⁴⁵

Track 1 – Mobilization of the international community on the promotion of Freedom of Religion or Belief

Denmark aims to place FoRB on the international agenda. This requires

international cooperation in the form of bilateral inter-state cooperation as well as cooperation through the EU and in the UN and other international fora. The Danish Government has chosen mobilization of the international community as one of the five tracks in the work of the Office of the Special Representative for Freedom of Religion or Belief.

As part of track 1, Denmark has, among others, taken the following actions:

- ◆ On January 11, 2018, Denmark hosted an international meeting on FoRB in Eigtved's Pakhus in Copenhagen.
- ◆ Joined the International Contact Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief (ICGFoRB)
- ◆ Participated at minister's level in the first Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom in Washington D.C., represented by Ulla Tørnæs, Minister for Development Cooperation.⁴⁶
- ◆ Worked to ensure that FoRB is among the priorities in EU-cooperation, including through meeting with Religious Freedom Intergroup Bureau European Parliament.
- ◆ Contributed to the establishment of international local "groups of friends" for FoRB around the world.
- ◆ Hosted, in collaboration with the EU and the Universal Rights Group, a "stock-taking" meeting on the progress with Istanbul process in Geneva with more than 100 participants from across the world.⁴⁷

Track 2 – A thematic focus on the intersections between Freedom of

Religion or Belief and Gender Equality, and Freedom of Religion or Belief and Responsibility to Protect (R2P)

FoRB is closely intertwined with a number of other human rights and global commitments. The Danish Government has chosen to focus on two intersections in particular: The intersection between Freedom of Religion or Belief and Gender Equality, and the intersection between Freedom of Religion or Belief and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P).

As part of track 2, Denmark has, among others, taken the following actions:

- ◆ In March 2019, Denmark launched, in collaboration with Norway, a one-year consultation process to explore synergies between FoRB, gender equality, and the EU's Sustainable Development Goals. The process convenes and mobilizes a diverse constituency of actors in support of FoRB and gender equality, including both faith-based and secular perspectives with the goal of identifying areas of common ground and encourage common action. The process is organized in cooperation with the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), the UN Interagency Task Force on Religion and Development, the Stefanus Alliance, and the Danish Institute for Human Rights.⁴⁸
- ◆ Took part in the OIC-EU collaboration leading to the establishment of a UN mechanism to collect and retain evidence from supposed international crimes against Rohingyas in Myanmar in 2011.

- ◆ Supported the UN plan of action for the role of Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes.

Track 3 – A geographical focus on the immediate neighborhood of the EU, including the Middle East and North Africa

Danish attention is focused on the Middle East and North Africa where FoRB is under pressure in several states, and the presence of ISIS has formed the backdrop of some of the worst persecutions of religious minorities in recent years.

As part of track 3, Denmark has taken the following actions, among others:

- ◆ Participated in international conferences aimed at building bridges between different religious groups and different religious approaches to FoRB.
- ◆ The Danish Christian-based organization, Danmission, successfully hosted, with support from the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme, a dialogue on strengthening Muslim-Christian relations in Amman with participants from Jordan, Lebanon, Denmark, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and Saudi-Arabia, and representatives from nine different religious groups: Protestants, Catholics, Maronites, Orthodox, Yazidis, Sunnis, Shias, Druzes, and Alawites.⁴⁹
- ◆ Strengthened the focus on FoRB, including the protection of religious minorities, in Denmark's development projects and programs.

- ◆ Denmark's efforts to support the stabilization of Iraq prioritize reconciliation and the establishment of trust between different religious groups. For instance, it provides funding to a reconciliation project managed by the UN Development Programme (UNDP), which includes several different religious groups in the reconciliation process. Denmark also supports the UN's Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS).⁵⁰

Track 4 – Collaboration on Freedom of Religion or Belief with specific countries

Denmark wishes to establish partnerships with a number of countries on matters related to FoRB to enhance dialogue and cooperation between Denmark and specific countries, including between the the civil societies of those countries. Where desired, these collaborations could result in the establishment of concrete projects aimed to promote FoRB, mutual understanding, and toleration between religious groups. The Office of the Special Representative for Freedom of Religion or Belief has currently initiated dialogues with the governments of Indonesia and Lebanon.

As part of track 4, Denmark has, among others, taken the following actions:

- ◆ Hosted an Indonesian interreligious-delegation of religious scholars and religious representatives from civil society organizations, including Professor Dr. Nasaruddin Umar, the Grand Imam of the Istiqlal Mosque in Jakarta.
- ◆ Allocated DKK 5 million (\$751,000 approx.) in the National Budget Act of 2019 to projects promoting FoRB.

- ◆ Increased the Danish Civil Society Fund from DKK 12 million to 20 million (\$1,803,000 to \$3,005,000 approx.), through which civil society actors and organizations can apply for grants for FoRB-related projects.
- ◆ Commissioned the Danish Institute for Human Rights to conduct a report on the International Promotion of Freedom of Religion or Belief. The report sketches the contours of a common framework for understanding and approaching international FoRB promotion and highlights five overall recommendations for actors engaged in this enterprise.⁵¹

Track 5 – Support to individuals persecuted for religious reasons

All over the world, individuals are persecuted based on their religion or belief. Individuals are persecuted for several reasons—e.g. converting to another religion, being an atheist, criticizing religion, interpreting or practicing their religion differently than the majority, or due to the fact that they belong to a specific religious minority.

The Danish Government has committed itself to pursue a number of cases with individuals persecuted for religious reasons through bilateral, EU, and multilateral cooperation. The Danish Government does not publish which cases it chooses to pursue due to the sensitive character of the cases and the safety and interests of those involved.

In January 2018, the Danish Government established the Danish Forum for Freedom of Religion or Belief.⁵² The aim of the Forum is to gather relevant

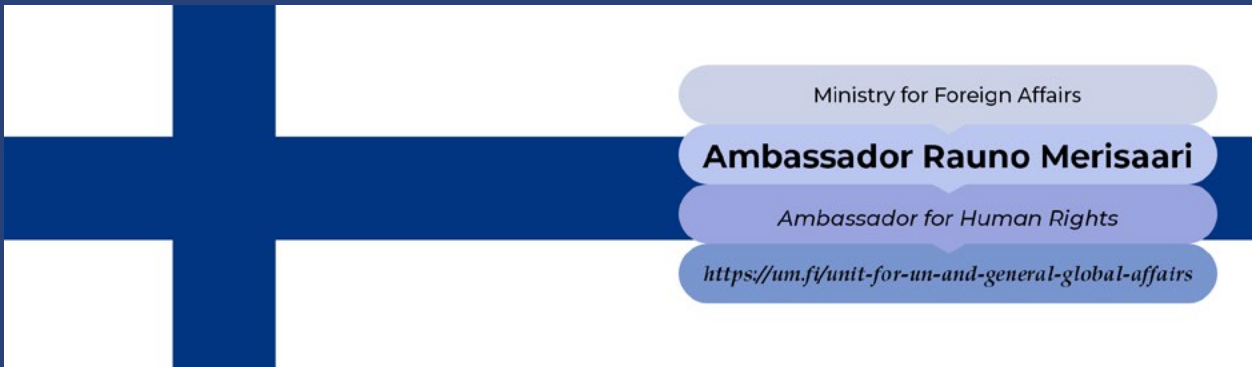
Danish actors from various faith-based and secular civil society actors, academia, religious institutions, and others who wished to promote freedom of religion or belief abroad.⁵³ The Forum for FoRB meets approximately twice a year.

The Danish Mission Council Development Department (DMRU) manages a “pooled fund on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs” that primarily supports poverty reduction initiatives in developing countries in which Council members and partners are active. A 2017 review of the pooled fund conducted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs notes that, in response to increased funding, the DMRU “is also expected to increasingly include activities in its portfolio that target freedom of religion and protection of religious minorities.” Future reports will indicate to what extent projects that support religious freedom and religious minorities have been incorporated as part of the pooled fund.

MULTILATERAL ENGAGEMENT

The Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs maintains a website detailing the activities of the Special Representative for Freedom of Religion or Belief that is updated frequently. Activities include bilateral and multilateral meetings with foreign governments and like-minded allies on issues of religious persecution overseas; participation in UN, EU, and OSCE conferences and regular meetings addressing questions of FoRB; and, meeting with faith communities and advocacy groups actively engaged in championing international religious freedom.⁵⁴

FINLAND



HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM POLICY

In 2013, the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) sponsored a working group composed of the Finnish Ecumenical Council (SEN) and various other faith-based organizations to “identify Finnish foreign policy priorities that support freedom of religion and offer recommendations on policy measures and instruments that are needed to safeguard its existence.” The efforts of this working group resulted in the publication of a comprehensive report, “Religious Freedom and Foreign Policy: Recommendations for Finland.” The goal of this report was to “raise religious

freedom from the margins to the mainstream” and to “make religious freedom an integral part of Finland’s foreign, security and development policy.”⁵⁵

The report states that “Finnish foreign policy has shown an interest in freedom of religion for reasons of principle, but this has rarely translated into practical initiatives for its advancement.” While Finland has taken some steps in recent years to better integrate religious freedom into its foreign policy, it is clear, as the report states, that “the principles and goals of Finland’s foreign policy [do] not explicitly mention religious freedom as a priority.”

The MFA states that the principles of non-discrimination and equality are cornerstones of Finland's international human rights policy, applicable to religious and non-religious individuals of all stripes. The MFA notes that "Finland devotes particular attention to the position of the Roma and other ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities."⁵⁶ However, neither the promotion of religious freedom nor protection of religious minorities are identified among Finland's five international human rights policy priorities. This is reflected in the most recent "Human Rights Strategy of the Foreign Service of Finland," which fails to mention the promotion of religious freedom and makes only a passing reference to those who face discrimination based on religion or belief.⁵⁷

According to the MFA, Finland's advocacy for religious freedom and religious minorities is rooted in the conception of freedom of thought and religion found in international human rights conventions, including Article 18 of the UDHR and Article 18 of the ICCPR.⁵⁸

KEY INSTITUTIONS

Finland does not have an ambassadorial post dedicated to the promotion of religious freedom or the protection of religious minorities, as was recommended in the above-mentioned working group report. However, the Ambassador at Large for Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue Processes works on peacebuilding and countering violent extremism (CVE) initiatives at both the bilateral and multilateral levels, which involve religious freedom aspects. This post is currently held by Ambassador Pekka Metso.⁵⁹

The National Forum for Cooperation of Religions in Finland (CORE) is a domestic coalition of actors representing the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim traditions that advocates for religious freedom and interreligious dialogue in Finland, non-discriminatory immigration policies, and "expertise in religions and religious freedom and the advancement of other human rights as a natural part to foreign policy and foreign aid policy."⁶⁰

The SEN has been a strong advocate for international religious freedom within Finnish civil society. It has engaged with the Finnish MFA on how best to advance religious freedom as a foreign policy priority and has advocated for a greater focus on the training of diplomats to this effect.⁶¹

POLICY & PROGRAMMING ACTIVITIES

In May 2016, the MFA hosted a seminar titled, "Religious Freedom and Protecting Religious Minorities." This conference was hosted in conjunction with Finn Church Aid, the Finnish Ecumenical Council, and the Network of Religious and Traditional Peacemakers. Minister for Foreign Affairs Timo Soini delivered the opening remarks for the event, focusing on the protection of religious minorities and CVE and calling "mediation and support to dialogue between cultures and religions" a "foreign policy priority."⁶²

The MFA notes that the purpose of the conference was to "increase awareness of the promotion and protection of the freedom of religion or conviction" and to "deal with the freedom of religion or conviction from the point of view of peace

and security.”⁶³ This suggests that Finland recognizes the strong relationship between religious freedom and national security.

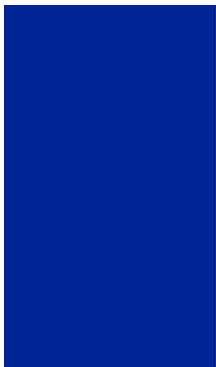
MULTILATERAL ENGAGEMENT

In 2013, Finland founded and is still the main donor to the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers, a global organization with connections to the UN and various faith-based intergovernmental organizations that is dedicated to connecting government actors with traditional and religious peacemakers in support of conflict transformation and dialogue efforts. The Network is actively involved in supporting peace processes throughout Africa and South-Central and East Asia.⁶⁴

DIPLOMATIC TRAINING EFFORTS

The MFA sponsored a day-long training session on religious freedom and foreign policy at the MFA in Helsinki in September 2016. This was in partnership with the SEN. Beyond this event, there is no available information suggesting the existence of broader Finnish diplomatic training efforts related to the promotion of religious freedom and the protection of religious minorities, despite this being a recommendation of the above-mentioned working group report.

FRANCE



Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs

Jean-Christophe Peaucelle

Counsellor for Religious Affairs

<https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/>

HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM POLICY

Article 2 of the French Constitution states that “France is an indivisible, secular, democratic, and social republic.” It ensures the equality of all citizens before the law, without distinction as to origin, race, or religion. It respects all beliefs. Article 77 states that “all citizens shall be equal before the law, regardless of their origin, race or religion. They shall have the same duties.” These Constitutional provisions, combined with the Law on the Separation of Church and State (1905), form the basis of France’s system of laïcité, or “secularism in the public square.” The promotion of secularism

in the public square represents the key difference between the American and French understandings of religious freedom.⁶⁵

France adheres to the definition of FoRB that is laid out in Article 18 of the UDHR and Article 18 of the ICCPR. France’s Foreign Ministry states that “in addition to freedom of religion, this right includes the right to adopt, change, or abandon a religion or belief, or to profess no religion or belief.” France views FoRB and freedom of opinion and expression as “intrinsically linked and mutually reinforcing principles founded in the universal, indivisible, and interrelated nature of all human rights.”⁶⁶

KEY INSTITUTIONS

The French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs has a Counsellor for Religious Affairs who is the lead in the foreign ministry for religious freedom and inter-religious dialogue. The position is currently held by Jean-Christophe Peaucelle, former Ambassador to Qatar. A 2015 report from the Transatlantic Academy on “Faith Freedom and Foreign Policy” affirms that France is among a small group of states that are particularly active in supporting the EU’s promotion of religious freedom. The same report notes that “France was the first (EU member state) to set up a specific unit within its Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs to address religion as well as similar outfits in the French Ministry of Defense and the French Development Branch.”⁶⁷

POLICY & PROGRAMMING ACTIVITIES

While limited information is available to indicate specific policy activities on the issue, the Foreign Ministry indicates that “at the international level, France advocates the universal scope of FoRB and of freedom of opinion and expression, upholding the view that the purpose of human rights is to protect individuals and not doctrines of thought such as religions and their symbols, which do not constitute subjects of law.”⁶⁸

MULTILATERAL ENGAGEMENTS

France advocates against laws prohibiting defamation of religion in international forums, including at the UN. It rejects any resolution that would permit an establishment of religion. The French Foreign Ministry notes its influence on the European Council’s adoption of a text in 2009 that reflects “the values of secularism (laïcité),” including the “need to provide adequate and effective guarantees of freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief,” including “the right to criticize religions.”⁶⁹

GERMANY



HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM POLICY

In 2010, the German Bundestag “passed a parliamentary resolution defending the fundamental human right to freedom of religion around the world.” Since the rise to power of the Christian Democratic Union of Germany (CDU) and the Christian Social Union in Bavaria (CSU) in 2005, the German Government under Chancellor Angela Merkel has embraced “a new commitment to make the promotion of religious freedom and the protection of Christian minorities a cornerstone of its foreign and security policy,” in line with its intention to promote a “value-based

foreign policy.” Dr. Thomas Schirmacher of the International Institute for Religious Freedom notes that Chancellor Merkel’s first government (2005-2009) was “the first to make religious freedom and an offensive engagement for persecuted Christians a central theme in foreign policy.”⁷⁰

The 2014 “Grand Coalition Multi-Party Government Agreement,” which provided an outline of German domestic and foreign policy priorities under Chancellor Merkel’s third government (2014-2017), reaffirmed freedom of religion as a “foreign policy priority of the new government.”⁷¹ The Agreement called freedom of religion “a

fundamental right” and noted “special concern for solidarity with disadvantaged and suppressed religious minorities,” particularly Christians. It also noted that German support for countries in the Arab world was based on various criteria, including the protection of religious freedom, particularly for religious minorities.

The German Foreign Federal Office employs the term “freedom of religion and thought” and identifies the promotion of this freedom as an “important part of Germany’s human rights policy.” The Foreign Federal Office believes that freedom of religion and thought “includes the freedom of an individual to have or to adopt a religion or world view of their choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others, to practice their religion or world view without interference.” It also includes the freedom to convert and the freedom not to adhere to any religion as encompassed under this more general term. This conception of religious freedom is largely in line with that which is promoted in the UDHR and ICCPR.

The aforementioned 2010 Bundestag resolution highlights “the right to publicly practice one’s faith and to attract new followers through preaching and missionary activities,” the freedom to convert or to have no religion, and the efforts of Muslim states to enshrine “protection of religion in international law” as three key areas where religious freedom is under threat and should be defended.

In April 2018, the Bundestag embraced the recommendation of the Committee on Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid and adopted a resolution on the

worldwide situation of FoRB. The resolution recognized the critical role of the freedom of religion in fostering durable peace and security. It also called for greater implementation of a strategy of the German Development Ministry to highlight the role of religion in development cooperation in order to strengthen human rights worldwide.⁷²

KEY INSTITUTIONS

The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), which is tasked with directing Germany’s international development policy, is actively encouraging the role of religion, religious communities, and faith-based development organizations in international development. Under Minister Gerd Müller, who is a CSU minister, the BMZ has developed several policies that support discussion of the role of religion in international development and the unique role that German churches and denominations can play in delivering overseas aid.⁷³

In April 2018, Markus Grübel was appointed as a new Federal Government Commissioner for Global Freedom of Religion within the Development Ministry. In his announcement Minister Müller said, “By setting up a new office for a Commissioner for Global Freedom of Religion, the German government is sending a clear message that it supports freedom of religion and interfaith dialogue with the aim of emphasizing shared values and promoting peace. In Markus Grübel, we have a skilled professional with considerable experience at international level at the helm of this new office.”⁷⁴

The Federal Foreign Office is led by Foreign Minister Heiko Maas.⁷⁵ The Commissioner for Human Rights Policy and Humanitarian Aid is Bärbel Kofler, who is charged with leading the work of German foreign policy in protecting human rights and promoting universal respect for them in multilateral forums.⁷⁶

In 2016, the German Foreign Federal Office established a Task Force on the Responsibility of Religions for Peace. It is responsible for developing a more strategic foreign policy approach toward engaging politically active religious actors and institutions abroad.⁷⁷

This engagement includes supporting the work of religious actors in areas like peacebuilding and education. The Task Force has been compared to the now defunct Office of Religion and Global Affairs at the U.S. Department of State.⁷⁸

Over 70 parliamentarians predominantly from the CDU and CSU, including Chancellor Merkel, have created a group called the Stefanuskreis (Stephens Circle) that “focuses on religious freedom internationally with an emphasis on Christian persecution.” Additionally, Heiner Bielefeldt, a German, served as the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief from 2010 to 2016.⁷⁹

Chancellor Merkel is a member of the International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief (IPPFoRB) and was the keynote speaker at the IPPFoRB’s 2016 conference

“An Embattled Right: Protecting and Promoting Freedom of Religion or Belief,” which took place in Berlin and was co-hosted along with the CDU/CSU Parliamentary Group and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation.⁸⁰ In previous remarks, she has identified the protection of religious freedom as “an important part of German foreign policy and human rights efforts.”⁸¹

POLICY & PROGRAMMING ACTIVITIES

In 2016, the German Government published a report on the status of religion and thought worldwide, which identifies major violations of the freedom of religion and thought, including “the perpetration of violence in a religious context,” and provides an overview of Germany’s “foreign policy endeavors to prevent violations” of freedom of religion and thought.⁸²

The German Foreign Federal Office notes that Germany and its EU partners “seek to protect and foster freedom of religion and thought in its bilateral political dialogue with third countries.” Germany also “provides systematic support to projects designed to enhance universal respect for freedom of religion and thought, in particular to intercultural dialogue programs aimed at promoting better understanding between people of different faiths.”⁸³



In May 2017, the Foreign Federal Office hosted a Conference on the Responsibility of Religions for Peace that included 100 faith leaders from 53 countries. This conference has prompted evaluation by the Task Force of the ways that the German government can better support peace processes at the regional and local levels through, among other means, the provision of training for religious leaders, in conjunction with German foreign missions.

It is unclear what the resources and programmatic mandate is for the Commissioner for Global Freedom of Religion Markus Grübel. He has led engagement with representatives from various ethnic and religious communities in Iraq to engage in supporting the necessary conditions for peaceful coexistence for all religious communities. In these conversations, he explored the intersection with the relief and development projects supported by the German government.⁸⁴

MULTILATERAL ENGAGEMENT

As documented by the Federal Foreign Office, freedom of religion and thought is an important component of Germany's overall approach to human rights. Religious freedom is regularly a component of EU activities. Germany is an active participant in the EU's Working Party on Human Rights (COHOM), which produced the 2013 "EU Guidelines on the promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief."⁸⁵ Freedom of religion concerns are a part of bilateral relations between Germany and countries of concern. As examples, a 2016 Federal Foreign Office report cited freedom of religion as part of the human rights

dialogue with Egypt, Algeria, Bangladesh, Georgia, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, Mexico, Myanmar, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam.⁸⁶

Germany also aims to incorporate freedom of religion activities into its work at the UN through bodies including the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, and the Universal Periodic Review, and the interactive dialogues with special rapporteurs on thematic or country issues.⁸⁷

GREECE

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Efstathios C. Lianos Liantis

Special Secretary for Religious and Cultural Diplomacy

<https://www.mfa.gr/en/leadership/secretaries-general/special-secretary-for-religious-and-cultural-diplomacy.html>

HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM POLICY

Greece maintains strong historical ties with the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the other Greek Orthodox Patriarchates, and the Orthodox Autocephalous Churches, and supports their initiatives on issues related to the interreligious and intercultural dialogue, the protection of religious freedom, the protection of the environment, and the religious heritage. It also maintains strong ties with the Holy Monastery of the Mount Sinai (Saint Catherine's Monastery), the oldest Christian monastery, with unique spiritual and cultural treasures, a sacred place revered by Christians, Muslims and Jews.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs follows the activities of the World Council of Churches, the relations between the Orthodox Churches, as well as the relation of the Orthodox Churches with other Christian Churches with which they maintain regular contact. In the context of religious diplomacy, Greece supports and promotes international initiatives and interfaith contacts of its Christian, Muslim, and Jewish institutions.

The dialogue among the Orthodox Churches and the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church, convened from 16 to 27 June 2016 at the premises of the Orthodox Academy of Crete, have been followed with great interest by Orthodox Christians, Christians worldwide, and

people from around the globe. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs had established a Special Committee of the Holy and Great Council for public sector coordination to support the organization.

The dialogue between the Orthodox Churches and other Christian Churches and Confessions has led to cooperation for the promotion of human values and the protection of the environment.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs attaches particular importance to the inter-religious dialogue, which promotes respect for the rights of religious communities and enhances understanding between religions. Inter-religious dialogue is an issue of high priority in the agenda of international organizations. Greece supports the action taken by the Greek Orthodox Churches in this respect.

Mount Athos is the most important monastic center of the Orthodox Church and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Promoting the monastic community as a major cultural heritage center and its relations with the Greek State, constitute a high priority of ecclesiastical diplomacy. In this context, the supervision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the Civil Governor of Mount Athos, in accordance with the provisions of Article 105 of the Greek Constitution, are also noteworthy.

Finally, there is constant cooperation with the Church of Greece on issues related to international activities, ecclesiastical diplomacy, and the promotion of religious tourism in Greece.

KEY INSTITUTIONS

Within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic is the position of Special Secretary for Religious and Cultural Diplomacy. The current holder of the position is Dr. Efstathios C. Lianos Liantis.⁸⁸ He serves concurrently as Greece's Special Envoy on Combatting Antisemitism and Preserving Holocaust Remembrance and as Head of the Greek Delegation to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. The Special Secretariat for Religious and Cultural Diplomacy is the Unified Administrative Sector of the E1 Directorate for Educational and Cultural Affairs and the E2 Directorate for Religious and Ecclesiastical Affairs, and was created in order to supervise, study, and recommend solutions of all matters and affairs pertaining to religious institutions outside Greece, and to create synergies between culture, education, and economy, utilizing either educational institutions or the existing facilities of select Greek agencies located in areas of particular natural, historical, and cultural value.

The operation of the Unified Administrative Sector is defined according to the clauses of the Common Ministerial Decisions P23E1-42372/P23E2/29-12-2015 (FEK B 2921/31-12-2015) and P13-1517/19-1-2016 (FEK B 25/22-1-2016).

POLICY & PROGRAMMING ACTIVITIES

With regard to the ongoing crisis in the Middle East – where the Patriarchates

of Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem and Saint Catherine's Monastery in Sinai have been present for many centuries – Greece follows developments closely and expresses its strong interest in the protection of the local Christian communities and Christian shrines and monuments. In this context, the 1st And 2nd International Conferences on the Religious and Cultural Pluralism and

Peaceful Coexistence in the Middle East were organized in Athens in 2015 and 2017.⁸⁹ Patriarchs of the Orthodox Church, Primate of Christian Churches, religious leaders and high representatives of the major world religions, and prominent personalities of international politics, academic communities, and civil society participated and intervened. They also focused on the future challenges religious pluralism will face in the region and proposed possible arenas in which religious coexistence and pluralism could be further developed. More specifically, the participants underlined the role of religious communities and leaders in shaping the development of policies related to refugees and migrants and stressed the important role media and education can play in both conflict prevention and in the course of a conflict.

In 2019 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs organized a conference on the subject, “Reflections of Principles of Policy and Strategic Drawing on Religious and Ecclesiastical Diplomacy.”⁹⁰

Seven sessions and more than 40 speakers from religious and ecclesiastical institutions operating in Greece attempted to give clear answers to the

practical application of religious and ecclesiastical diplomacy.


MULTILATERAL ENGAGEMENTS

Through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Greece is a member of The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) and The European Parliament Working Group on Antisemitism, and when appropriate, addresses issues of religious freedom in these venues.

DIPLOMATIC TRAINING EFFORTS

The Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs has specific training modules on international religious freedom for its diplomatic staff. The candidates in the Diplomatic Academy during CYCLE B of their initial training have two weeks of seminars on religious diplomacy, religious freedom, protection against violence in the name of religion, and hate speech. In these seminars they examine pertinent issues of law, privacy, peace, and security.

HOLY SEE



Roman Curia

H.E. Bishop Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot

President of Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue

<https://www.pcinterreligious.org/>

HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM POLICY

The Holy See first embraced a comprehensive definition of religious freedom when Pope St. Paul VI promulgated the Second Vatican Council's Declaration on Religious Freedom (also known by its Latin name, *Dignitatis Humanæ*) on December 7, 1965. With its global reach and moral stature, the Holy See has been a strong advocate of religious freedom for people of all faith traditions since this time. Pope Paul VI's successors, including Pope Francis, have championed religious freedom in the light of *Dignitatis Humanæ*.

The Holy See has the world's oldest diplomatic corps and maintains diplomatic relations with 182 states, second in scope only to the United States. The Holy See has identified "the priority of the human person, of his dignity and rights," including the right to freedom of conscience and of religion, as a cornerstone and guiding principle in its bilateral and multilateral diplomacy. It has also highlighted "respect for cultures and religious traditions" as a focus of its work in multilateral forums.⁹¹

Dignitatis Humanæ states that "the human person has a right to religious freedom," which itself "has to do with immunity from coercion in civil society."⁹²

Religious freedom is conceived as the freedom to “actively seek religious truth and fully live out that truth in public and private” without coercion from the state. Emphasis is placed on the “freedom to practice our faith in public.”⁹³

KEY INSTITUTIONS

The Secretariat of State, established in the 15th century, serves as the governing bureaucracy of the Catholic Church, organizing and implementing the Holy See’s diplomatic activities. The current Secretary of State, who is also the second highest-ranking Holy See official after the Pope, is Pietro Cardinal Parolin (Italy). Within the Secretariat of State, the Secretary for Relations with States (the equivalent of a Foreign Minister) oversees the Holy See’s bilateral relations and participation in multilateral organizations, including issues dealing with religious freedom. The current Secretary for Relations with States is Archbishop Paul Gallagher (United Kingdom).

The primary institution dedicated to the promotion of religious freedom is the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue, a dicastery of the Roman Curia that was established in 1964. The Council was headed by Jean-Louis Card. Tauran (France) until his death in late 2018; the position remains vacant to-date.

Other dicasteries within the Roman Curia whose portfolios work to secure religious freedom include: the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which was established in 1542 and is currently headed by Luis Ladaria Card. Ferrer, S.J. (Spain); the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, which was established in the lead up to the Second

Vatican Council and is currently headed by Kurt Card. Koch (Switzerland); the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, which was established in 1917 and is currently headed by Leonardo Cardinal Sandri (Argentina); the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, which was founded in 1622 and is currently headed by Fernando Card. Filoni (Italy); the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization, which was established in 2010 and is currently headed by Archbishop Salvatore Fisichella (Italy); and the Pontifical Council for Culture, which was established in 1982 and is currently headed by Gianfranco Card. Ravasi (Italy).⁹⁴

POLICY & PROGRAMMING ACTIVITIES

As noted above, the Holy See has the world’s oldest diplomatic corps and maintains diplomatic relations with 182 states. Apostolic Nuncios, the Holy See’s equivalent to an ambassador, are tasked specifically with promoting freedom of conscience and religion.

The Holy See supports various papal charities, organized through the Office of Papal Charities, that conduct work in support of religious freedom and religious minorities throughout the world.⁹⁵ Caritas Internationalis is a confederation of over 160 Catholic members conducting humanitarian and development work around the world. Additionally, there is the pontifical charity, Catholic Near East Welfare Association (CNEWA), whose humanitarian work is based in the Middle East, Northeast Africa, India, and Eastern Europe. It is among those organizations active in locations where religious freedom is violated and/or not protected.⁹⁶

In March 2017, the Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations in Geneva sponsored an event on Mutual Respect and Peaceful Coexistence as a Condition of Interreligious Peace and Stability: Supporting Christians and Other Communities.⁹⁷

In April 2017, the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations hosted a side event in the Economic and Social Council Chamber on Defending Religious Freedom and Other Human Rights: Stopping Mass Atrocities Against Christians and Other Believers. This event was intended to mobilize international support for religious freedom and the defense of religious minorities, focusing specifically on the plight of Christians and other persecuted religious groups in the Middle East and North Africa.⁹⁸

In September 2017, the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations sponsored a side event on the Protection of Religious Minorities in Conflict. At the event, Archbishop Paul Gallagher asserted that protecting religious minorities was “one of the most urgent responsibilities of the international community.”⁹⁹

persecution of Christians and other religious groups in the Middle East and Africa.¹⁰¹

In June 2015, The Holy See became a founding member of the International Contact Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief.

MULTILATERAL ENGAGEMENT

As a Permanent Observer to the UN, in contrast to a Permanent Representative, the Holy See is a strong advocate for religious freedom and religious minorities at both the UN General Assembly in New York and the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.¹⁰⁰ During his address to the UN General Assembly in 2015, Pope Francis referenced the importance of religious freedom and condemned the

HUNGARY

State Secretariat for the Aid of Persecuted Christians
and the Hungary Helps Program

Tristan Azbej

State Secretary for the Aid of Persecuted Christians

<https://www.kormany.hu/en/prime-minister-s-office/state-secretariat-for-the-aid-of-persecuted-christians-and-for-the-hungary-helps-program>

HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM POLICY

Hungary was the first state where the Diet adopted a decree on religious freedom in 1568. Moreover, Hungary was one of the first European states to give equal rights to Jewish people with the law of emancipation in 1868.

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Since Viktor Orbán became Prime Minister in 2010, Hungary has taken a strong policy position championing religious freedom abroad, especially with regards to support for persecuted Christian communities. This position puts Hungary at odds with a comprehensive conception of religious freedom that

defends the right of individuals from all faith traditions, as well as those who do not adhere to any faith tradition, to worship freely and engage in the public square using religious argumentation.

Prime Minister Orbán has stated that Christian persecution, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa, “threatens European values,” and that, “what is at stake today is nothing less than the future of the European way of life.” He has identified the “indifferent, apathetic silence of a Europe which denies its Christian roots” as, “the greatest danger we face today.” Furthermore, Orbán has decried the attempt to “create a mixed society in Europe which... will

utterly transform the cultural and ethnic composition of our continent – and consequently its Christian identity.” He continued that “there could be no excuse for Hungarians not taking action and not honoring the obligation rooted in their Christian faith to defend persecuted Christians,” while also decrying the neglect of other governments, international organizations, and Christian politicians, in addressing this global problem in a substantive way.¹⁰²

KEY INSTITUTIONS

In 2016, Hungarian Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán, and Minister of Human Capacities, Zoltán Balog, met with church leaders from the Middle East at an international conference of Christian MP’s in Frascati, Italy. The religious leaders informed the Hungarian politicians about the persecution against their churches and requested Hungary’s help. Following this encounter, the Hungarian Parliament passed an all-party resolution on *condemning the persecution of Christians and genocide in the Middle East and Africa, and supporting the persecuted*.¹⁰³ As a result of the meeting in Frascati, the Government of Hungary established the Deputy State Secretariat for the Aid of Persecuted Christians, beginning its work on 15 October 2016.¹⁰⁴ Acknowledging results achieved, as well as the Hungarian Government’s continued commitment to persecuted Christians, the Deputy Secretariat became the State Secretariat for the Aid of Persecuted Christians and the Hungary Helps Program in October 2018. This is the only government ministry in the world specifically dedicated to aiding persecuted Christians.¹⁰⁵

The Hungary Helps Program, established

by Government Decision 244/2017 (VIII. 28.), aims to deliver the official development assistance and international humanitarian aid provided by Hungary within a unified portfolio.

Based on the Act CXX of 2018 in the Hungary Helps Program, the coordination of international humanitarian aid has been transferred to the State Secretariat for the Aid of Persecuted Christians and for the Hungary Helps Program of the Prime Minister’s Office, and the Hungary Helps Agency established on 14 April 2019. The Hungary Helps Agency is a fully state-owned non-profit private limited company whose task is to fulfil the functions related to the deliverance of the budgetary resources, including aid and donations, appropriated under Parliamentary Act CXCV of 2011.¹⁰⁶ The Hungary Helps Agency works to ensure rapid and effective assistance to persecuted Christians and victims of humanitarian catastrophes. The agency further contributes to Hungary’s international efforts to eradicate the root causes of migration through direct local assistance.

POLICY & PROGRAMMING ACTIVITIES

The Government Decree to establish the State Secretariat determined that international advocacy should be its main task. Therefore, its presence in international fora and efforts to build relations with faith-based and charitable organizations that provide assistance to persecuted people are of primary importance. Hungary has consistently called for a “coordinated international response” to address the problem of Christian persecution.

Following the International Consultation on Christian Persecution, Deputy State Secretary Tristan Azbej stated that the “suppression of news reports in the West concerning the persecution of Christians is not spontaneous, but intentional.”¹⁰⁷ Besides strengthening bilateral relations, building contacts with national representatives of religious freedom and close cooperation with V4 countries are also priorities for the State Secretariat. It consistently stands for the protection of persecuted Christians at events organized by multilateral organizations, and continuously develops relations with special envoys for the promotion of FoRB. Recognizing Hungary’s unique mission, USAID initiated cooperation with the Hungarian Government which resulted in the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on 18 December 2018. The Memorandum focused on cooperation in the Middle East.¹⁰⁸

The State Secretariat hosted and co-organized several international conferences in Hungary on the themes of religious freedom, Christian persecution and international development cooperation. In October 2017, the State Secretariat organized the International Consultation on Christian Persecution: Finding the Appropriate Answers to a Long-Neglected Crisis. This event, attended by 450 (mostly non-governmental) participants from 32 countries and EU Special Envoy for FoRB, Ján Figel', marked the first “major conference ever held by a government in support of persecuted Christians.” State Secretary Azbej (then Deputy State Secretary) said that the goal of the conference was “to acquire first-hand information from leaders of persecuted Christian communities about the status of their communities, the dangers

they face and possibilities to provide assistance.”¹⁰⁹

The conference resulted in the Budapest Declaration, a series of thirteen recommendations relating to the promotion and protection of religious freedom which were formulated by the conference participants.¹¹⁰

Hungary’s State Secretariat regularly invites church leaders from conflict zones and persecuted Christians to give testimony and provide direct information on their situation. Many such guests were also received by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. Political leaders responsible for the protection of religious freedom and humanitarian assistance often visit Hungary at the invitation of the State Secretariat.

Prime Minister Orbán has an established relationship with Ján Figel', the EU Special Envoy for FoRB. Orbán has reinforced Hungary’s belief that it is best to provide assistance in “affected regions” to address Christian persecution, rather than “bringing the trouble into Europe.” Further, Orbán has stated that the Deputy State Secretariat for the Aid of Persecuted Christians works “in cooperation with churches, non-governmental organizations, the UN, The Hague, and the European Parliament.”¹¹¹

MULTILATERAL ENGAGEMENTS

Hungary has consistently called for a “coordinated international response” to address the problem of Christian persecution.

Prime Minister Orbán stated that Hungary has decided to deliver aid “directly to the churches of persecuted

communities,” as opposed to “the channels established earlier, which seek to assist the persecuted as best they can within the framework of international aid.”

Since the appointment of State Secretary Azbej, the State Secretariat has been engaged actively in building Hungarian-American relations. The State Secretary addressed the In Defense of Christians Summit in October 2017, during which U.S. Vice President Mike Pence made an announcement of primary importance: namely, the U.S. would directly support persecuted religious communities in the Middle East through USAID, rather than through the UN.

State Secretary Azbej has maintained close contact with Sam Brownback, U.S. Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom. Ambassador Brownback considers the Hungarian program for the aid of persecuted Christians to be exemplary, often highlighting Hungary’s activities at his meetings. Furthermore, Brownback proposed the implementation of this successful pilot program to American leaders. Upon the invitation of State Secretary Azbej, Ambassador Brownback visited Hungary on 14 November 2018. He was received by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Péter Szijjártó. Ambassador Brownback conducted separate talks with State Secretary Azbej about expanding Hungarian-American cooperation in the field of religious freedom and the defense of persecuted Christians.

Closer relations with USAID marked a new chapter in the activities of the State Secretariat. In September 2018, State

Secretary Azbej held talks with State Department officials and introduced the Hungary Helps Program at a Senate roundtable discussion. USAID leaders initiated the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with the Hungarian Government, seeking to strengthen joint Hungarian-American efforts, and negotiated concrete projects with the State Secretary at USAID headquarters in Washington D.C.

As international advocacy and awareness-raising is among the primary objectives of the State Secretariat, informing the public and presenting the plight of persecuted Christians has also occurred. The State Secretariat initiated the Cross-in-Fire exhibition in Washington D.C., February 2018, to illustrate the destruction by Da’esh. The exhibition was also opened by the State Secretary in New York of April that same year.¹¹² To address the national and international community, the State Secretariat organized a roll-up exhibition on Christian persecution in the Middle East and Africa. The exhibition was opened in Washington D.C. and Ottawa.

ITALY



HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM POLICY

The protection and promotion of freedom of religion or belief and of the rights of ethnic and religious minorities are key priorities for Italian foreign policy. This is the case in both multilateral and bilateral frameworks as well as in the field of development cooperation.¹¹³

The Italian conception of religious freedom is consistent with that advanced in UN and EU major documents, along with most of the other EU members described in this report. Foreign policy initiatives in this field are based on a broad conception of religious freedom

which recognizes all kinds of religions and faiths as well as those who do not adhere to a faith tradition.

The Italian approach to FoRB derives from Italy's geographical location at the center of the Mediterranean, and thus at the intersection of multiple civilizations. Its approach to FoRB is also shaped by its strong relationship with Islam, Christianity and Judaism.

Italy first began to incorporate religious freedom as a component of its foreign policy during the second tenure of Franco Frattini as Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2008. Under Frattini, Italy's primary foreign policy concern related to religious

freedom was the protection of Christian minorities, particularly in Pakistan. The major accomplishment of Frattini's three years in office was Italy's work to pass the UN Human Rights Council "Resolution on combating religious intolerance and violence against persons based on religion or belief" in 2011.¹¹⁴

Under Frattini's successor, Giulio Terzi di Sant'Agata, Italy took further steps to incorporate religious freedom as a component of its foreign policy, most notably through the establishment of the Italian Oversight Committee for Religious Freedom in 2012, which was active till 2014. The purpose of the Committee was to "monitor and combat violations of religious freedom around the world." The Committee was led by a coordinator, Massimo Introvigne, and supported by two diplomats and two non-governmental representatives.

In the last five years, FoRB has received further political attention and support, and many initiatives and policies were implemented. Among them, Angelino Alfano sponsored the creation of the "Observatory on the respect of religious freedom in the world" in 2017, and supported the creation of Humanitarian Corridors to provide safe and legal access to Europe for refugees fleeing from conflict zones.¹¹⁵

The new government implemented other specific instruments, such as the inclusion of an ad hoc fund in the 2019 budget law, which is dedicated to interventions in favor of Christian

minorities subject to persecution in crisis areas. Other examples are the increase in contributions to projects of Italian NGOs and international organizations designed to alleviate sufferings of displaced people and victims of conflicts, especially Yazidi minorities.

KEY INSTITUTIONS

The Office for Human Rights of the Political Directorate and the Policy Planning Unit within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs maintain a strong and well-established focus on religion and international relations.

POLICY & PROGRAMMING ACTIVITIES

Italy has implemented a number of specific initiatives aimed at the promotion and protection of FoRB, both in Italy and abroad.

- ◆ It participates in the International Contact Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief, established in 2015, aiming to facilitate the monitoring of risk situations, and the exchange of information and good practices between member States.
- ◆ As mentioned above, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MFAIC) launched the "Observatory on respect for religious freedom in the world," in 2017, headed by Professor Salvatore Martinez. The Observatory's aim is to monitor the conditions of



religious minorities worldwide and to recommend initiatives that raise religious awareness in Italy and abroad.¹¹⁶

- ◆ On the occasion of the launch of the Observatory, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs hosted the international conference "Protecting religious communities: investing in young people as protagonists of a new season of encounter, dialogue and peaceful coexistence among peoples," dedicated to the role that young people play in fostering FoRB.
- ◆ Since 2009, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs organizes with an Italian think tank, ISPI, an annual international seminar that gathers policymakers, scholars, and members of religious communities. The objective of the seminar is to raise awareness about the growing relevance of religion in international affairs, with a specific FoRB focus in the Italian foreign policymaking community.
- ◆ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also supported the broad consultation on FoRB organized by Sussex University and ISPI, which resulted in the report, "Interreligious engagement strategies: a policy tool to advance freedom of religion or believe." The report was presented on the occasion of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Ministerial Conference in Milan, December 2018.¹¹⁷
- ◆ In December 2017, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs organized the international conference: "The dialogue between cultures and religions in the promotion of peace: 800 years of Franciscan

presence in the Holy Land." The aim of the conference was to inspire a reflection on the fundamental role of interreligious dialogue in the promotion of peace and in the construction of inclusive societies, taking inspiration from the 800th anniversary of the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land.

- ◆ The Policy Planning Unit of the Italian MFAIC is part of the Transatlantic Network on Religion and Diplomacy, a forum of diplomats from Europe and North America who collaborate on religion-related policy issues, launched in 2015.¹¹⁸
- ◆ The Italian MFAIC strongly supported the foundation of the European Academy of Religions, a platform dedicated to scientific academies and associations, research centers and institutions from Europe and the surrounding region, committed to supporting academic and interdisciplinary exchanges. The goal of this foundation is to promote mutual respect between communities of different religions or beliefs.
- ◆ As mentioned above, the new Italian law aimed at financially contributing to research projects in the field of foreign policy and international relations (art. 23-bis DPR 18/1967), contains a specific reference to "persecutions against Christian and other religious, ethnic and political minorities around the world," a key strategic priority for Italian foreign policy.

The Italian diplomatic network monitors the human rights situation all over the

world, with a particular focus on the protection of religious freedom. In some cases, on the basis of the situation on the ground, Italian Embassies and Consulates intervene to prevent serious violations of human rights based on religious discrimination.

One example is the case of Mariam Ibrahim, a Sudanese Christian woman who faced a death sentence and 100 lashes. She was charged with apostasy, accused of illegally renouncing what was alleged to be her original faith. After 6 months of detention (from December 2013 to June 2014), she was released and allowed to leave Sudan for Italy, then onto the US, thanks to the mediation of the Italian Embassy in Khartoum.

Moreover, the diplomatic network is also active on numerous projects to promote tolerance, intercultural and interreligious dialogue, respect for diversity and the fight against sectarian violence, in order to create open, inclusive and pluralistic societies.

Among the initiatives carried out on the ground, the MFAIC supported the conference, Human Rights and Freedom of Religion, held in Baghdad in 2016 and promoted by the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart. Main themes throughout the conference were the promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, the fight against sectarian violence and the spread of a culture of respect for diversity. The reflections begun at this conference continued in 2018 at the following event, Religious Freedom and Human Rights in the Middle East, organized in Amman.

MULTILATERAL ENGAGEMENTS

United Nations

Within the UN, Italy supported a number of resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council on the protection of freedom of religion or belief. Italy further co-sponsored and actively contributed to the negotiations of EU-led FoRB Resolutions, both in the Human Rights Council and in the UN General Assembly (Third Committee).

Italy also supports the initiatives aimed at promoting interreligious dialogue, endorsed by the Office of the Special Advisor of the UN Secretary General for the prevention of genocide. In this context, Italy hosted the first seminar of religious leaders of the European area in Treviso, September 2015, followed by other seminars on a regional basis.

In 2018, Italy was elected member to the Human Rights Council of the United Nations for the 2019-2021 term. FoRB and the protection of religious minorities are among the priorities of Italy's mandate.¹¹⁹ Italy gives particular attention to FoRB issue also in the context of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the Human Rights Council, and it regularly addresses recommendations on this subject to the States under examination.

EU

Within the European Union, thanks to Italy's commitment, FoRB continues to be a priority in the field of human rights.

Italy was a key player in drafting the EU Guidelines for the Protection and Promotion of Freedom of Religion or

Belief in 2013,¹²⁰ and in the establishment of an informal working group on FoRB within the European Union. Italy also contributed to the inclusion of specific actions to promote and protect the rights of religious minorities and interreligious dialogue in the EU Action Plan for Human Rights and Democracy, 2015-2019.

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, OSCE

During the Italian OSCE 2018 Presidency, Italy paid particular attention to the phenomenon of combating all forms of discrimination and intolerance.¹²¹ Following the practice of past presidencies, the MFAIC appointed three Personal Representatives of the Chairman-in-Office on tolerance and non-discrimination, particularly on a religious basis. The Personal Representatives were tasked with the implementation of the commitments of the OSCE member States and to suggest recommendations, in coordination with the Presidency and with the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.

In January 2018, the Italian Presidency opened with an international conference organized in Rome and dedicated to combating anti-Semitism, which gathered Ministers and high-level representatives of the governments of the OSCE countries and beyond. In November 2018, Italy organized a second conference on combating intolerance and discrimination, including on a religious basis, with a focus on Christians and Muslims. The conference reaffirmed the correlation between religious freedom, combating discrimination, including on religious grounds, and security in the OSCE area.

G7

Within the G7, on Italian impulse, the joint Communiqué of the Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Lucca in 2017 reaffirmed the importance of promoting pluralism, inclusion, respect for diversity, as well as intercultural and interreligious dialogue, and FoRB. The Communiqué also expressed strong concern for all cases of persecution against persons belonging to religious or ethnic minorities in the world.

Development Cooperation

Italy supports a number of development cooperation programs in support of religious communities who are victims of sectarian violence, particularly in the Middle East.

In response to discrimination and violence perpetrated in Iraq, the Italian Cooperation provided humanitarian contributions to UNICEF (€ 1 million) in 2018, for health care and psychosocial support for girls kidnapped by Daesh and subsequently released. Yazidi population was among the beneficiaries of the initiatives.

Since 2015, in the framework of the Global Coalition to Defeat Daesh, Italy has also financed (a total amount of € 11.8 million) the Funding Facility for Immediate Stabilization (FFIS), a fund managed by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and aimed at the stabilization of the areas in Iraq freed from Daesh.¹²² The activities financed by Italy, both through the Fund and through other international organizations, promote the reconciliation between the ethnic-religious groups involved in the conflict.

The Italian Government also supported the Humanitarian Corridor project. The initiative was launched in 2016 by the Community of Sant'Egidio, together with the federation of Evangelical Churches and the Waldensian Table, to provide safe and legal access to Europe for hundreds of refugee families fleeing civil wars and conflict zones.

With specific regard to Christians, the 2019 Budget Act has introduced an ad hoc fund, managed by the Italian Cooperation, to finance interventions in crisis areas in favor of Christian minorities subject to persecution. € 2 million will be allocated yearly to the fund in 2019 and 2020, and € 4 million from 2021. Projects financed under this fund will be implemented in an inclusive manner, with the additional purpose of fostering interreligious dialogue.

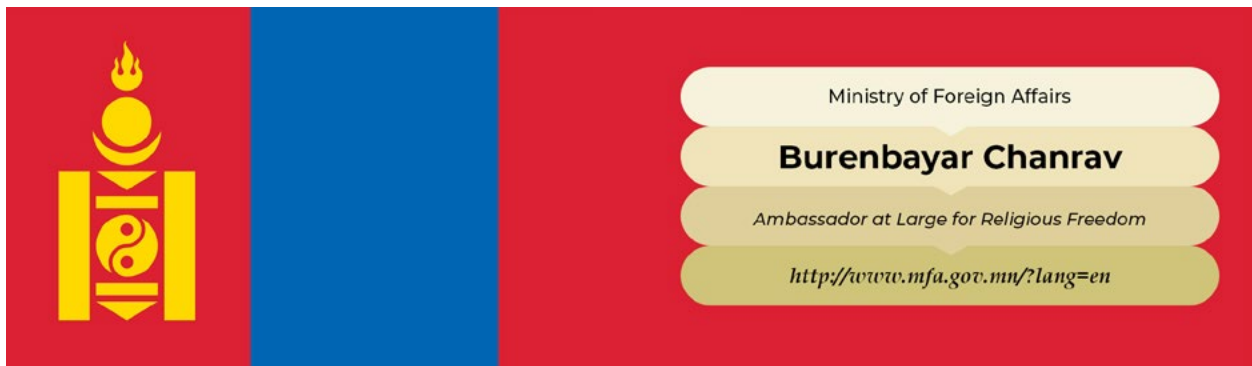
The protection of cultural and religious heritage is also linked to the protection and promotion of religious freedom. In this regard, Italy supports a renewed action by the international community to defend cultural and religious heritage.

Italy has paid particular attention to the humanitarian crisis that affected the Rohingya people in Rakhine State in Myanmar. At the Geneva donors' conference in October 2017, Italy pledged a financial contribution of € 7 million through 2017-2018.¹²³ These resources were allocated to bring humanitarian relief to Rohingya in Myanmar and Bangladesh.

DIPLOMATIC TRAINING EFFORTS

From 2019, the Italian MFAIC has included a visit to the Shoah Museum of Rome among the new diplomats' activities. At the Museum, MFAIC has collaborated on an exhibition, "Solo il dovere. Oltre il dovere," dedicated to the role of Italian diplomats' efforts to save Jewish people from Fascist and Nazi persecutions in the 30s and 40s. The aim of the exhibition is to raise awareness among young diplomats on the importance of the protection of religious minorities from State sponsored persecutions.

MONGOLIA



HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM POLICY

Mongolia's foreign ministry first became actively involved in international religious freedom advocacy in June 2008. With the help of the International Religious Liberty Association, Mongolia's Council for Religious Affairs—a 13-member governmental consultative body on relations between domestic religious groups—hosted the country's first ever religious liberty symposium. The symposium was attended by close to 50 governmental and religious figureheads from the region. At its conclusion, the symposium sought to host a full religious freedom conference as well

as the 3rd Asian Congress on Religious Liberty. Unfortunately, neither goal appears to have become a reality. Since the symposium, Mongolia has had little presence in the international religious freedom sphere.

In 2018, the northern Asian nation appeared to be seeking an active role once again, after attending the U.S. Department of State's Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom.¹²⁴

KEY INSTITUTIONS

After the Ministerial, Mongolia promised to appoint an Ambassador at Large for Religious Freedom, following the U.S.

model, and affirmed this in a meeting September 2018 between Mongolian Foreign Minister Damdin Tsogtbaatar and U.S. Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom, Sam Brownback.¹²⁵ In June 2019, Mongolia announced the appointment of Burenbayar Chanrav to this position.

state's head of delegation. In September of that year, Minister Tsogtbaatar again met with the U.S. Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom. Minister Tsogtbaatar “highlighted that Mongolia values...religious freedom and noted the importance of levying religion in strengthening the international unity and peace,” according to a press release from the Mongolian foreign ministry.¹²⁷

POLICY & PROGRAMMING ACTIVITIES

Mongolia has expressed its willingness to engage with multilateral partners, but there appear to be limited policy initiatives in place with regard to international religious freedom. As documented by the European External Action Service, Mongolia “has joined recently the International Contact Group on Freedom of religion or belief, led by Canada, a platform allowing like-minded democracies to coordinate their action in favor of religion or belief at the UN.”¹²⁶ Formally launching the position of Ambassador at Large for Religious Freedom is expected to provide resources and a clear mandate for Mongolia’s foreign ministry in the area of religious freedom.

Following the 2018 Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom, Foreign Minister Tsogtbaatar proposed “to initiate a scholarly work, a project to research the best practices of religious tolerance in today’s world, and to convene thematic or regional chapters” to advance religious freedom.

MULTILATERAL ENGAGEMENT

In 2018, Mongolian Foreign Minister Tsogtbaatar attended the U.S. Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom as his

THE NETHERLANDS



HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM POLICY

At a 2007 OSCE event, Dutch Ambassador at Large for Human Rights (now Human Rights Ambassador) Piet de Klerk stated that “freedom of religion or belief has always been an area of particular interest for the Netherlands.” The first instance, however, of the Netherlands formally incorporating freedom of religion or belief as a component of its foreign policy was in 2009, with the launch of its freedom of religion or belief “pilot program,” described in the following section.¹²⁸

The Dutch Foreign Ministry advances the promotion of religious freedom under its

broader mandate for the promotion of human rights. It does this in the following ways:

- ◆ “ensuring [that] freedom of religion and belief is a top priority at various international organizations including the European Union (EU), the United Nations (UN), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OCSE) and the Council of Europe (CoE);
- ◆ highlighting the importance of freedom of religion and belief in various settings. For instance, in talks with the government of the country in question or in dialogues with religious leaders;

- ◆ financing projects through the Human Rights Funds. For an up-to-date overview of projects see the Human Rights Report which is submitted to Parliament each year; and,
- ◆ having the Human Rights Ambassador raise the issue in countries where these freedoms are under threat.”¹²⁹

The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs states that the government “believes that all individuals should be able to define their own religious or ideological identity,” including the right to convert to another religion or not to believe at all, and it makes no distinction between religions and beliefs.¹³⁰

Nonetheless, in a 2011 letter to the President of the House of Representatives on “Human Rights in Foreign Policy,” the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Uri Rosenthal, called freedom of religion or belief a “core value of Dutch foreign policy,” that is, “fundamental to any society which values freedom and personal development.” He also noted that the Netherlands place “a special emphasis on the protection of religious minorities,” from both violence and discriminatory legislation in recent years.¹³¹

In a 2014 interview, former Human Rights Ambassador Lionel Veer defined freedom of religion or belief as the “freedom for all people to have or choose their religion or belief, to change their religion or belief, and freedom not to be religious or not to believe.” Ambassador Veer further noted that “for the Netherlands there is no hierarchy in human rights.” Last, Veer emphasized the connection between the promotion of freedom of religion or belief and security.¹³²

KEY INSTITUTIONS

There is not an ambassadorial post dedicated exclusively to religious freedom. All Dutch foreign policy related to freedom of religion or belief falls under the jurisdiction of the Human Rights Ambassador, a position currently held by Ambassador Kees van Baar. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ Human Rights Fund finances the Netherlands’ foreign policy initiatives related to religious freedom, including the freedom of religion or belief “pilot program” described below.

POLICY & PROGRAMMING ACTIVITIES

In 2009, the Netherlands initiated its freedom of religion or belief “pilot program,” designed to “enhance the profile of freedom of religion or belief issues in Netherlands embassies’ activities” in countries the Netherlands viewed as struggling to protect religious freedom. The Netherlands “aims to actively enter into dialogue” with those respective governments and “supports projects with a view to protect minorities and individuals from discrimination on the basis of religion or belief.” The initial launch of the program focused on promoting religious freedom in China, India, Egypt, Kazakhstan, and Pakistan. Two years later, the Ministry of Foreign affairs expanded the “pilot program” to cover Armenia, Nigeria, North Korea, and Sudan.

The primary functions of the program are to “raise awareness of freedom of religion or belief issues,” to “support interfaith dialogue,” and for embassies to monitor and report on freedom of religion or belief issues in their respective countries.

The program was initiated in response to rising levels of global violence driven by religious intolerance and radicalization. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs planned to evaluate the program in 2014. It is unclear whether the program still exists, as well as how much funding was dedicated to it from 2009-2014.¹³³

While more detailed information on specific programming activities associated with the above-mentioned “pilot program” is not available, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs notes that the program generally had “an enhanced policy focus on strategy for promoting freedom of religion and belief.” Further, the Ministry also noted that embassies in selected countries “surveyed violations of freedom of religion and belief, tried to begin dialogues with authorities to discuss this and supported civil society organizations defending this freedom.” The fact that the pilot program was expanded in 2011, from five to ten countries, suggests that the programming activities covered under the initial stage of the pilot were successful.

MULTILATERAL ENGAGEMENT

The Netherlands is a founding member of the International Contact Group on Freedom of Religion and Belief, while Dutch parliamentarians were among the founding members of the International Panel of Parliamentarians on Freedom of Religion or Belief.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs notes that the Dutch Human Rights Ambassador has raised FoRB issues during bilateral consultations with countries where religious freedom is threatened, specifically mentioning Egypt and

Indonesia. The same source states that the Netherlands pushes for pressure to be applied in the framework of [EU] trade agreements if third countries fail to respect freedom of religion, but provides no additional information that substantiates this claim.

NORWAY



HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM POLICY

In November 2011, Norway took its first substantive step toward incorporating religious freedom into its foreign policy with the creation of the Minority Project. This project, focusing on Christian minorities in the Middle East, is dedicated to improving the situation of vulnerable religious minority groups throughout the world. The establishment of this project followed significant debate in the Norwegian Parliament in the preceding years, particularly in 2006 and 2010, regarding the incorporation of FoRB as an element of Norwegian foreign policy.¹³⁴

Ingrid Vik and Cecile Endresen argue that “religion is not regarded as a relevant factor in traditional ‘hard core’ foreign policy” in Norway and “is largely confined to softer policy areas such as development, human rights advocacy and peace and reconciliation.” However, the emergence of the Minority Project calls into question the authors’ claim that “the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs persistently holds the view that religion should be kept out of the diplomatic sphere” and invalidates the statement that “there is no special office engaged in religious matters in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,” as described below.¹³⁵

In terms of nomenclature, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) uses the term FoRB and understands it to mean “that all people have the freedom to practice their religion or belief, either alone or in community with others, in public or private,” along with “the freedom to convert to another religion, to question another’s religion or belief, or to have no religion or belief.” The MFA writes that Norway’s FoRB priorities include holding national authorities accountable for respecting religious freedom “in legislation and in practice,” promoting the rights of religious minorities, encouraging religious and belief groups to “respect human rights both within their groups” and in broader society, and ensuring that religious freedom “does not limit freedom of expression or other human rights.”¹³⁶

KEY INSTITUTIONS

In August 2012, the position of Special Envoy (Ambassador) for Human Rights was created to lead the Minority Project. The Special Envoy reports through senior officials to the MFA and is aided by the “Forum for Minorities,” a civil society advisory group composed primarily of “representatives of faith-based NGOs, religious communities, and secular human rights NGOs with an interest in minorities.”

On May 27, 2015, Norwegian parliamentarians, with the support of all of Norway’s political parties, launched the Norwegian Parliamentary Group for Freedom of Religion. The Group was founded by Abid Raja, a parliamentarian affiliated with Norway’s Liberal Party. It is unclear to what extent the Group has organized itself since its launch, as well as

the specific initiatives (if any) in which it is involved.

POLICY & PROGRAMMING ACTIVITIES

Norway funds policy and advocacy activities in support of FoRB. In 2018, this support amounted to USD \$10 million. Norway’s foreign missions “are required to report to Oslo on the situation for religious minorities in their respective countries,” and this information is incorporated into Norway’s contributions to the UN Universal Periodic Review process.

Bilateral engagement in the area of programming is largely through partnership with NGOs, representing 70% of Norway’s FoRB programming. The remainder is undertaken with multilateral organizations (15-20%), faith-based organizations (5%), and like-minded governments (5%). Norwegian missions abroad set priorities, which work with partners through a needs-based assessment to identify programming activities to be launched. Specific regions of focus are the Middle East and East Asia.

Through the Minority Project, Norway has increased its financial support for efforts to protect religious minorities by nearly 800% in the last five years, and pledged approximately \$100 million to this cause in 2018. These efforts, conducted in partnership with the UN and NGOs including the World Council of Churches and Norwegian Church Aid, include the creation of monitoring and early warning mechanisms for vulnerable groups and the development of “measures to improve conditions for persecuted religious minorities who are being subjected to harassment and discrimination.”

In 2013, Norway hosted the OSCE High-Level Conference on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination in Oslo. At the conference, Ambassador at Large for Minorities Harald Neple reaffirmed that “improving the situation of religious minorities is a long-term priority for Norwegian foreign policy.” This same speech alluded to Norway’s intention to increase its funding for efforts to protect religious minorities, outlined above, as well as its development of guidelines for the Norwegian Foreign Service, described below.¹³⁷

were developed to aid the Norwegian Foreign Service and relevant civil society organizations in their efforts to protect the rights of religious minorities and outline various strategies foreign missions can employ to “engage in practical work to promote the situation of minorities.”¹³⁸

MULTILATERAL ENGAGEMENT

Norway regularly engages through the UN and other international bodies. As noted above, Norway partners with the UN and NGOs including the World Council of Churches and Norwegian Church Aid to support the Minority Project.

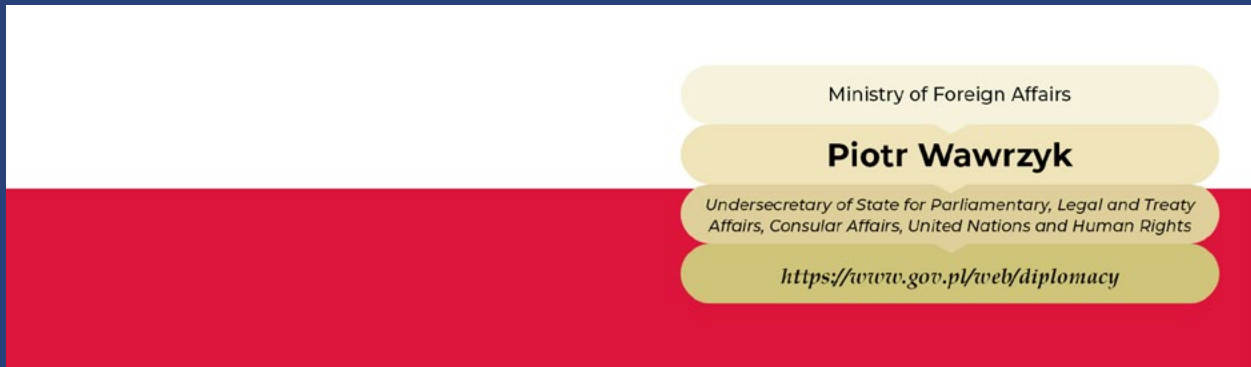
Norway is a founding member of the International Contact Group on Freedom of Religion and Belief and participates actively in that body’s discussions.

Norway is a founding member of the IPPFoRB and currently provides significant funding for an IPPFoRB secretariat and various programming. Parliamentarians from Norway signed the Oslo Charter for Freedom of Religion or Belief.

DIPLOMATIC TRAINING EFFORTS

The initiation of the Minority Project led the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2015 to publish “Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Freedoms of Persons Belonging to Religious Minorities: Guidelines for the Norwegian Foreign Service.” These guidelines

POLAND



HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM POLICY

The position of the ruling Law and Justice Party on religious freedom and foreign policy is focused primarily on the protection of religious minorities, with an emphasis on persecuted Christians. The Law and Justice Party emphasizes the “Christian heritage of the nation” and promotes said heritage and Christian values as a foundation of its foreign policy.¹³⁹

In his annual address to Parliament reporting on past and upcoming foreign policy priorities, then-Foreign Minister Witold Waszczykowski identified the

protection of religious minorities as a diplomacy priority. Elsewhere he emphasized Poland’s “concern over the discrimination and persecution of Christians and followers of other religions”¹⁴⁰ at a 2016 session of the UN Human Rights Council, calling freedom of religion and belief “one of the fundamental human rights” that “must be respected throughout the world.”¹⁴¹

Like its Central European neighbor Hungary, it has been reported that Poland is experiencing rising levels of xenophobia and ethno-nationalism in recent years, accompanied by the growing presence of both anti-Islamic and anti-Semitic sentiments in Polish

politics and society.¹⁴² The clearest manifestation of these trends is the Polish government's ongoing refusal to resettle refugees, which it often justifies with anti-Islamic arguments. While 86% of Polish citizens identify as Roman Catholic, Article 53 of the Polish Constitution guarantees a comprehensive conception of "freedom of faith and religion" to all Polish citizens.¹⁴³

KEY INSTITUTIONS

There is no ambassadorial post or other significant institution within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) or Poland's broader foreign policy apparatus that is dedicated to the promotion of religious freedom or the protection of religious minorities.

POLICY & PROGRAMMING ACTIVITIES

In October 2013, the Sejm (the lower house of the Polish parliament) called for "bold action in defense of Christians in Syria and Egypt," through a resolution "expressing solidarity with persecuted Christian communities in the Middle East."¹⁴⁴ While this resolution was supported by the then Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski, Freedom House reports that no substantive action was taken as a result.¹⁴⁵

In 2014, Poland airlifted humanitarian aid to Erbil, northern Iraq, for "Iraqi victims of religious persecution and ethnic cleansing, including Christians and Yazidis, who have found refuge in Iraqi Kurdistan."¹⁴⁶

At the Warsaw Dialogue for Democracy Conference in December 2016, the Polish

MFA hosted a session devoted mainly to the rights of persons belonging to religious minorities.

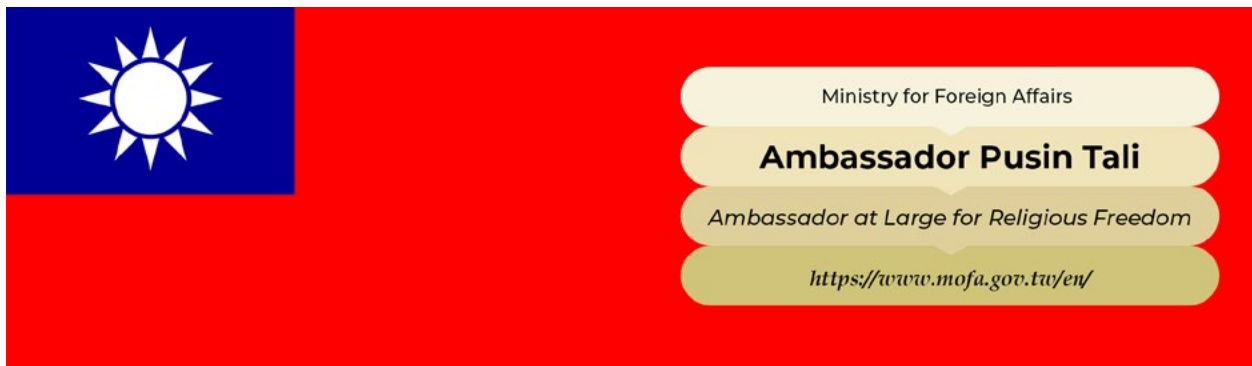
MULTILATERAL ENGAGEMENT

Former Foreign Minister Witold Waszczykowski stated that "Poland wants the protection of religious minorities' rights, including Christians' rights, to be the focus of interest and joint action by the European Union and the United Nations." He further stated that, "Poland is among the sponsor states of the UN resolution on freedom of religion and belief" and pays attention "to cases of non-compliance with the rights of religious minorities, including the persecution of Christians" and especially the Crimean Tatars (Muslim).¹⁴⁷ The Polish MFA states that "Poland has been particularly outspoken about the situation of Christians in Syria, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Nigeria, and Sudan," and is an active advocate for the rights of Christians and other religious minorities at the UN Human Rights Council.¹⁴⁸

The ruling Law and Justice Party has been highly critical of the EU for what it perceives as the supranational organization's "departure from Christian roots and embracing progressiveness," along with its refusal to adequately address the issue of Christian persecution and protect the religious freedom of Christians.¹⁴⁹

Poland was an early member of the International Contact Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief.

TAIWAN



HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM POLICY

In recent years, Taiwan has taken significant steps to demonstrate its desire to ally itself with United States policy toward international religious freedom and become a central advocate for that cause in Asia. In doing so, Taiwan has bravely become a voice for religious minorities suffering at the hands of state-sponsored suppression and cultural extinguishment in China.

Taiwan was a participant in, and has been particularly responsive to, the Potomac Plan of Action. The Potomac Plan was a principal achievement of the 2018 U.S.

Department of State's Ministerial on International Religious Freedom which encourages states to develop foreign policy elements to confront religious persecution on a global scale.¹⁵⁰ Taiwan is also a signatory to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; it has reaffirmed these documents a number of times in recent years.

KEY INSTITUTIONS

Taiwan's main foreign policy institution for international religious freedom is so new that the Ministry of Foreign

Affairs website has not yet even created space for it. On March 12, 2019, Taiwan announced that it had appointed Pusin Tali, former president of the Yu-Shan Theological College, as the country's first ever Ambassador for Religious Freedom. This decision was made in response to the U.S. led Potomac Plan of Action. While there is not yet a formal mission statement for the ambassadorship, the press release in which the announcement was made states, "Ambassador Tali will be tasked with representing the Taiwan government in working with like-minded countries and civic groups worldwide to strengthen international links and cooperation for religious freedom."¹⁵¹

POLICY & PROGRAMMING ACTIVITIES

A precarious relationship with China makes ostensible actions to protect religious minorities in Asia a substantial political challenge for Taiwan. However, in recent years Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen has made a number of symbolic and programmatic strides to condemn the most serious threats to religious freedom in the region—namely, those arising from Chinese surveillance and suppression of its Christian, Uyghur, and Tibetan Buddhist populations. By hosting a number of Western delegations, conferences, and forums in Taiwan, President Tsai is in the process of beginning dialogue in Southeast Asia that calls attention to Chinese abuses. By aligning with Western initiatives like the Potomac Plan and U.S. Commission for International Religious Freedom, Taiwan has reinforced this message.



Notably, throughout 2018 Taiwan has maintained a policy of close cooperation with the Vatican as delegations from the Holy See attempted to find compromise on ecclesiastical appointments in China.¹⁵² After the 2018 Ministerial, Taiwan—to further demonstrate its commitment to the Potomac Plan and solidarity with U.S. efforts in advancing international religious freedom—pledged a donation of \$200,000 a year for the next five years to the International Religious Freedom Fund facilitated by the U.S. State Department. It seems likely that during 2019 Taiwan's institutional capacities for religious freedom advocacy will increase, giving

rise to an even greater level of engagement on the issues and putting Taiwan in a unique position to develop as a leader for religious freedom in Asia.¹⁵³

After attending the 2018 Ministerial, Taiwan set out to begin a dialogue among its partners in Asia on religious freedom in the region. In March of 2019, President Tsai—with the support of the American Institute of Taiwan, the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy, and U.S. Ambassador Brownback—helped the informal "Civil Society Dialogue on Securing Religious Freedom in the Indo-Pacific Region" to establish a working group among Asian countries.¹⁵⁴ In her opening address to the group, President Tsai made as clear a condemnation of Chinese violations of religious liberty as diplomatic decorum between the two countries can permit in saying: "In those countries [that violate religious liberty], religious organisations are being

persecuted, religious statues and icons are being destroyed, religious leaders are forced into exile, and people are held in re-education camps, and forced to break their religious taboos.”¹⁵⁵

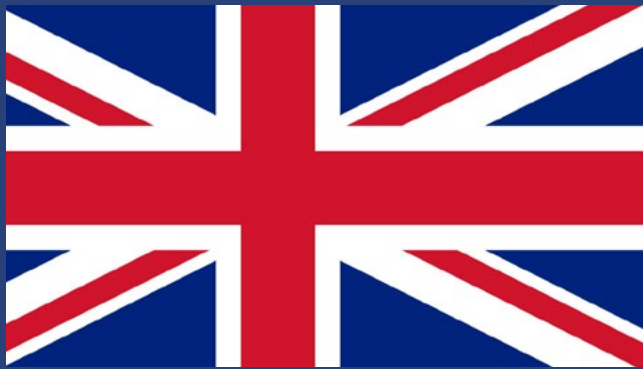
The primary conclusion of this working group was to host a formal Asian conference on international religious freedom, which took shape in the “Taiwan International Religious Freedom Forum” hosted in Taipei and attended by 27 states in June of 2019. Taking an even bolder step than President Tsai’s speech in March, the Taiwan Conference produced the “Declaration on Uyghur Religious Freedom,” which gives as its first clause, “Whereas the Uyghur people face an existential crisis because of the current massive campaign of destruction and extermination of their ethno-religious identity conducted by the government of China.”¹⁵⁶ The forum also produced a declaration that list of abuses against the Uyghurs perpetuated by the Chinese government, and calls on the

international community—specifically on regional states—to provide refuge for the Uyghurs, encourage private companies to “end all sales and collaboration” with Chinese surveillance programs, and to publicly denounce and resist China’s practices in Xinjiang.¹⁵⁷

MULTILATERAL ENGAGEMENT

Due to the nascence of Taiwan’s ambassadorship for religious freedom, multilateral engagements other than those mentioned above have been scarce. However, as Taiwan continues to emerge as a regional leader in religious freedom advocacy, one can anticipate that such engagements—with Taiwan and even across Asia—will become more common.

UNITED KINGDOM



Foreign Commonwealth Office

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon

Minister of State for the Commonwealth and the UN at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office; Prime Minister's Special Envoy on Freedom of Religion or Belief

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-office>

HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM POLICY

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office's operating definition of Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB), outlined in its 2009 "Freedom of Religion or Belief Toolkit," encompasses not just the freedom to hold personal thoughts and convictions, but also being able to manifest them individually or with others, publicly or in private. It also includes the freedom to subscribe to different schools of thought within a religion, and to change one's religion or beliefs, including to leave or abandon religions, or to hold no religious convictions. The UK's definition

is aligned to the UDHR and the ICCPR (Article 18).

The UK's goals on international FoRB policy are:

- ◆ **Advocacy:** the UK actively promotes the importance of FoRB and tackle discrimination on the basis of religious identity through our diplomatic activity, including at the United Nations and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).
- ◆ **Promoting FoRB at a country-level:** the UK raises individual cases and

highlight practices and laws that discriminate against people on the basis of their religion or belief.

- ◆ Responding effectively and quickly to instances of the suppression of FoRB.
- ◆ Promoting Respect through Education: The UK has supported a small number of projects on FoRB, and will develop a policy toolkit on promoting respect through education.
- ◆ Working with international partners to promote FoRB: The UK works with key international partners such as the US, European partners, faith groups, civil society organizations and the Commonwealth.

The UK Human Rights Act of 1998 incorporated the rights guaranteed in the European Convention on Human Rights, including the freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, into British law (a detailed definition of this freedom is provided in the “Understanding of Religious Freedom” section below). The Foreign Commonwealth Office’s (FCO) “Freedom of Religion or Belief Toolkit” (2009) represents the earliest document that notes the United Kingdom’s formal incorporation or institutionalization of religious freedom into its foreign policy.¹⁵⁸ Since the release of this publication, the United Kingdom has significantly developed its efforts to promote and protect international religious freedom and religious minorities throughout the world, as described in the following section.

In its most recent Human Rights and Democracy Report, the FCO noted the continuation of its policy of “raising cases

of persecution in individual countries,” and highlighted its work on behalf of legislation related to religious freedom and/or persecuted religious minorities in Burma, China, Indonesia, Iran, Pakistan, Russia, and Sudan. The United Kingdom’s freedom of religion or belief foreign policy objectives include: (1) “championing the promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief for all individuals in the Middle East and globally;” (2) “promoting freedom of religion or belief in policies on Countering Violent Extremism;” and (3) “engaging with and supporting effective multilateral negotiations devoted to maintaining consensus on freedom of religion or belief-related institutions.”

KEY INSTITUTIONS

At a ministerial and senior official level, the UK focuses on promoting and defending FoRB, and tackling discrimination on the basis of religious identity, through diplomatic efforts. The Foreign Secretary has oversight of all FCO work and has made FoRB a priority with the launch of an independent review of FCO support for persecuted Christians.¹⁵⁹ The review is headed by the Rt. Revd. Philip Mounstephen, the Bishop of Truro and, as stated in the terms of reference, “aims to map levels of persecution and other discrimination against Christians in key countries around the world. It will provide an objective assessment of the impact and levels of FCO support, and make recommendations to the Foreign Secretary.”¹⁶⁰ Defending and promoting human rights, including Freedom of Religion or Belief, has been a long-standing priority for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister of State for the

Foreign and Commonwealth Office, leads the UK Government's efforts on FoRB as the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion and Belief.¹⁶¹ However, all FCO ministers are responsible for defending FoRB in the geographical areas they cover. Lord Ahmad is supported by a team of four full-time FCO officials who work on FoRB and post-Holocaust issues. In July 2018, Lord Ahmad was appointed as the Prime Minister's Special Envoy on Freedom of Religion or Belief.¹⁶² Since then, there has been an increase in the UK Government's activity on FoRB. The rationale for this appointment is connected to growing concerns about FoRB related persecution.

Beyond the FCO, the UK has an all-government approach to FoRB, and ministers from across Whitehall meet regularly to discuss Freedom of Religion or Belief both in the UK and overseas. The Department for International Development in particular has responsibility for ensuring the UK's international development policies align with the FCO's work on Freedom of Religion or Belief.

In July 2012, UK Parliamentarians established the All-Party Parliamentary Group for International Religious Freedom or Belief (APPG). This purpose of the APPG, currently composed of 109 Members of the Houses of Commons and Lords and various affiliated civil society organizations, is "to raise awareness and profile of international freedom of religion or belief as a human right among Parliamentarians, media, government, and the general public in the United Kingdom, and to increase the effectiveness of the UK's contribution to international institutions charged with enforcing this human right."¹⁶³ The

APPG was founded by current co-chair Baroness Elizabeth Berridge and is currently chaired by Jim Shannon, MP.¹⁶⁴ The Group releases occasional reports and other publications, including most its most recent report "Article 18: From Rhetoric to Reality," which "underlines practical measures that can and should be taken by the UK Government" to make freedom of religion or belief a political and strategic priority.¹⁶⁵

POLICY & PROGRAMMING ACTIVITIES

The UK works to promote the right to FoRB at three levels:

Multilaterally: support UN Resolutions, including at the Human Rights Council and UN General Assembly, that combat religious intolerance and protect human rights of members of minorities. The UK also works at the OSCE to promote and defend FoRB.

Country / bilateral level: raise individual cases, and highlight practices and laws that discriminate on the basis of religion or belief.

Support projects and programs to promote respect, and support civil society organizations working on Freedom of Religion or Belief issues.

Bilaterally, the UK works closely with like-minded partners to join-up work on FoRB where possible, including the Holy See, the EU and the US. They also work bilaterally with specific countries to promote and defend FoRB. At a multilateral level, the UK works at the UN, OSCE and with members of the Commonwealth on FoRB.

The FCO works closely with its embassies and high commissions to determine where it can have the greatest impact. Based on their feedback about whether the UK can positively influence FoRB through diplomatic efforts and/or UK-funded programs, ministers will decide where the UK should concentrate its resources. The FCO also reacts to current and emerging violations of FoRB as and where necessary. The FCO develops programmatic objectives on a case-by-case basis depending on the context. This case-by-case response is evident particularly in those countries designated by the FCO as priority countries where more extensive resources are devoted to support specific policy and programmatic activities, e.g. the introduction of FoRB related laws, facilitating dialogue between communities, and supporting networks of religious freedom advocates. The FCO also considers wider trends, such as the rates of minorities leaving countries like Iraq.



The FCO releases an annual Human Rights and Democracy Report that outlines the United Kingdom's foreign policy priorities and initiatives related to religious freedom and religious minorities.¹⁶⁶ In the 2016 report, Minister of Human Rights Ahmad described the promotion and defense of freedom of religion or belief as "a key and integral part of the work of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office," and noted his desire to expand the United Kingdom's efforts in this area "as a key priority to drive forward our efforts to build

more cohesive, tolerant and peaceful societies," and address radicalization and the persecution of religious minorities.¹⁶⁷

In 2012, under the government of Prime Minister David Cameron, the Cabinet-level position of Minister for Faith was created and tasked with working "with religious and community leaders to promote faith, religious tolerance, and stronger communities within the UK." The position has since been abolished, and the duties of the Minister for Faith have been subsumed by the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State.

The Minister of State at the Foreign Commonwealth Office for Counter-Terrorism and Violent Extremism, Freedom of Religion or Belief, a position currently held by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, is the primary actor charged with leading the United Kingdom's foreign policy initiatives relating to religious freedom and religious minorities.

In January 2016, the FCO created the Magna Carta Fund for Human Rights and Democracy, a task force dedicated to "tackling the root causes of human rights violations, strengthening institutions and governance, promoting and protecting human rights, and supporting democracy and the rule of law."¹⁶⁸ This Fund has been used to support various projects related to religious freedom, including "a project to support including freedom of religion or belief in the curriculum of secondary schools in the Middle East and North Africa region" and a workshop, run in conjunction

with Christian Solidarity Worldwide, that sought “to promote the right to freedom of religion or belief in South Asia by providing human rights defenders with key advocacy and documentation skills.” This Fund has been employed for projects “to promote religious freedom and build human rights capacity in provincial administrations and civil society” in Pakistan.

The FCO also runs FoRB-related programs. This financial year (2018-2019), the FCO has projects for over £1 million in four countries. The UK (through the Department for International Development) has also launched a £12 million program to promote and defend Freedom of Religion or Belief within poverty reduction work.¹⁶⁹ Activities are funded through a mixture of funding accounts: £1 million from the FCO’s Magna Carta fund and £12 million through the Department for International Development. All government funds are subject to monitoring processes.

Approximately £1 million is dedicated to FCO’s in-country programming on FoRB. This figure is exclusive of other human rights program funds, many of which have a FoRB element. The FCO partners with the Department for International Development (DfID) on FoRB. DfID recently announced a £12 million package on FoRB. In-country FCO funded programming is done in partnership with NGOs by Overseas Development Aid grants. 100% of the FCO’s FoRB Programming budget is with NGOs

The FCO targets its own priority countries. There are four priority countries where it focuses the most resources

on promoting and defending FoRB, but does not publicly confirm which countries these are. Most of the work is concentrated in Asia, the Middle East and North Africa. UK engagement is tailored to each country. Ministers, particularly Lord Ahmad, will often raise issues at the highest levels of Government. Promoting respect through education is becoming an increasing priority.

For program funding, each program will develop aims, objectives, and indicators of success (e.g. number of children trained in FoRB; levels of tolerance; human rights defenders trained). In addition, DFID’s £12 million program is currently in an inception phase. A key element of this will focus on developing indicators.

In terms of academic outreach activities the FCO hosted a two-day summit in October 2016 on “Preventing Violent Extremism by Building Inclusive and Plural Societies: How Freedom of Religion or Belief Can Help.”¹⁷⁰ The FCO has a relationship with the Freedom of Religion or Belief Foreign Policy Initiative at the University of Sussex, which serves as a forum for research and policy work on transatlantic policy, preventing violent extremism, and religious engagement and intercultural dialogue.¹⁷¹ The UK sees scope for improvement of baseline data on FoRB, and the FCO is funding a project with the Religious Freedom Institute (RFI) to develop better indicators on FoRB.

MULTILATERAL ENGAGEMENT

The UK is a founding member of the ICG having joined in June 2015 (when the ICG was formed). The FCO attends the meetings, has led on agenda items (e.g. RFI's work on improving FoRB data), and support lobbying priorities, where it can. The UK has joined the International Contact Group's lobbying efforts on various countries.

The FCO has close links with the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on FoRB (which links into the IPP-FoRB), with regular meetings at official and ministerial level. Through this partnership the FCO shares advocacy priorities, and gets their views on current priorities.

DIPLOMATIC TRAINING EFFORTS

In 2009, the FCO released a "Freedom of Religion or Belief Toolkit," which provides "guidance on how freedom of religion or belief relates to the UK's strategic priorities" and describes how "diplomats can promote freedom of religion or belief and better understand the role of religion in foreign societies." This publication was updated in 2016. In 2013, the FCO "developed an (optional) one-day course on freedom of religion or belief for its diplomats," that includes information sharing, regional focuses, and panel discussions led by ambassadors and journalists.¹⁷²

The 2016 Human Rights and Democracy report notes that the FCO continues "to run religious literacy training to help its staff understand the key role which religion plays in shaping the views of the majority of the world's population."

UNITED STATES



HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM POLICY

In 1998, the U.S. Congress passed the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA), which established in law the promotion of religious freedom as a component of US foreign policy. Congress passed the Frank R. Wolf International Religious Freedom Act (Wolf Act) in 2016, which amends and expands the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, as described below.¹⁷³

Historically, there has been bipartisan support for the promotion of international religious freedom as a component of U.S. foreign policy, although growing

disagreements over the meaning and value of religious freedom in the United States are challenging that consensus. Addressing the Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom, Vice President Mike Pence identified the protection of religious freedom as “a top priority of this administration,”¹⁷⁴ and former President Obama called the promotion of religious freedom “a key objective of U.S. foreign policy.”¹⁷⁵ In addition, recognizing the nexus of religious freedom and security, the promotion of religious freedom and protection of religious minorities was identified as a U.S. policy priority in the 2017 National Security Strategy.¹⁷⁶ International religious freedom is one of the few issues that has enjoyed

consistent support, although in varying degrees, from both Democratic and Republican presidential administrations in the last two decades, including in the National Security Strategy.¹⁷⁷

In 2018, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo convened for three days at the Department of State a Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom, the first of its kind anywhere in the world. In 2018, some 85 foreign delegations attended the Ministerial, as well as over 400 leaders of civil society institutions around the world. The 2019 Ministerial, as of this writing, is expected to draw even larger participation. The 2018 Ministerial yielded the Potomac Declaration and Plan of Action that present a robust articulation of religious freedom and a variety of tangible steps that can be taken to advance it globally.¹⁷⁸ The momentum produced by the Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom has also led to additional regional and multinational forums and roundtables on similar themes and the creation of the International Religious Freedom Fund.¹⁷⁹

The Trump administration has taken substantive steps to protect and promote religious freedom in U.S. foreign policy. The Obama administration also engaged in foreign policy actions on behalf of international religious freedom. Both are described in part below.

KEY INSTITUTIONS

The International Religious Freedom Act created several key institutions that facilitate the promotion of religious freedom as a component of U.S. foreign policy. Within the Department of State, the Office of International Religious Freedom serves as the lead institutional

actor in fulfilling this mandate.¹⁸⁰ This office is tasked with “promoting religious freedom as a core objective of U.S. foreign policy,” including the responsibility to “monitor religious persecution and discrimination worldwide, recommend and implement policies in respective regions or countries, and develop programs to promote religious freedom.” As of June 2019, the office reports directly to the Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights, it had previously been under the Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor.¹⁸¹ The office is headed by the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom who reports directly to the Secretary of State, as mandated by the 2016 Wolf Act.¹⁸² This position is currently held by Ambassador Samuel D. Brownback.¹⁸³

Ambassador Brownback has a long history as an advocate and activist on international religious freedom issues, including during his sixteen years as a Congressman and U.S. Senator. He was a key sponsor of IRFA in 1998, and also sponsored bipartisan legislation related to religious freedom to address human rights crises in places like North Korea and Sudan, including the North Korea Human Rights Act of 2004 and the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act of 2006. From 2005 to 2007, Brownback was Chairman of the Helsinki Commission, a U.S. agency that monitors compliance with the Helsinki Final Act (see Appendix: Key Religious Freedom Documents) and advances human rights throughout the 57-nation region of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.¹⁸⁴

In 2015, following an act of Congress to create a position of Special Envoy to Promote Religious Freedom of

Religious Minorities in the Near East and South Central Asia,¹⁸⁵ the Obama administration created the position of Special Advisor for Religious Minorities in the Near East and South/Central Asia within the Department of State.¹⁸⁶ Current Special Advisor Knox Thames serves as co-chair of the International Contact Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief and regularly addresses issues of freedom of religion within his geographic area of focus.¹⁸⁷

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, also established by the International Religious Freedom Act, is an independent and bipartisan entity that drafts an annual report on religious freedom violations throughout the world and makes policy recommendations related to the promotion of religious freedom to the President, the Secretary of State, and Congress.¹⁸⁸ It reviews and evaluates “U.S. policies in response to violations of religious freedom” and conducts general studies on the intersection of foreign policy and religious freedom. The Commission on International Religious Freedom is composed of the Ambassador for International Religious Freedom, who serves ex officio as a non-voting member, and nine commissioners who are appointed for two-year terms. (Note: commissioners are appointed by the president and congressional leadership from each party).¹⁸⁹ In September 2018, acting on a recommendation from the Government Accountability Office, State and USCIRF took steps to improve coordi-



ination and information sharing including on efforts to promote religious freedom and policy initiatives.¹⁹⁰

In 2013, Secretary of State John Kerry established the Office of Religion and Global Affairs, comprised of 30 full-time staff, to “advise the secretary when religion cut across his portfolio, engage religious actors, assess religious dynamics globally, and build the capacity of State Department offices and posts to do this work.” This office, was led by Shaun Casey, encompassed a diverse slate of issues, from supporting peace efforts in Burma and on the Israel-Palestine conflict to supporting U.S. refugee resettlement work and combating sexual and gender-based violence.¹⁹¹

Various diplomatic positions were placed by Secretary Kerry under the Office of Religion and Global Affairs’ mandate, including the Special Representative for Religion and Global Affairs, the Special Representative to Muslim Communities, the Special Envoy to Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism. For a variety of reasons, the Trump administration consolidated that office’s functions and responsibilities into the Office of International Religious Freedom.¹⁹²

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), “places a strong emphasis on the rights of religious minorities and aims to protect and vigorously promote religious liberty.” During the George W.

Bush Administration, USAID published guidelines for working with faith-based humanitarian agencies as well as a “Religion and Conflict Toolkit.” Today, USAID’s program on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance advances these efforts by “focus[ing] on promoting and protecting the foundational rights embodied in the U.S. Constitution and law, including religious liberty and freedom from discrimination. This includes assistance to protect religious minorities from persecution and atrocities.”¹⁹³

POLICY & PROGRAMMING ACTIVITIES

As mandated in IRFA, the Office of International Religious Freedom leads the drafting process of an annual International Religious Freedom Report that documents “the status of religious freedom in every country,” with the exception of the United States.¹⁹⁴ This report provides information on religious demographics, government policies that violate religious freedom, and U.S. engagement vis-à-vis religious freedom with government and civil officials. The law also requires the President to annually identify countries that have engaged in or tolerated “particularly severe violations of religious freedom” for designation as Countries of Particular Concern and certain non-state actors that have engaged in particularly severe violations of religious freedom as Entities of Particular Concern.¹⁹⁵ These authorities have been delegated to the Secretary of State. The most recent designations were made by Secretary of State Michael Pompeo in December 2018.¹⁹⁶

As the diplomat tasked with leading the U.S. effort to promote religious freedom

abroad, the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom serves as the principal IRF adviser to the President and the Secretary of State and conducts country visits where he or she meets with government and civil society representatives concerning religious freedom issues. In addition, the Ambassador regularly meets with the NGO committee, including the religious freedom roundtable in an effort to promote grassroots activity to promote religious freedom.¹⁹⁷ The Office of International Religious Freedom also engages in “sponsorship of reconciliation programs (often run through NGOs) in disputes which divide groups along the lines of religious identity” and “programs of outreach to American religious communities.”¹⁹⁸

Beginning in 2013, the Departments of State, Justice, and Homeland Security began an initiative to “assist governments worldwide in training local officials on legal and policy protections for religious freedom, particularly regarding engagement with members of religious minorities and enforcement of non-discrimination laws.”¹⁹⁹

The Office of International Religious Freedom has historically been part of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor and regularly awards funds for programs and efforts that are designed to advance religious freedom in particular geographic areas or to address particular thematic challenges. According to an Office of Inspector General report, annually \$10 million in Economic Support Funds are earmarked for the Ambassador at Large and managed by DRL’s Office of Global Programs under the Ambassador’s direction.²⁰⁰ In 2016, the Obama administration reported

that it had “dedicated tens of millions of dollars to foreign assistance programs to promote greater respect for religious freedom and to combat abuses, with \$16 million in such activities currently ongoing.”²⁰¹ No further details were provided regarding the allocation of this funding or its effects.

Issues related to the protection of religious freedom and vulnerable religious minorities at times strongly influence policy actions, such as in 2016, Secretary of State John Kerry declared that ISIS “is responsible for genocide against groups in areas under its control, including Yazidis, Christians, and Shia Muslims,” as well as “crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing directed at these same groups and in some cases also against Sunni Muslims, Kurds, and other minorities.” This statement marked the culmination of a long-running diplomatic effort to designate ISIS as a perpetrator of genocide against religious minority groups.²⁰² Military actions against ISIS begun under the Obama administration were intensified by the Trump administration, particularly through leadership of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, leading to the retaking of nearly all territory held by ISIS in Iraq and Syria.²⁰³ Despite these military successes, grave threats to religious freedom persist, particularly for religious minorities.

Efforts by the Trump administration to return and resettle Iraqi religious minorities devastated by ISIS and other survivors of genocide has been a major point of emphasis for the administration. These efforts lead to the creation of the Genocide Recovery and Persecution Response (GRPR) Program, announced by Vice President Pence at

the 2018 Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom.²⁰⁴ Recognizing the particular threats faced by religious minorities in conflict and crisis situation through this program, the Vice President said, “the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development will closely partner with local faith and community leaders to rapidly deliver aid to persecuted communities.” According to USAID, as of October 2018, \$239 million had been committed to the GRPR across four pillars: 1) Meeting Immediate Needs; 2) Helping Restore Communities; 3) Promoting Economic Recovery; and 4) Preventing Future Atrocities.²⁰⁵

USAID assistance programs include humanitarian assistance for persecuted communities in times of crisis and also includes support for programs such civil society efforts to promote good governance, legal aid clinics, and peace-building and social cohesion programs. USAID’s Center for Faith and Opportunity Initiatives also supports a number of programs that integrate religion into aid and development work. Key to guiding this work is the “U.S. Strategy on Religious Leader and Faith Community Engagement,” which aims to work with religious leaders and faith communities in accomplishing many strategic objectives, including to “advance pluralism and human rights, including the protection of religious freedom.”²⁰⁶

MULTILATERAL ENGAGEMENT

International religious freedom policy informs United States engagement in a number of multilateral fora. A regular feature has been the United States opposition to blasphemy laws. As articulated by the former Acting

Special Envoy to the Organization for Islamic Cooperation, “blasphemy laws enforced in various parts of the world violate the fundamental freedoms of expression and religion or belief, weaken broader protections for human rights, and undermine social stability and prosperity.”²⁰⁷

Former Ambassador for International Religious Freedom David Saperstein participated as a founding member of the International Contact Group on FoRB (described below), an initiative of former Canadian Religious Freedom Ambassador Andrew Bennett and the Canadian Office of Religious Freedom.²⁰⁸ The International Contact Group meets twice annually in New York and Geneva on the margins of the United Nations General Assembly and the United Nations Human Rights Council, in addition to other ad hoc meetings. Each meeting is co-chaired by the United States and Canada.²⁰⁹



In 2018, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo convened for three days at the Department of State a Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom, the first of its kind anywhere in the world.²¹⁰ In 2018, some 85 foreign delegations attended the Ministerial, as well as over 400 leaders of civil society institutions around the world. The 2018 Ministerial yielded the Potomac Declaration and Plan of Action that present a robust articulation of religious freedom and a variety of tangible steps that can be taken to advance it globally.²¹¹ The

initiative launched by the Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom has also led to additional regional and multinational forums and roundtables on similar themes, including events hosted by the United Arab Emirates and Taiwan. The International Religious Freedom Fund, announced at the ministerial, has also received millions of dollars in donations, according to Secretary Pompeo.²¹²

The 2019 Ministerial, as of this writing, is expected to draw even larger participation, with Secretary Pompeo announcing his expectation that up to 1,000 individuals to participate in the second annual event.

DIPLOMATIC TRAINING EFFORTS

As mandated in the International Religious Freedom Act and made more explicit by the Frank R. Wolf International Religious Freedom Act, the Office of International Religious Freedom has worked with the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) to incorporate modules on religious freedom into their diplomatic training courses as part of the State Department's mandated role to train Foreign Service Officers and others in human rights generally and religious freedom in particular.²¹³

Increased training of diplomats on the meaning and value of religious freedom and the mechanism by which to advance it has been an identified area of focus for the effective implementation of U.S. religious freedom policy, as documented

in assessments such as the 2015 USCIRF annual report.²¹⁴

Some progress was made to address this need under the Obama administration. The Office of Religion and Global Affairs partnered with FSI to further develop “a training curriculum on religion and foreign policy,” prior to its consolidation under the Office of International Religious Freedom.²¹⁵

Following the passage of the Wolf Act, greater attention and resources have been paid to this effort. From 2016-2018, FSI provided religious freedom training to approximately 1,000 Department of State employees, according to an Inspector General report.²¹⁶

As mandated, “in mid-2017, the IRF Office and FSI have incorporated religious freedom training into the existing courses specifically mentioned in the Wolf Act, namely the entry-level course (“A100”) required of all new FSOs and the courses for outgoing deputy chiefs of mission and ambassadors. In addition to the IRF training modules added to the abovementioned courses, FSI offers a four-day elective on Religion and Foreign Policy twice a year. This course exposes U.S. officials to common themes appropriate for engaging religious and faith-based communities in the field and teaches best practices for incorporating religious community outreach and religious freedom advocacy into broader U.S. foreign policy objectives and post engagements. Through a focus on tradecraft skills, the course trains entry and mid-level officers serving in Washington and in embassies and consulates overseas to use the annual International Religious Freedom Report and other tools to expand outreach

to, and strengthen relationships with, members of religious communities.”²¹⁷

Additional training opportunities have also been developed to further equip diplomats at various stages of their careers with better understanding of religious freedom. The Department of State has developed a distance learning course on international religious freedom that as of 2019 is now required for all Foreign Service Officers. IRF Office staff also offer Regional Religious Freedom Seminars three to five times per year to provide practical, in-depth training for both Foreign Service Officers and locally employed staff. In addition, a number of resources are regularly updated and made available across the department to provide relevant information, best practices, and key international documents relevant to promotion of religious freedom.²¹⁸

MULTILATERAL ENGAGEMENT INT'L BODIES



EUROPEAN UNION/
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

ORGANIZATION
FOR SECURITY
& COOPERATION
IN EUROPE

UNITED NATIONS

EUROPEAN UNION & EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT



HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM POLICY

The European Union first addressed religious freedom in the drafting of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) in 1950. Article Nine of the ECHR, along with Article Ten of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (2000), guarantees the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. These articles, largely in line with Article 18 of the UDHR and Article 18 of the ICCPR, define this right as encompassing “freedom to change religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to

manifest religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance.”

In June 2013, the Council of the European Union adopted the EU Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of Freedom of Religion or Belief. These guidelines reaffirm the EU’s commitment “to promote, in its external human rights policy, freedom of religion or belief as a right to be exercised by everyone everywhere.” They also provide instructions to “officials of EU institutions and EU Member States” on how to engage “with third countries and with international and civil society organizations” regarding freedom of

religion or belief, as well as how to employ external policy instruments “to seek to prevent violations of freedom of religion or belief, to analyze cases, and to react effectively to violations wherever they occur.”²¹⁹

KEY INSTITUTIONS

The commitment to advancing freedom of religion outside the European Union is shared by various European Union institutions, specifically the European Commission, the European External Action Service, and the European Parliament.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (EC)



In May 2016, European Commission President Jean Claude Juncker created the position of Special Envoy for the Promotion of the Freedom of Religion or Belief Outside of the European Union, appointing former Slovak politician and European Commissioner Ján Figel'. The Special Envoy has a one-year mandate and must be reappointed annually, and also serves as a Special Adviser to the Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development. He is tasked with supporting the “implementation of the 2013 EU Guidelines with a special focus on country level action.”²²⁰ His mandate was most recently renewed in 2018.

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT (EP)²²¹



In January 2015, the European Parliament Working Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief became the Intergroup on Freedom of Religion or Belief and Religious Tolerance. This group is composed of members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and is dedicated to promoting and protecting FoRB in the world through the EU's external actions.

The intergroup's secretariat consists of two assistants of the co-chairs, a consultant, and academic support which they hire externally. The intergroup has a bureau, consisting of the two co-chairs and members representing all main political groups in the EP. The two co-chairs manage the intergroup on a daily basis with the Bureau providing strategic guidance. The advantage of the intergroup is that it has become the natural interlocutor in this area with other EU-institutions as well as beyond.

Intergroups of the European Parliament do not receive any special financial support or employees for their work. Since the intergroup does not receive any funding from the EP, nor from external organizations, all costs are paid out of the budget of the political groups or out of the general expenditure allowance each MEP receives on a monthly basis. The main costs relate to the Annual Report and amount to € 5,000 to € 10,000.

Additionally, and separate from the EP Intergroup, there exists within the European Parliament the European People's Party (EPP) Working Group on "Intercultural and Religious Dialogue" which is an official permanent structure of the European People's Party Group in the European Parliament (EPP Group) and is currently co-chaired by György Hölvényi MEP (Hungarian) and Jan Olbrycht MEP (Polish), in which a number of EPP Group Members of the European Parliament gather monthly to deal with religious and intercultural issues.

EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE (EEAS)



The European External Action Service (EEAS) has a dedicated division with a mandate to support EEAS efforts to uphold FoRB outside of the European Union. The division is located within the Global Affairs 1-Human Rights bureau within the Human Rights, Global, and Multilateral Issues directorate of the EEAS. It supports the efforts of High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission, currently Federica Mogherini.

POLICY & PROGRAMMING ACTIVITIES

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (EC)

The European Union emphasizes the use of its various financial instruments to support freedom of religion or belief abroad. The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), a “thematic funding instrument for EU external action,” prioritizes funding for initiatives related to the promotion of freedom of religion or belief, the protection of religious minorities, and combatting religious discrimination abroad. From 2007-2016, the EIDHR funded 40 civil society projects related to freedom of religion or belief abroad, representing a total commitment of over \$18 million. The European Commission notes that the Development Cooperation Instrument, the European Neighborhood Instrument, the Instrument Contributing to Stability and Peace, and the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance have been used to support “initiatives that are relevant for an enabling environment of freedom of religion or belief” abroad.

Duties of the Special Envoy for FoRB include country visits and participation in events at the multilateral level relating to the freedom of religion or belief.

The Special Envoy for the Promotion of FoRB outside the EU, Ján Figel' advances his mandate principally through country visits and through participation in multilateral fora. Through these efforts, he focuses on the importance of FoRB including everything from the right to believe in a non-theistic system of belief to a robust pluralism.²²²

His recent country visits in 2018 included Bosnia and Herzegovina, Pakistan, Nigeria, Lebanon, Burkina Faso, Malaysia and Egypt. During his visits, the Special Envoy supported various conversations on religious freedom between government officials and civil society as well as inter-religious dialogues that emphasized links between education, cultural endeavors and religious freedom.

In terms of multilateral engagement, Special Envoy Ján Figel was involved in the interactive dialogue on Freedom of Religion or Belief at the UN Human Rights Council in March 2018. The Special Envoy also ensures more effective coordination between various European bodies, such as the European Parliament, and between the EU and members states as they both individually and collectively engage in the advancement of international religious freedom.²²³

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

*Intergroup on Freedom of Religion or Belief and Religious Tolerance*²²⁴

The main activity of the intergroup is its Annual Report. This can be seen as both the product of academic research concerning violations of FoRB in the world, and a set of recommendations to the European Commission, the Council, the EEAS and the EP itself. That part of the report is definitely more advocacy-based. The methodology is refined

every year. In the 2018 report, the researchers identified a number of key violations of FoRB and defined a number of countries as focal countries. In addition, they also tried to measure the leverage of the EU over the third countries concerned, as well as the interest of these countries for the EU, e.g. because of trade or geopolitical reasons. For the rest, reference is made to the Annual Report itself, which can be found on the intergroup's website: <http://www.religiousfreedom.eu/>. The EEAS has worked closely with the EP Intergroup in preparing the report which is tabled in the European Parliament in autumn each year.

The intergroup's recommendations primarily target the EU-institutions, but in spring 2019 its members were invited for the first time to participate in several side events in Geneva, on the occasion of the Human Rights Council. It is to be expected that the international outreach of the intergroup will be further developed, if in September 2019 the newly elected EP decides to prolong the Intergroup (since there can be a maximum of 28 intergroups, this is a highly competitive system).

Other Intergroup activities include the organizing of events in the EP (always with an advocacy angle) and voting alerts when FoRB-relevant resolutions are voted upon.

Although the intergroup has maintained contact with the IPPFoRB, only recently the decision was taken to inform the IPPFoRB of the intergroup's interest in joining them. It is to be expected that if the intergroup is prolonged, these bonds will become stronger.

The intergroup has strong relations with the European Platform on Religious Intolerance and Discrimination (EPRID) and other NGOs, such as the European Humanist Federation (EHF) and the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU). It also maintains contacts with the EU Special Envoy on FoRB, as well as the Special Envoy's counterparts in the Member States. It also has close relations with the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and Belief.

*The EPP Working Group on Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue*²²⁵

The numerous events provide for interaction at the highest possible level between European politicians and religious representatives who seek support from Members of European Parliament (MEPs) to defend freedom of religion. The Working Group stresses that religious freedom as a universal right contributes to the flourishing of multi-religious societies. It calls on the European Commission, European External Action Service and the governments of the Member States of the EU to pay particular attention to the strong correlations between religious freedom and social stability and political moderation, both inside and outside the EU. Discussions center on religious pluralism as part of the EU's external policy as well as dedicated EU aid for displaced Christian populations and refugees worldwide.

A specialist Unit of the Secretariat of the EPP Group in the European Parliament supports the work of the Co-Chairs and organizes a wide range of events throughout the year:

The EPP Group Annual Dialogue Conference with Religions and Cultures
Monthly Working Group meetings

Thematic Working Breakfast meetings with Ambassadors of Muslim majority countries

Meetings with Church representatives and religious leaders as well as NGOs from the Balkans, the Middle East, Africa and Asia

Conferences on current affairs related to religious freedom

Visits to inspirational places with religious connotation

The EPP Group is the only political group in the European Parliament, which has held a long-standing structured dialogue with monotheistic religions for more than 20 years; today this has become a part of the EPP's core identity. The working group proved to be a suitable and important platform for a regular cooperation with Churches and religious organizations. No other political group in the European Parliament has this level of commitment.

EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE (EEAS)

The EEAS engages in regular dialogue with countries outside the EU on promoting religious freedom. During 2018 the European Union was active in more than 20 human rights consultations with specific focus on countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, South Asia, Central Asia and Southeast Asia. These dialogues placed particular emphasis on acts of religious violence and social hostilities against individuals and groups because of the beliefs they confess. As with many other countries engaged in international religious freedom policy the EU pays particular attention to the effects of blasphemy and apostasy laws. Additional attention is given to government regulations that complicate efforts of various religious communities to exercise their freedom due onerous registration requirements.²²⁶

MULTILATERAL ENGAGEMENT

Much of the European Union's engagement on international religious freedom is undertaken through multilateral bodies such as the UN, the OSCE, and the ICG. The EU has also been active in the U.S. sponsored Ministerial on Advancing Religious Freedom first hosted by the U.S. Department of State in July 2018.

At the United Nations the EU continues to be a principal sponsor of resolutions on freedom of religion in both the Human Rights Council (HRC) and the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly. The resolution calls on countries "to protect, respect and promote the right to freedom of religion or belief, while expressing concerns for violations to the right to FoRB and calling on states to step up their efforts to implement the

commitments undertaken.”²²⁷ Along with other countries that support these religious freedom resolutions, the EU maintains a dialogue with the Organization for Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on its own resolution: “Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence, and violence against persons based on religion or belief” so that there might be “greater complementarity of resolutions.”²²⁸

The EU is active in the Human Rights Council in advocating for freedom of religion in countries where there is serious persecution. Its most recent activities in the HRC have been to address religious freedom violations in Burma, China, Pakistan, North Korea, Syria, and Iran as well as by non-state actors such as the Islamic State.²²⁹

The EU actively supports the efforts of the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and Belief (UNSR) and often sponsors side events that give the UNSR opportunities to present the findings of his most recent reports, such as his 2018 report “Religion and State - a multidimensional relationship”. The UNSR is also regularly involved in consultations with EU bodies, notably during a recent visit to Brussels in June 2018.²³⁰

The EU has also worked recently with partners such as Canada, IPPFoRB, and the Netherlands to look at the various relationships between women and religious freedom, notably through events at the UN in Geneva and during high-level week in New York in September 2018.²³¹

The EU is a regular intervenor in the discussions pertaining to religious freedom that take place during the annual OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM) in Warsaw each autumn during which it has raised issues with religious freedom violations in OSCE states, such as the Russian Federation’s banning Jehovah’s Witnesses in 2017.²³² Also the EU engages the ministerial level of the OSCE level, such as in the recent negotiations on the OSCE Ministerial Council’s decision to augment efforts to promote FoRB and target violations of this fundamental right.²³³

The EU and several European member states are active participants in the International Contact Group on Freedom of Religion and Belief.

The EEAS co-chairs the Transatlantic Policy Network on Religion and Diplomacy (TPNRD) – which is a community of diplomats from Europe and North America focused on the interplay between religion and foreign policy. The TPNRD has produced a series of projects including research that aims to improve the religious literacy of foreign policy actors through effective diplomatic training, as well as strategic approaches to enhancing existing dialogues with the OSCE, the UN and the OIC.²³⁴

DIPLOMATIC TRAINING EFFORTS

The Commission has increased awareness-raising activities through training for staff. In 2018, two thematic seminars on gender, religion and development, and freedom of religion or belief were organized. The EED 2018 also included, for the first time, a high-level event on religion and gender equality which brought together policy makers, development practitioners, and academics to discuss how religion and religious dynamics support or challenge gender equality in the context of development cooperation and human rights.

In April, an EEAS-sponsored training course—delivered by practitioners working in the human rights area to EU and Member State diplomats—focused on identifying challenges to advocating FoRB, the initiatives in multilateral fora to promote this right, and explaining the plight of atheists and non-believers worldwide.

ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY & COOPERATION IN EUROPE



Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

Kishan Manocha

Senior Advisor on Freedom of Religion or Belief

<https://www.osce.org/odihr/freedom-of-religion-or-belief>

HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM POLICY

The OSCE (formerly the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe) was one of the few forums during the Cold War for dialogue between East and West where human rights issues could be discussed and norms could be agreed upon.

“Freedom of thought, conscience, religion, or belief has been one of the core commitments” of the organization’s membership since the signing of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975.²³⁵

In the Helsinki Final Act Basket I Section VII this principle was addressed, under the heading, “Respect for human rights

and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief:

The participating States will respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion.

They will promote and encourage the effective exercise of civil, political, economic, social, cultural and other rights and freedoms all of which derive from the inherent dignity of the human person and are essential for his free and full development.

Within this framework the participating States will recognize and respect the freedom of the individual to profess and practice, alone or in community with others, religion or belief acting in accordance with the dictates of his own conscience.”²³⁶

The OSCE has affirmed its support for religious freedom through binding commitments in subsequent documents, including the Vienna Concluding Document (1989), the Copenhagen Concluding Document (1990), and the Charter for European Security (1999).²³⁷

KEY INSTITUTIONS

The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) is the primary body through which the OSCE engages on questions of FoRB. In its role, ODIHR works to assist member states, religious communities, and civil society in protecting and promoting freedom of religion or belief. It also aims to address intolerance and discrimination on religious grounds.²³⁸ The current ODIHR Senior Advisor on Freedom of Religion or Belief is Kishan Manocha.

ODIHR is assisted in its work by a 12-member Advisory Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief first established in 1997. This panel is made up of individuals serving in a personal capacity for three-year terms. The role of the Panel is to provide advice, guidance and recommendations to ODIHR, and through ODIHR to OSCE participating States. The 2016-2019 term included experts from Germany, Latvia, United Kingdom, Russia, United States, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia.²³⁹

In addition, the ODIHR annually hosts the Human Dimension Implementation

Meetings (HDIM) which is Europe’s largest human rights conference, bringing together “hundreds of government officials, international experts, civil society representatives and human rights activists to take stock of how states are implementing their commitments in the human dimension, in other words, the core values that promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.”²⁴⁰

POLICY & PROGRAMMING ACTIVITIES

ODIHR undertakes a number of activities aimed at protecting and promoting freedom of religion or belief, including:²⁴¹

Reviewing legislation for governments, upon request, to help them bring their legislation in line with OSCE commitments and other international standards.

Providing expert opinions on issues related to freedom of religion or belief.

Developing and disseminating guidance to assist participating States in strengthening implementation of OSCE commitments and other international standards on freedom of religion or belief.

Following key developments affecting freedom of religion or belief in the OSCE area.

The primary purposes of the Panel of Experts on FoRB are to assist “participating states, religious or belief communities, and civil society in protecting and promoting the right to freedom of religion or belief” and to serve as “a consultative body that

can be used by participating states, OSCE field missions, and civil-society stakeholders.”²⁴²

The Panel of Experts is also tasked with “developing training materials on standards of international law on freedom of religion for faith communities, civil society, government officials, and academics.”²⁴³

In February 2016, the ODIHR led a training session for lawyers in Kyiv, Ukraine on “the main principles underpinning the right to freedom of religion or belief as enshrined in the ECHR and other international human rights instruments, as well as the relevant case law and the procedural aspects of bringing cases before the European Court of Human Rights.” This training session was part of the ODIHR’s project on “Promoting Security for Religious Communities and Others in the Regions of Ukraine.”²⁴⁴

The ODIHR hosted a two-day event in Amsterdam on “religious rites and practices and freedom of religion or belief,” which was attended by “representatives from Jewish and Muslim communities and other interested stakeholders.” The OSCE reports that this is part of the ODIHR’s project on “Turning Words into Action to Address Anti-Semitism,” which is sponsored by the German Federal Foreign Office.²⁴⁵

The ODIHR, in partnership with the Polish Mission to the United Nations, the Alliance Defending Freedom, and the International Center for Law and Religion Studies at Brigham Young University, organized a meeting at the United Nations Office in Geneva in September 2017. During the meeting, which was reportedly attended by representatives

of 45 UN Member States, the ODIHR presented its new Guidelines on the Legal Personality of Religious or Belief Communities, which was created in collaboration with the Council of Europe’s Venice Commission.²⁴⁶

In March 2019, the ODIHR, in conjunction with the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, held a series of roundtables in two cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, building on training workshops that have been held with municipal officials, religious communities, and civil society members.²⁴⁷

Major ODIHR publications in recent years include the Guidelines for Review of Legislation Pertaining to Religion or Belief (2004),²⁴⁸ which was drafted in conjunction with the Council of Europe, the Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools (2007),²⁴⁹ and Guidelines on the Legal Personality of Religious or Belief Communities (2015).²⁵⁰

UNITED NATIONS



Office of the United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights

Ahmed Shaheed

Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief

[https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/freedomreligion/
pages/freedomreligionindex.aspx](https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/freedomreligion/pages/freedomreligionindex.aspx)

HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM POLICY

The United Nations first addressed religious freedom through the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948. Article 18 of the UDHR guarantees “the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion,” including “the freedom to change religion or belief and the freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship, and observance.”²⁵¹

Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)

(1966) expands on conception of religious freedom outlined in the UDHR, stating that “freedom to manifest one’s religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.”²⁵² These documents are supplemented by the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination (1981)²⁵³ and language relating to freedom of religion or belief in various other UN human rights declarations and conventions (e.g. the 1951 Refugee Convention) over the last several decades.

KEY INSTITUTIONS

The Human Rights Council within the United Nations system is responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe and for addressing situations of human rights violations.

Through the complaint procedure the UN Human Rights Council is designed “to address consistent patterns of gross and reliably attested violations of all human rights and all fundamental freedoms occurring in any part of the world and under any circumstances” and can hear complaints from individuals, groups, and NGOs that are themselves victims of violations or have reliable knowledge of them.²⁵⁴

In 1986, the UN Commission on Human Rights (now the UN Human Rights Council) established the Special Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance. In 2000, the Commission on Human Rights changed the title of the position to the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief.

The Special Rapporteur is appointed by the UN Human Rights Council and has been mandated

- to promote the adoption of measures at the national, regional and international levels to ensure the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of religion or belief;
- to identify existing and emerging obstacles to the enjoyment of the right to freedom of religion or belief and present recommendations on ways and means to overcome such obstacles;

- to continue her/his efforts to examine incidents and governmental actions that are incompatible with the provisions of the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief and to recommend remedial measures as appropriate;
- to continue to apply a gender perspective, inter alia, through the identification of gender-specific abuses, in the reporting process, including in information collection and in recommendations.²⁵⁵

Dr. Ahmed Shaheed a career diplomat who twice was the Minister of Foreign Affairs for the Maldives has served as Special Rapporteur since November 2016.

The Third Committee of the General Assembly holds agenda items relating to a range of social, humanitarian, and human rights issues that affect people all over the world, including questions of human rights, and interacts with special rapporteurs on such issues.²⁵⁶

The Human Rights Committee is made up of independent experts who monitor the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights by State parties.²⁵⁷ The Committee not only monitors the status of human rights globally but also provides a platform for individuals to bring complaints of ICCPR rights violations, including those against freedom of religion.²⁵⁸

POLICY & PROGRAMMING ACTIVITIES

The Special Rapporteur on FoRB drafts annual reports for the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly “on the activities, trends, and methods of work,” “undertaking fact-finding country visits,” and engaging with governments “with regards to cases that represent infringements of or impediments to the exercise of the right to freedom of religion or belief.”²⁵⁹ These annual reports regularly address key thematic issues of concern such as: “State-Religion Relationships and their Impact on Freedom of Religion or Belief,”²⁶⁰ “Relationship between freedom of religion or belief and national security,”²⁶¹ and “Restrictions imposed on expression on account of religion or belief.”²⁶²

In March 2014, the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief led an “Expert Workshop on Tackling Religious Intolerance and Discrimination at the Workplace” in Geneva, in collaboration with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The central purpose of this event was to “explore how the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief can be appropriately implemented at the workplace and what measures States and other stakeholders should take to overcome intolerance and discrimination in employment.”²⁶³

In September 2016, the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief hosted a workshop on “Religion

and Religious Freedom in International Diplomacy.” This event was held in collaboration with the World Council of Churches and the Finnish Ecumenical Council.²⁶⁴ This workshop was followed by a “panel discussion on ‘Religion and Religious Freedom in International Diplomacy’ during the 33rd Session of the UN Human Rights Council.”²⁶⁵

Formal country visits also make up a fundamental activity of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur. “The Special Rapporteur undertakes country visits to get an in-depth understanding of specific contexts and practices and to provide constructive feedback to the given country and report to the Council or the General Assembly.” These visits include meetings with government officials, civil society representatives, religious communities, and other individuals who are interested in or affected by the mandate.²⁶⁶

Beyond the work of the Special Rapporteur, since its creation in 2006, the Human Rights Council has issued five resolutions directly related to freedom of religion or belief, in 2007, 2010, 2013, 2017, and 2019.²⁶⁷

An additional mechanism for addressing religious freedom issues in particular countries is through the United Nations Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review (UPR). As designed, the UPR is a process which reviews the human rights records of UN Member States.”²⁶⁸



The UPR is a State-driven process, under the auspices of the Human Rights Council, which provides the opportunity for each State to declare what actions they have taken to improve the human rights situations in their countries and to fulfil their human rights obligations."²⁶⁹

Through the UPR process a formal review is conducted based on information provided by the state under review, a "national report", information in reports from independent human rights experts, including the UN Special Procedures and other UN entities, as well as other stakeholders, including submissions from NGOs.²⁷⁰ This process provides an opportunity for both states and civil societies to formally raise religious freedom concerns directly with countries of concern as a means of opening up formal dialogue on rights violations.

MULTILATERAL ENGAGEMENT RELIGIOUS FREEDOM SPECIFIC BODIES

INTERNATIONAL CONTACT GROUP
ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

INTERNATIONAL PANEL OF
PARLIAMENTARIANS FOR
FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF



INTERNATIONAL CONTACT GROUP ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM POLICY

The International Contact Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief (ICG) was established in 2015 as an initiative of the Canadian Office of Religious Freedom. The ICG's inaugural meeting in Brussels in June 2015 featured the participation of some 20 founding ICG member states, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Norway, Cameroon, Jordan, and Indonesia. The ICG can be best described as a network of likeminded governments who fully support an individual's right to freedom of religion or belief, as set out in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The central purpose of the ICG is to provide a platform to facilitate collaboration and promote appropriate diplomatic actions to address the challenge of rising levels of religious persecution globally, outside of traditional multilateral institutions.

KEY INSTITUTIONS

U.S. Special Advisor Thames and Giuliana Natale, Director of Inclusion and Religious Freedom in Global Affairs Canada's Office of Human Rights, Freedom and Inclusion, are the current co-chairs of the ICG.

The ICG consists of some 25-member states, as well as an unspecified number of affiliated multilateral organizations. While a complete list of member states has not been made available to the public, known members of the ICG include Cameroon, Canada, Germany, Jordan, Morocco, Norway, Poland, Senegal, Tunisia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

POLICY & PROGRAMMING ACTIVITIES

The ICG's primary accomplishment includes the development of coordinated responses to religious freedom violations and abuses in countries such as Pakistan, Vietnam, Turkmenistan, and Eritrea.

The ICG has met several times since its inception, including at the U.S. Department of State in Washington, D.C. in 2016 and on the margins of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva in 2017. According to the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, its 9th meeting was held in Geneva on March 6, 2019, once again on the margins of the UN Human Rights Council.²⁷¹

INTERNATIONAL PANEL OF PARLIAMENTARIANS FOR FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM POLICY

The International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief (IPPFoRB) was established in November 2014 at the Nobel Peace Center in Oslo, Norway. During this initial meeting, 30 parliamentarians from 17 countries signed the Oslo Charter for Freedom of Religion or Belief, the founding document of IPPFoRB. The gathering also produced its first two advocacy letters expressing concern over the situation in Pakistan and Burma.²⁷²

The Oslo Charter reaffirms support for religious freedom in the wake of increasing restrictions around the world and commits the signatories to promote religious freedom in their work, bolstering global cooperation by working across geopolitical and religious lines and by working to “share information and mobilize effective responses.”²⁷³

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) played a leading role in the effort to establish the IPPFoRB, alongside parliamentarians and legislators from a number of countries including Brazil, Canada, Norway, Turkey, and the United Kingdom.²⁷⁴

IPPFoRB describes itself as “an international network of parliamentarians and legislators committed to combating religious persecution and advancing freedom of religion or belief, as defined by Article 18 of the Universal Declaration for Human Rights.”²⁷⁵

IPPFoRB has representation from parliaments and legislatures in 97 countries, and over 300 parliamentarians have attended meetings organized by IPPFoRB to help promote international religious freedom.²⁷⁶

KEY INSTITUTIONS

IPPFoRB is led by an informal Steering Committee currently composed of parliamentarians from Brazil, Canada, Norway, Indonesia, and the United Kingdom. The panel is also supported by a volunteer Secretariat of policy advisors who help manage IPPFoRB activities and work with parliamentarians on issues of concern. USCIRF, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the British Council are among the primary partners and funding sources for the IPPFoRB.

As a part of expanding its work, IPPFoRB supports the “formation of national and

regional groupings of parliamentarians committed to combating religious persecution and advancing freedom of religion or belief.”

Established national groups include the UK All Party Parliamentary Group for International Freedom of Religion or Belief, the Norwegian Parliamentary Group for Freedom of Religion, IPPFoRB Brazil, Canadian Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief (CANFoRB), the Pancasila Caucus in Indonesia, and the Danish Network of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief.

Current collaboration with regional networks includes the African Parliamentarians Association for Human Rights (AfriPAHR) network of approximately 80 African Parliamentarians, European Parliament Intergroup on Freedom of Religion or Belief & Religious Intolerance, The Southeast Asian Parliamentary Working Group on FoRB, and IPPFoRB Latin America.

POLICY & PROGRAMMING ACTIVITIES

IPPFoRB’s work focuses “on growing a diverse and collaborative global network and building the capacity of parliamentarians to act as agents of change in support of freedom of religion or belief both at home and abroad.”²⁷⁷

IPPFoRB members seek to influence international religious freedom policy of their governments “by focusing on developing robust domestic legislation” and through country visits which aim to build solidarity among parliamentarians addressing religious freedom violations in countries of concern.

The work is organized into four key areas: training, high-level events, research and fact-finding, and advocacy.

IPPFoRB hosts a variety of targeted training events as well as the IPPFoRB Academy. Hosted in Oxford, England, “IPPFoRB Academy is a unique and interactive residential training course for parliamentarians providing capacity building in the field of freedom of religion or belief.” Speakers for the events are drawn from leading advocates, academics, and parliamentarians to provide both technical knowledge and practical skills in equipping parliamentarians to advance freedom of religion in their particular contexts.²⁷⁸ The first IPPFoRB Academy was hosted in September 2018 and drew over a dozen parliamentarians for the three-day program.²⁷⁹

In addition to training events, IPPFoRB has helped develop resources geared particularly toward parliamentarians yet available for broader application.²⁸⁰

A key resource is the IPPFoRB Toolkit “designed to enable parliamentarians to advocate for the right to freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) more effectively, through increasing their understanding of FoRB and the national, regional and international mechanisms at their disposal for promoting and protecting this right.” Produced by CSW, the toolkit provides key definitions, highlights national and multilateral mechanisms, and proposes suggested actions parliamentarians can take to advance freedom of religion.²⁸¹

Since its 2014 founding, IPPFoRB has convened a number of high-level events in locations around the world. These

events often serve to address particular regional issues (e.g. the Balkans and South Caucasus,²⁸² Latin America, ASEAN region) and thematic concerns (e.g. Multinational efforts to advance Freedom of Religion or Belief, FoRB and Gender Equality: Positive Synergies²⁸³), at various venues, including on the margins of major events such as the UN General Assembly.

These events are designed for the dual purpose of encouraging mutual learning by showcasing inspirational work from around the network and providing a venue to learn from leading experts on the latest research and emerging trends. These gatherings build solidarity across varying backgrounds and present opportunities for coordination and collective action.²⁸⁴ Outcomes from these events have included collective advocacy letters (e.g. Letter to the Prime Minister of Malaysia)²⁸⁵ and joint resolutions (e.g. New York Resolution for Freedom of Religion or Belief).²⁸⁶

A third area of work for IPPFoRB is fact-finding and research efforts to investigate particular issues and areas of concern. During these visits, delegations will engage a variety of stakeholders such as government officials, religious communities, and civil society organizations with the aim of better analyzing key issues of concern and opening channels with political leaders and local communities. Such country visits also enable deeper engagement on religious freedom issues between visiting and host legislators, opportunities for “rapid response and strategic intervention, and opportunities to build the capacity of local FoRB parliamentarians by introducing them to a wider network of parliamentarians.”²⁸⁷

According to IPPFoRB, since 2016, the panel has “completed three solidarity missions in Myanmar and Nepal. Over 16 MPs from around the world have taken part in these solidarity visits. Each visit introduced local parliamentarians to a wider network of parliamentarians and allowed for cross-border exchange.” Some of these visits have been documented in reflections by individual parliamentarians and in published reports.²⁸⁸

IPPFoRB encourages and facilitates participation in a variety of advocacy actions to address violations of freedom of religion. Such steps include writing opinion pieces in media outlets and addressing issues in legislative sessions. Two IPPFoRB spotlights are the panel’s advocacy letters and prisoners of conscience advocacy letters.

To date, IPPFoRB as a network has written 29 letters raising concerns on religious freedom issues to heads of state or other political leaders.²⁸⁹ These issues and countries span the globe from Egypt and Iran in the Middle East, to Sudan and Eritrea in Africa, Pakistan and India in South Asia, and Myanmar, Vietnam, Malaysia, and North Korea in Asia.

In conjunction with USCIRF, IPPFoRB has also taken particular steps to advocate for prisoners of conscience in various avenues. According to the panel, “half of the prisoners of conscience that IPPFORB has advocated for have been released.”²⁹⁰

APPENDIX A:

KEY RELIGIOUS FREEDOM DOCUMENTS

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948): Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted in the aftermath of the Second World War, states:

“Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship, and observance.”

As noted in this report, the UDHR’s conception of religious freedom has significantly influenced subsequent U.N. documents and forms the basis for many European states’ understanding of religious freedom today.

Available at: <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

European Convention on Human Rights (1950): Article Nine of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) guarantees “freedom of thought, conscience, and religion.” While nearly identical to the wording on this freedom found in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (see below), the ECHR states:

“Freedom to manifest one’s religion or beliefs shall be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others” (emphasis added).

All 47 Member States of the Council of Europe are party to the ECHR, which gives individuals legal recourse in the European Court of Human Rights if said individual believes that his or her rights have been denied.

Available at: https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_ENG.pdf

Declaration on Religious Freedom (1965): The Declaration on Religious Freedom (also known by its Latin name, *Dignitatis Humanæ*), approved at the end of the Second Vatican Council and promulgated by Pope Paul VI, is the definitive statement on the Catholic Church’s understanding of and support for a comprehensive understanding of religious freedom for the religious consciences of individuals because *“the human person has a right to religious freedom. This right is immune from coercion on the part of individuals or of social groups and of any human power, in such wise that no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs, whether privately or publicly, whether alone or in association with others, within due limits.”* Governments have a responsibility to favor

religion in fulfillment of the mandate “to make provision for the common welfare.”

Available at: http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651207_dignitatis-humanae_en.html

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966): Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) expands on the conception of religious freedom found in the UDHR, stating:

“No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice.” Further, “freedom to manifest one’s religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.”

There are currently 172 states party to the ICCPR.

Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>

Helsinki Final Act (1975): Article Seven of the Helsinki Final Act guarantees religious freedom, stating:

“The participating States will respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion. They will promote and encourage the effective exercise of civil, political, economic, social, cultural and other rights and freedoms all of which derive from the inherent dignity of the human person and are essential for his free and full development. Within this framework, the participating States will recognize and respect the freedom of the individual to profess and practice, alone or in community with others, religion or belief acting in accordance with the dictates of his own conscience.”

The Helsinki Final Act, which represents the foundational document of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), further references the rights of national minorities and the conception of religious freedom found in the UDHR and ICCPR. 35 states, including the Soviet Union, signed the Helsinki Final Act, which is credited as playing a substantive role in bringing an end to the Cold War.

Available at: <https://www.osce.org/helsinki-final-act?download=true>

U.N. Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief (1981): The U.N. Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief is a U.N. General Assembly resolution reaffirming the commitment of Member States to the conception of religious freedom found in the UDHR and ICCPR. The declaration explicitly prohibits State discrimination on the basis of religion or other beliefs and provides a more detailed overview of specific freedoms that fall under the umbrella of religious freedom, including the freedom to provide religious education, train and appoint religious leaders, and

operate charities and humanitarian organizations with a basis in religion or other beliefs. The introduction recognizes:

“freedom of religion and belief should also contribute to the attainments of the goals of world peace, social justice and friendship among peoples and to the elimination of ideologies or practices of colonialism and racial discrimination.”

Available at: <https://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/36/a36r055.htm>

U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992):

The U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious, and Linguistic Minorities is a U.N. General Assembly resolution that explicitly affirms the right of minority populations to religious freedom, including the free exercise of religion in the public square. Article Two of this Declaration states:

“Persons belonging to minorities have the right to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, and to use their own language, in private and in public, freely and without interference or any form of discrimination. Persons belonging to minorities have the right to participate effectively in cultural, religious, social, economic and public life.”

Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/Minorities.aspx>

Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000): Article Ten of the freedoms listed in the second chapter guarantees “freedom of thought, conscience, and religion.” While adopting the basic definition and understanding of religious freedom found in the UDHR and the ICCPR, Article Ten also states:

“The right to conscientious objection is recognized, in accordance with the national laws governing the exercise of this right.”

All E.U. Member States are party to the Charter of Fundamental Rights, and the rights enumerated in the Charter are intended to inform the actions, including the creation of law, of both E.U. Member States and E.U. institutions (e.g. the European Parliament).

Available at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text_en.pdf

Oslo Charter for Freedom of Religion or Belief (2014): The Oslo Charter reaffirms the support of its signatories for the understanding of religious freedom found in Article 18 of the UDHR. It also commits its signatories to:

“Promote freedom of religion or belief for all persons through their work and respective institutions; Enhance global cooperation by endeavoring to work across geographical, political, and religious lines; and Undertake efforts to jointly promote freedom of religion or belief, share information, and mobilize effective responses.”

The Oslo Charter was signed by 30 parliamentarians from around the world, all of whom were members of the International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief acting in their personal capacity. The Charter does not have any support from state governments.

Available at: <https://www.ippforb.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Charter-for-Freedom-of-Religion-or-Belief.pdf>

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APPENDIX B:

IRFP ONLINE SURVEY (CONDUCTED DEC. 2018 - MAY. 2019)

INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM POLICY LANDSCAPE REPORT RESEARCH QUESTIONS FOR MFAS & MULTILATERAL ORGANIZATIONS

OBJECTIVE

In order to produce a robust and accurate landscape report on the current state of international religious freedom policy being undertaken by foreign ministries (MFAs), multilateral organizations (MOs), and related bodies, the RFI IRFP Action Team went into the field from November 2018 to February 2019 with the following set of research questions. These questions follow the layout of the above IRFP Landscape Report focusing on advocacy and programmatic activities, along with aiming to capture the broader contexts for action. These questions were submitted to MFAs and MOs in order to round out and verify information previously obtained through available open source material.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

N.B. *“Organization” below is an inclusive category that may refer to a foreign ministry, a multilateral organization, or a responsible division therein.*

CONTEXT

1. What is your organization’s operating definition of freedom of religion? How does this definition relate to Article 18 in the UDHR and ICCPR?
2. What are the stated goals of your international religious freedom policy (IRFP)?
3. What is the nomenclature employed by your organization in your IRFP: freedom of religion, freedom of religion and belief, or other?
4. What is the structure within your organization that coordinates and/or leads IRFP activities? Who heads this structure and where do they sit within your organizational hierarchy? Is there a reporting relationship to a political office, such as a minister’s office?
5. Since when has your organization focused on the issue of IRFP? Have there been any changes in organizational structure or reporting relationship during this time. If so, what was the rationale for change?
6. What form does your IRFP take? Is it principally advocacy-based, program-based, or both?
7. How are your activities funded? What is your current annual budget, and is it subject to an internal audit?
8. Does your organization produce a regular report on your IRFP activities? How often is this report produced? Is the report public?

ADVOCACY

1. What are the principal means of advocacy adopted by your organization to advance international religious freedom?
2. Does your organization engage in international religious freedom advocacy through diverse ways, i.e. bilaterally with priority countries of focus and/or multilaterally through international organizations such as the UN, OSCE, and EU?
3. Is your organization active in the International Contact Group on FoRB? When did your organization join the ICG? What contribution has your organization made to the actions of the ICG?
4. Does your organization coordinate advocacy activities with other bodies such as the International Panel of Parliamentarians on FoRB (IPPFoRB)?
5. In advancing international religious freedom, does your organization employ a methodology to determine which regions or countries to prioritize? If so, please briefly describe the methodology.
6. In which countries or regions is your organization most active? What specific forms of advocacy do you undertake, e.g. démarches, bilateral engagements, and multilateral engagements?
7. What metrics or indicators does your organization employ to measure the effectiveness of advocacy activities?

PROGRAMMING

1. On average, what percentage of your organization's annual budget is dedicated to funding in-country programming?
2. Does your organization currently partner with other organizations, including other governments/multilateral organizations in addition to NGOs?
3. What percentage of your organization's in-country programming activities are undertaken in partnership with the following g
 - Non-governmental organizations
 - Faith-based organizations
 - Multilateral organizations
 - Like-minded governments
4. How does your organization determine priorities for in-country programming? What are specific target areas for programming, e.g. education, post-conflict reconciliation, direct relief to members of persecuted religious groups, and inter-religious dialogue?
5. In which regions or countries is your organization most active in terms of sponsoring in-country programming?
6. What metrics or indicators does your organization employ to measure the effectiveness of in-country programming?

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