



Programme

Developing a multilateral approach to freedom of religion or belief: a European perspective

Monday 9 – Wednesday 11 February 2015 | WP1383

This programme is designed to enable European policymakers and other experts to contribute to strengthened multilateral cooperation on freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) in dialogue with transatlantic partners. In June 2013 the EEAS adopted its Guidelines for the Promotion and Protection of Freedom of Religion or Belief. In doing so, EU member states reaffirmed and embedded the promotion of freedom of religion or belief for all within their wider international commitment to Human Rights. Together with the creation of the Office for Religious Freedom in the Canadian DFATD, the EU guidelines represented one of the most significant of an increasing number of governmental and inter-governmental initiatives including observatories, commissions, offices and panels of experts for the protection of FoRB internationally. Although all are tasked with fostering FoRB, the different institutional approaches reflect very different conceptions of FoRB and state-religion arrangements. They can be classified as follows: monitoring and informing, assisting, promoting and defending, and engaging. The merits and challenges of each of these different approaches need to be assessed.

The EU Guidelines have been published at a time where there is a growing recognition in the foreign policy community of the need to engage with religion. Recognising the need for more coordinated policymaking, this conference aims to

- Draw policymakers, diplomats, FoRB experts and religious actors into dialogue about how to work more closely together to promote and protect FoRB in key

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countries and regions of the world.

- Explore how to build up the religious literacy of diplomats/policymakers to better understand the religious worldviews that shape international policy including FoRB.
- Draw on a wide range of initiatives and experiences to identify how governments can most effectively work with stakeholders to promote FoRB.
- Analyse the specificities of the European and North American traditions including the opportunities and challenges of multilateral approaches to international religious freedom.

Monday 9 February

1300-1430

Participants arrive and buffet lunch available

1500

Welcome and introduction

Why is Freedom of Religion or Belief increasingly important in a globalised world? What has been the impact so far of the EU Guidelines? What other work is already being done by governments and intergovernmental organisations to promote engagement with religion or FoRB? Have we got stuck? How can these experiences help to inform better European policymaking and engagement?

Gary Wilton

Canon Emeritus of Pro-Cathedral of Holy Trinity, Brussels; Vicar of All Saints, Ecclesall and Visiting Programme Director, Wilton Park, Steyning

Elizabeth Berridge

Chair, All Party Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief, House of Lords, London

Fabio Petito

Senior Lecturer of International Relations, University of Sussex and Scientific Coordinator of the Italian MFA project on Religions and International Relations

1515-1645

1. The promotion of Freedom of Religion or Belief in the international arena

What are the policy challenges and dilemmas facing the international community when promoting FoRB? How does FoRB relate to other Human Rights? What are the advantages or disadvantages of the North American stand-alone approach to International religious freedom? What are the advantages or disadvantages of the European approach which embeds FoRB within a wider Human Rights agenda? Which elements of the different approaches are working or not working? Are there ways in which the differences could be used strategically?

Andrew Bennett

Ambassador for Religious Freedom, Office of Religious Freedom, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD), Ottawa

Jean-Christophe Peaucelle

Advisor for Religious Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development, Paris

Knox Thames

Director of Policy and Research, US Commission on International Religious Freedom, Washington DC

1645-1730

Photograph followed by tea/coffee

1730-1900

2. Can Europe speak with one voice on FoRB? National traditions and external approaches – What are the opportunities and risks?

How is FoRB understood differently in the domestic politics of European countries? How do these legacies impact on how religious freedom is incorporated in foreign policy? How can the EU balance, in its external action, the different national approaches to relationships between religion and state and, as a consequence, to religious freedom? What are the implications of different European understandings of the relationship between freedom of religion and freedom of expression? Is there a risk that Europe is perceived as a 'Christian club' only concerned with promoting its own interests?

Silvio Ferrari

Professor of Law and Religion, University of Milan and Honorary President of International Consortium for Law and Religion Studies

Jean-Bernard Bolvin

Policy Officer (Freedom of Religion or Belief), European External Action Service, European Commission, Brussels

Pierre Morel

Director, Pharos Observatory of Culture and Religious Pluralism, Paris

1900

Reception hosted by the Department of International Relations, University of Sussex

1930

Dinner

Tuesday 10 February

0800-0845

Breakfast

0915-1045

3. Europe and other regions of the world

How well is Europe positioned to advocate a sustainable model of FoRB for countries where religion and state are integrated? How might Europe engage with countries holding different views of the relationship between religion and the state? Which countries are best placed to communicate with others? How can Europe build creative partnerships beyond the West? How do Europe respond to hate speech or allegedly incendiary comments in different contexts? Is there a significant difference with US in this respect? How much freedom is allowed for those from minority relations to practice and express their faith?

Heiner Bielefeldt

Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Geneva

Claudio Mario Betti

Professor, Community of Sant'Egidio, Rome

Paul Bhatti

Former Federal Minister of National Harmony, Advisor to the Prime Minister of Pakistan for Minority Affairs, Chairman, Shahbaz Bhatti Memorial Trust and All Pakistan Minorities Alliance, Islamabad

Olivier Roy

Professor of Social and Political Theory, European University Institute, San Domenico di Fiesole

1045-1115

Tea/coffee

1115-1245

4. Breakout session: Engaging policymakers with issues of faith and belief in advocacy

Participants will be divided into smaller working groups to discuss practical strategies for policymakers seeking to promote FoRB, for prisoner release cases, in cases of conflict and the – political context following the recent Paris events. How can policymakers work most effectively with members of faith communities/advocacy organisations will also be considered. Each working group will consider a different case study;

Group 1: Dealing with prisoners release cases: the case of Asia Bibi

John Esposito

Professor of Religion and International Affairs, Georgetown University, Washington DC

Anita Weiss

Professor, Department of International Studies, University of Oregon, Eugene

Group 2: Protecting FoRB in situations of conflict: from the Balkans to the Middle East and the Ukrainian crises

Cole Durham

Director of the International Center for Law and Religion Studies, Brigham Young University, Provo

Group 3: From the Danish cartoon to the Paris cartoon – implication for religious engagement, social cohesion and the relationship between freedom of religion and freedom of expression

Merete Bilde

Policy Advisor, European External Action Service, Brussels

Group 4: Promoting FoRB in an era of growing religious nationalism: the case of South Asia

Ram Madhav

General Secretary of Bharatiya Janata Party and Director, India Foundation, New Delhi

Questions for all Groups to consider may include;

- What are the most effective means of promoting FoRB in advocacy cases?
- What lessons can be learned from past conflicts to improve the strategies to protect FoRB?
- What is the relationship between FoRB and freedom of expression?
- Are hate speech laws an excessive limitation of freedom of expression?
- How can initiatives of inter-religious dialogue locally and globally help to combat violations and abuses of FoRB?
- How can Governments better react to anti-conversion, blasphemy and unfair registration laws?

1245-1415

Lunch

1415-1500

5. Feedback from breakout session on case studies

1500-1630

6. The relationship between FoRB and religious engagement in foreign policy

What is the relationship between human rights and religious engagement? What are the tensions between 'human rights' and 'religious engagement' frameworks? Could FoRB be better promoted through support for the wider rights of freedom of association and expression? How far should the emphasis be on the duties of states to respect, protect and promote FoRB or on the responsibility of faith communities to promote dialogue and tolerance? What challenges are there in promoting dialogue between religious institutions and human rights bodies? How can obstacles be overcome? How can organisations best work together towards common goals?

Peter Mandaville

Professor, Government and Politics, George Mason University, Fairfax

Malcolm Evans

Professor, Public International Law, University of Bristol, Bristol; Chair, UN Subcommittee for Prevention of Torture

Timothy Shah

Associate Director, Religious Freedom Project; Senior Fellow, Department of Government Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs, Georgetown University, Washington DC

1630-1700

Tea/coffee

1700-1830

7. Breakout session: Enhancing coordination between the national and international level

Participants will be divided into smaller groups to consider how national and international initiatives can be aligned and support one another.

- **Group 1:** Best practise in project work: What projects and where do Western MFAs tend to fund to protect FoRB? Which are the good implementers? What are the areas that different states are receptive to? How have people thought laterally to run a FoRB project in a country that is normally very hostile to FoRB?

Sue Breeze

Head, Equality and Non-Discrimination Team, Human Rights and Democracy Department, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, London

- **Group 2:** What lessons can be learned from existing transnational agreements for future international frameworks? How to build alliances and further international parliamentary coordination? How can faith groups be engaged with implementation in the community?

Elizabeth Berridge

Chair, All Party Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief, House of Lords, London

Knox Thames

Director of Policy and Research, US Commission on International Religious Freedom, Washington DC

- **Group 3:** How can the different standards and reporting systems of national and international agreements be closer aligned or better coordinated for cross-checking?

Pasquale Ferrara

Italian Diplomat; Secretary General, European University Institute, Florence

Brian Grim

President, Religious Freedom and Business Foundation, Annapolis

1900

Reception followed by dinner

Wednesday 11 February

0800-0845

Breakfast and checkout

0900-0915

10-15 minutes: eQuestionnaire completion
<http://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/WP1383>

0915-1045

8. Feedback from breakout sessions and conclusions

Lessons learned from the breakout sessions will be related back in a plenary session. This will be followed by a summary of the concluding points from the dialogue as a whole and the opportunity for further group discussion.

1045-1115

Tea/coffee

1115-1230

9. Looking forward – developing a European approach to promoting Freedom of Religion or Belief

Drawing on the points raised during the dialogue, what are the opportunities for European policymakers moving forward? How can current strategies to protect FoRB be developed further? How can policymakers and religious actors work together to promote and protect FoRB creatively? How can the transatlantic tensions mentioned above be utilized or overcome in the effort to construct a better coordinated multilateral approach to religious freedom? How can the benefits of these advances be shared more widely to maximise their impact?

Arne Brandsma

Senior Policy Advisor, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Hague

Maciej Janczak

Deputy Director, Department of United Nations and Human Rights, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Warsaw

Dan Philpott

Professor of Political Science and Peace Studies and Director of the Center for Civil and Human Rights, Notre Dame University

Anne Leahy

Former Canadian Ambassador to the Holy See and Adjunct Professor, Faculty Advisory Board of the Faculty of Religious Studies, McGill University, Montreal

Pasquale Ferrara

Italian Diplomat; Secretary General, European University Institute, Florence

1300

Lunch

1400

Participants depart