All Party Parliamentary
Group for International
Freedom of Religion or Belief

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ARTICLE 18: FROM RHETORIC TO REALITY

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Rohingya Muslims transport vital aid supplies near Sittwe. Credit: Mathias Eick, EU/ECHO, Rakhine State, Myanmar/Burma, September 2013

LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Article 18: From Rhetoric to Reality is a timely report. It is four years since the All Party Parliamentary Group's first report *Article 18: An Orphaned Right* highlighted the situation of millions of people around the world who face persecution or discrimination because of their religion or beliefs. In the intervening years, violations of the right to freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) have not diminished, and discrimination and persecution in the name of religion or belief continue in many countries across the world.

While there is now considerable national and international discussion about the importance of freedom of religion or belief and how to tackle the violations, there remains a need to embed systematic and proactive actions and policies to move FoRB from rhetoric to reality.

This report has taken evidence from a range of individuals and institutions and offers a number of recommendations and suggestions for good practice which, if implemented, will have the power to transform the lives of vulnerable people.

The work that has gone into this report is extensive. I should like to record special thanks to the staff in the APPG office, Katharine Thane, the Operations Director, and Amro Hussain, the Parliamentary Officer, for their sterling work in drafting, editing and producing this report. The extensive commitment this has taken is typical of their unflagging interest and enthusiasm and is much appreciated. Grateful thanks should also go to all those who contributed to the report, and gave freely of their time to steer and edit the contents. I should also like to thank particularly, Dr Ahmed Shaheed, the UN Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Religion or Belief for his Foreword, and Brigham Young University for their generous financial support which has made the production and launch of this Report possible. Last, but by no means least, I should like to thank our Stakeholders whose faithful financial and practical support enables this APPG to be a voice for those who have none, and resources its Members to speak out in the UK Parliament, Government and across the international stage on behalf of all those who face persecution every day.

Jim Shannon MP
Chair, APPG for International Freedom of Religion or Belief

FOREWORD

By Dr Ahmed Shaheed, United Nations Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Religion or Belief

This report comes at a time when acts of intolerance involving religion or belief are on the rise globally. A climate of intolerance is being fostered in many nations by xenophobic and nativist narratives, which are also de-sensitising the general public to dangerous practices such as stigmatisation and incitement to hostility against those with different beliefs. An alarming trend has also emerged within many States with Governments' and officials' politicisation and securitisation of religion or belief, utilising them as a means to promote identity politics and justify restricting the right to freedom of religion or belief.

Violations of freedom of religion or belief are truly global, occurring in most continents and in many different cultures - from the potential crimes against humanity being committed against Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar and genocide against vulnerable Iraqi religious groups such as Yazidis, Shabak, Shi'a Muslims and Christians to the banning of religious groups including Jehovah's Witnesses. There is no one type of perpetrator or victim. Groups that face persecution in one country may be the persecutors in others. Perpetrators may also be State or non-State actors, and from the latter, mob violence is frequently used to enforce religious or social norms.

Despite global commitments to promote and to protect freedom of religion or belief, the scale of violations remains enormous, with almost 80% of the world's population living in countries with "high" or "very high" levels of restrictions and/or hostilities towards certain beliefs. Despite, also, a proliferation of internationally-agreed guidelines, toolkits and frameworks for implementing Freedom of Religion or Belief, only around 10% of States report on their implementation of these guidelines.

The importance of beliefs in forming a central part of who we are, how we interact with others and how religion or beliefs are utilised to promote violence and conflict have not quite fully been understood by us in the 'secular' UK. For those living in a secular society where the practice of religion is a minority activity and in which there is no experience of an invader or brutal dictator within living memory, it can be hard to appreciate the scale of religious persecution overseas and the importance of human rights such as the right to freedom of religion or belief.

Given the increasing global interaction between peoples, allowing persecution across the globe to be immediately felt by others abroad, including diaspora communities, both foreign and domestic policy will be enhanced by developing an understanding of religious or belief dynamics which influence people's behaviour towards others. It is crucial that we try to see the world as others see it and that we invest more in translating our expressions of solidarity into operational action. While the profile of Freedom of Religion or Belief is being raised in the Foreign Office, there is much still to be done to make sure that Government staff are fully equipped to recognise and tackle violations of this right.

This report explores the importance of the right to Freedom of Religion or Belief for Government Ministers and officials including for preventing violent extremism and promoting the sustainable development goals and provides recommendations and best practice for pursuing this right. I urge the UK and other Governments to give serious consideration to implementing what is laid out in this report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Article 18 (Universal Declaration of Human Rights): *"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".*

'Article 18: From Rhetoric to Reality' is a timely report. It is now 4 years since the APPG's '*Article 18: An Orphaned Right*?' report profiled the need for Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) to be brought into the mainstream of UK Government departments' work at home and overseas. In the intervening time, as Chapter 2 highlights, violations of FoRB have certainly not diminished. Discrimination and persecution on the basis of religion or belief continues, in different forms, in the majority of countries globally.

While there is now considerable talk about FoRB and how to tackle violations of FoRB such that it is no longer 'an orphaned right' in talk, there is an ever pressing need for systematic and proactive actions and policies to move FoRB from rhetoric to reality. In addition, FoRB policy discussion has tended to focus on how to utilise this right as a tool to achieve other policy ends. While extremely valuable, this does not always tackle the conditions leading to FoRB violations *per se*. As the title suggests, this report aims to provide good practice and recommendations to realise the right to FoRB in different country contexts to change the lives of persecuted people.

FoRB and its global applicability

The right to FoRB (as seen in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights) protects the right of each person to manifest their beliefs in private and public. This right may be restricted but only in exceptional circumstances. Recognition of the right to FoRB can be found throughout history and in all parts of the world, and as such is a right that can be rooted – and implemented – within all religious and cultural contexts.

The reality

Our beliefs inform our identity and how we relate to the world around us. Because of this, some people who undergo persecution face death, rather than renounce their beliefs.

Despite 243 States signing international human rights provisions on FoRB, the scope of FoRB violations is extensive. Nearly 80% of the world's population live in countries with "high" or "very high" levels of restrictions and/or hostilities towards certain beliefs.[1] There is no one type of perpetrator or victim. Belief groups that face persecution in one country may be the persecutors in others. Current trends of FoRB violations across different countries include the use of school textbooks containing discriminatory material and hate speech; blasphemy charges resulting in prison and death sentences and the use of anti-terrorism or "extremism" legislation to restrict religious or belief group members.

Initiatives to tackle FoRB violations at the international level

In the past five years, a denser network of organisations and collaborative initiatives seeking to realise FoRB have emerged. These include the International Panel of Parliamentarians for FoRB, an informal multi-national parliamentarian platform for advancing this right.[2] With the support of the new UN Special Rapporteur for International FoRB, Dr Ahmed Shaheed, initiatives such as the Faith for Rights

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1   Pew Research Center, 'Global Restrictions on Religion Rise Modestly in 2015, Reversing Downward Trend', 11 Apr. 2017, http://www.pewforum.org/2017/04/11/global-restrictions-on-religion-rise-modestly-in-2015-reversing-downward-trend/
2   For more information, see IPPFoRB's website at: http://ippforb.com

Initiative and The Fez Process are supporting political and religious leaders to tackle incitement to violence on the basis of religion or belief. The international response to ISIL/*Daesh*'s crimes towards Yazidis, Christians (Chaldeans/Assyrians/Syriacs/Melkites/Armenians), Shi'a Muslims and other religious minorities, potentially amounting to genocide, has also developed. It must be ensured that the independent investigative team to support domestic efforts to hold ISIL/Daesh accountable for its actions in Iraq, recently announced by the UN Security Council, is adequately resourced and that the evidence collated is used to bring ISIL perpetrators to justice in line with international law.[3]

FoRB as a policy tool

While not necessarily working to realise FoRB *per se*, FoRB can be used as a policy tool to achieve other policy ends including realising the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and preventing violent extremism (PVE). Nearly 85% of the world's population is affiliated with a religion or belief. In many countries with the highest expenditure of development aid, advancing FoRB – building understanding, tolerance and respect between belief groups – is critical for building lasting peace and stability.[4] Recent studies have also shown that FoRB can positively impact economic development and prosperity.[5] In this way, FoRB helps achieve SDGs - particularly SDG16 and SDG8 - and, in turn, the Department for International Development's Strategic Objectives.[6] Due to their ability to build trust with vulnerable communities, faith and belief-based organisations should be considered as key partners in realising the SDGs.

FoRB is also a key tool for building 'tolerant and inclusive societies' which are more immune to the challenges of violent extremism and the ideological bases of non-violent extremism.[7] Advancing FoRB in building 'cohesive communities' is recognised in the UK Counter-extremism Strategy and Casey Review. While religion is a factor in much recruitment to violent extremism, PVE measures should avoid identification of violent extremism with any one religion, which could lead to the alienation of certain individuals. However, in numerous countries overseas, religion is being viewed through a national security lens to justify restricting FoRB. There are also questions as to whether the UK is failing to ensure the full realisation of FoRB in practice as a result of its PVE measures. Chapter 4B highlights internationally-agreed good practice suggestions that can help to realise PVE's desired results.

Effective FoRB implementation

We urge the UK and other governments to work to advance FoRB from the present rhetoric and international human rights treaty ratification to practical reality. Effectively advancing this human right requires a multi-track approach involving governments, civil society and the private sector as well as tailoring to the specific context. Civil society includes human rights and faith and belief-based organisations, religious leaders, human rights defenders and other community and youth groups. This report makes a number of 'good practice' suggestions gathered from our stakeholders and other experts working in this field, which are explored in full in Chapter 5. These suggestions are:

• Track and audit government aid and investment to ensure it is not supporting intolerant narratives.

• Increase 'FoRB literacy' of country and thematic desk officers at home and abroad, embassy staff and Ministers in relevant government departments.

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3   UN Press, *Meetings Coverage: Security Council 8052nd Meeting, SC/12998,* (21 Sept. 2017), https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/sc12998.doc.htm

4   Pew Research Center, *The Changing Global Religious Landscape,* (5 April 2017), p.8, http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2017/04/07092755/FULL-REPORT-WITH-APPENDIXES-A-AND-B-APRIL-3.pdf

5   Alon, I.; Li Shaomin; Wu, J., *Religious Freedom, Interference in Religion, and Economic Growth,* accessed 5 Oct. at: http://www.rollins.edu/political-science/documents/ilan-alon-shaomin-li-and-jun-wu-religious-freedom-interference-in-religion-and-economic-growth.pdf

6   Department for International Development, 'Single Departmental Plan: 2015 to 2020', (1 Sept. 2016), https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfid-single-departmental-plan-2015-to-2020/single-departmental-plan-2015-to-2020

7   UN General Assembly, Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, A/70/674, (24 Dec. 2015)

- Develop a better understanding of key FoRB issues for those affected by conflict to help design effective solutions for local needs and facilitate peacebuilding.

- Work with and support civil society effectively to change cultural narratives around FoRB.

- Be wary about highlighting government involvement when advancing FoRB.

- Support positive messaging about respecting others' beliefs to help realise FoRB.

- Work with media organisations to advance FoRB and monitor hate speech and incitement to violence.

- Use alternative methods such as working with celebrities and business leaders to advance FoRB.

Building on these suggestions, this report makes a number of key recommendations to the UK Government, which are fully outlined in Chapter 6, to bring FoRB from rhetoric to reality. These recommendations are:

1) **Identify FoRB as a Political Priority of the Foreign Secretary, and establish a FoRB programming funding stream within the Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

2) **Identify FoRB as a strategic priority in the Department for International Development's work**

3) **Resource the International Investigative Team into ISIL's Crimes and ensure that the evidence collated is used to bring ISIL Perpetrators to justice in line with international law**

4) **Support Parliamentarians and Institutional Partners Globally to Advance FoRB**

5) **Ensure that aid is channelled to organisations and programmes that support and demonstrate a clear understanding of FoRB**

6) **Increase religious and FoRB 'literacy' among Embassy staff and civil servants**

7) **Undertake a baseline evaluation of the extent, quality and impact of FoRB in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in order to mainstream FoRB throughout work streams**

8) **Develop and share understanding of key FoRB issues, in conflict situations and facilitate peace-building**

9) **Revise the FCO Magna Carta Human Rights and Democracy Fund to support longer-term civil society-led projects and make available smaller grants to fund small projects advancing FoRB**

10) **Recognise religious persecution within the UNHCR vulnerability criteria**

11) **Establish a cross-Governmental programme to support pro-FoRB messaging and narratives on and offline**

12) **Integrate the FCO's recognition of FoRB's role within PVE measures across UK Government and then share this best practice internationally**

13) **Work with local civil society, including faith and belief-based organisations, to implement conflict reduction programming between religious or belief communities**

14) **Convene an expert group to scope initiating an international FoRB Convention**

INTRODUCTION
IS FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF STILL AN 'ORPHANED RIGHT'?

Freedom of Religion of Belief is one of the most difficult human rights to quantify and measure implementation, particularly when examining policy change at the national and international level. As with other human rights, progress in achieving FoRB is often frustratingly slow, with many different concerns and interests having to be balanced and complex issues addressed. For a considerable period, FoRB remained 'residual' or 'ancillary' to other goals and objectives[8], justifiably earning it the title of 'an orphaned' right.[9] As this report will show, although there have been a number of positive developments since the publication of the 2013 report, *'Article 18: An Orphaned Right'*, these appear to have made little impact on the realities of restriction and repression which continue to characterise the global experience of the enjoyment of this fundamental right. While FoRB may no longer be 'orphaned' in the sense of being forgotten in human rights discussions and diplomacy, it remains orphaned in terms of implementation. Hence the key message in the title of this report, the need to move from talk to policy and action, from rhetoric to reality - reality for the lives of those dying, imprisoned and oppressed for their faiths or beliefs. Indeed, there is a perception that advancing FoRB strengthens the male religious leaders' ability to control groups rather than it being a right of each individual. Taken overall, the evidence suggests that rather than improving, the situation for people has deteriorated since the last report. It is vital to move from rhetoric to reality, and redouble efforts to make Freedom of Religion or Belief a reality for all.

Article 18: An Orphaned Right: Recommendations Summary

The 2013 report presented prerequisites for implementing a FoRB Policy. These were:

• Grounding for all action in UDHR Article 18;

• Recognition of FoRB's central significance;

• Clear commitment across the domestic political spectrum;

• International action focused on FoRB for all, determined from broad-based consultation across the belief spectrum.

Specific recommendations included:

1)   Appoint Ambassadorial-level focal point on FoRB.

2)   UK to become a state party to the First Optional Protocol of the ICPPR.

3)   Establish a FoRB sub-group of the FCO's Human Rights Advisory Group.

4)   Undertake a baseline evaluation of the extent, quality and impact of mainstreaming issues concerning FoRB.

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8   APPG for International Freedom of Religion or Belief, *Article 18: An Orphaned Right,* (June 2013), p.5, https://appgfreedo-mofreligionorbelief.org/media/Article-18-An-Orphaned-Right.pdf
9   *ibid*

5) Ensure that DfID's aid is channelled to organisations and programmes that support and demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of FoRB.

6) Revise the FCO Human Rights and Democracy Programme (HRDP) to support longer-term projects.

7) Ensure sufficient funding for a paid, full-time Special Rapporteur on FoRB.

8) Identify FoRB as a new priority in DfID's work.

9) Ensure that the *Rabat Plan of Action* is used in engagement with UNHRC Resolution 16/18 and the Istanbul Process.

10) Convene an expert group to scope initiating an international FoRB Convention.

Progress made since *Article 18: An Orphaned Right*

Since the publication of the first APPG report in June 2013, there has certainly been no decrease in FoRB violations globally. Indeed, between 2013 and 2017, the situation appears to have worsened. Research carried out by the Pew Centre in 2017 found that there was a yearly increase in global restrictions on freedom of religion or belief between 2007-2012. Restrictions increased again in 2015 after a slight two-year fall.[10]

Many of the *Orphaned Right* report's recommendations and prerequisites for a successful FoRB policy' remain just as applicable today as they did in 2013. Some recommendations (3, 4 & 6) have been implemented to some extent, although attention needs to be given to ensuring their ongoing effectiveness. Recommendation 1 has been overtaken by events. The other 6 recommendations (2, 5, 7, 8, 9 & 10) have arguably not been addressed at all and indeed FoRB violations in some countries have only worsened.

The problem lies in recommendations concerning FoRB as a thematic policy area remaining too general and aimed at the international political community. As Professor Sir Malcolm Evans from the University of Bristol has commented, such recommendations tend only to produce international outcomes and consequently, we see little change trickling through to people on the ground. Advancing FoRB in practice inevitably differs between contexts. It requires engagement from a range of governmental and non-governmental actors working on country-specific issues where FoRB needs to be brought into the mainstream of all such work. This means that tension or conflict relating to religion or belief needs to be evaluated and acted upon by those working on and in specific countries. That will allow FoRB violations to be systematically tackled, which in turn will help build more secure, cohesive societies. This report highlights and provides recommendations designed to help bring FoRB into the mainstream of work across government departments.

There are many potential reasons why some *Orphaned Right* recommendations have not been implemented, or sustained. One is that the debate around FoRB has shifted from being a good in and of itself, towards being a tool to achieve other policy ends such as preventing violent extremism and achieving international development objectives such as the Sustainable Development Goals. While this is a positive use of FoRB, it has lessened the focus on realising the right itself for persecuted people. As Professor Evans wryly conjectures, while in some senses FoRB is no longer an orphaned right, it has been taken-up for ends other than itself.

Political changes and the passing of time have also impacted the implementation of *Orphaned Right*'s recommendations. During the period following the launch of the original report, FoRB was an identified area of particular policy focus and priority, as well as a personal priority of the minister with

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10   Pew Research Center, 'Global Restrictions on Religion Rise Modestly in 2015, Reversing Downward Trend', 11 Apr. 2017, http://www.pewforum.org/2017/04/11/global-restrictions-on-religion-rise-modestly-in-2015-reversing-downward-trend/

responsibility for the overall policy portfolio. In 2015, human rights work in the FCO was reconfigured into three generic 'themes' - 'democratic values and the rule of law', 'human rights for a stable world' and 'strengthening the international rules-based system' and FoRB ceased to be actively pursued as a discrete priority area.

Since the publication of the original report, we have also seen the rise of violent extremist groups such as so-called Islamic State (*Daesh*), who have an international reach and generate fear, including fear – and hatred - towards some religious communities. Xenophobic hate crimes have verifiably risen in the UK over the past few years, reflected in 2016 *Casey Review* which found that 'communities are divided along racial and religious lines'.[11] FoRB addresses such problems by protecting those whose beliefs and truths might not be properly understood and respected by the majority population. Only secure and confident societies are able to put their weight behind advancing FoRB and there are those who question whether the UK is currently such a society. There is no general Government consensus that advancing FoRB will result in more 'cohesive communities'. In fact, there is an erroneous understanding that advancing FoRB empowers religious organisations to conduct inappropriate or illegal activities. This misperception must be challenged and changed.

There have been some welcome innovations. The introduction of the role of a Special Advisor on Faith Communities to No.10 in September 2016 is a welcome indication of the recognition of the importance faith plays in people's lives, as was the pledge to "stand up for FoRB' as part of the UK's successful bid for 2017-19 UN Human Rights Council membership. In July 2017, Lord Ahmad, the newly appointed FCO Minister of State for the UN and Commonwealth, declared FoRB a personal political priority. Since his appointment, indications of support for FoRB have also been seen in DfID through its UK Aid Connect funding call which for the first time will make funds available to a consortia which will analyse how best to support tolerance and FoRB.

These innovations are a positive start to moving Article 18 from rhetoric to reality. For FoRB to be realised globally it must be mainstreamed, meaning measures to advance FoRB (which are explored throughout this report) being taken-on and pursued by Embassy staff and country-specific civil servants, including Country Desk Officers, across relevant Government Departments. This action, which has been accepted by Lord Ahmad, can be supported by the training and toolkits already available, including the 'FCO FoRB toolkit'.

Despite other pressing political issues such as Brexit, it is important to keep a sustained effort to advance the right to FoRB in an increasingly violent and unstable world, otherwise it risks remaining more rhetoric than reality.

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11   Dame Casey DBE CE, *The Casey Review*, (December 2016), https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-casey-re-view-a-review-into-opportunity-and-integration

Mosque minarets and church domes sit side by side (10 Sept. 2006). Credit: David Evers, Flikr

CHAPTER I
WHAT IS FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF?

Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) is possibly one of the least developed rights within the framework of the post second-world war system of international human rights protection. Unlike many of the other international human rights – such as the prohibition of racial or sexual discrimination – an internationally binding treaty focused on protecting the right to freedom of religion or belief remains a distant prospect.[12]

Article 18 (Universal Declaration of Human Rights)

Adopted on the 10th of December 1948, Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) 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."*

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12   UN General Assembly, *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*, Treaty Series, vol. 660, 195, (7 March 1966); UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, Treaty Series, vol. 1249, (18 December 1979)

Although not envisaged as creating binding legal obligations, Article 18 has over time acquired a normative character within general international law; considered to bind all States and those within them. While the provisions of Article 18 represent the international community's most significant commitment to FoRB, what they mean in practice needs greater clarification.

What does Article 18 mean in practice?

Article 18 of the UDHR affirms that FoRB is a right that belongs to each human being. It is an individual right, conferred upon individuals and group of individuals, and which can be manifested through a community of believers acting together either privately or in public. It does not confer any rights or privileges upon religions or beliefs themselves. One of its most important elements, not clearly set out in subsequent UN instruments, is the right to change one's religion or belief, or to abandon it, which acknowledges that a person's beliefs may be subject to development and change.

FoRB also does not provide protection from someone's religion or belief being subject to adverse comments or insults. This is an important point to note whenever arguments are given in support of concepts such as 'defamation of religion', or laws prohibiting blasphemy (speaking 'offensively' about God).[13] Article 18 therefore does not offer any validation or protection for States seeking to criminalise the defamation or insulting of any religion or belief.

The United Nations Human Rights Committee (UNHRC) has noted that forbidding actions which disrespect a religion or belief system, including blasphemy laws, are almost always incompatible with essential human rights and freedoms, including FoRB and the right to freedom of expression.[14] Article 20(2) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)[15] does however outline instances in which freedom of expression may be limited in order to protect FoRB.[16]

What are the limitations?

Article 18 is a non-derogable right. It cannot be denied through pressure, intimidation and coercion. That said, religious ideologies or belief systems can be misused and manifested in ways which generate hatred, intolerance and violence and undermine fundamental human rights of other members of society. The right to manifest religion or belief must therefore be balanced with other rights.

The UDHR generally affirms that rights may be restricted 'for the purpose of securing... respect for the rights and freedoms of others and... meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and... general welfare in a democratic society'.[17] ICCPR Article 18(3) outlines in more detail the permissible limitations to FoRB. The article states:

> *'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'.*

Article 18(3) does not allow believers to disregard the interests of those around them. State authorities have the right to restrict some manifestations of FoRB which have negative

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13   Implementation of General Assembly Resolution 60/251: *Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Asma Jahangir, and the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, Doudou Diène, further to Human Rights Council decision 1/107 on incitement to racial and religious hatred and the promotion of tolerance* A/HRC/2/3 (20 September 2006)

14   Human Rights Committee, *General Comment No. 34 (Article 19: Freedom of Opinion and Expression),* CCPR/C/GC/34, (12 September 2011), para .5

15   *ibid*, para. 48.

16   See, for example, a case in which a teacher who had published materials expressing hostility towards a religious community was transferred to a non-teaching position. *Malcolm Ross v. Canada*, Communication No. 736/1997, U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/70/D/736/1997 (2000) (Views adopted on 18 October 2000Communication No. 736/97; see also Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 34, para. 33.

17   *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, (10 Dec. 1948), Article 29(2)

consequences for other members of society as, for example, in cases where public marches, parades or religious organisations threaten public order, provided the restriction is in accordance with the provisions of that article.

The UNHRC has made it clear that the right to 'be free from coercion to have or adopt a religion and for parents/guardians to determine a child's religious or moral education cannot be restricted.'[18] 'Limitations on FoRB must also be 'directly related and proportionate to the specific need on which they are predicated' and 'may not be imposed for discriminatory purposes or applied in a discriminatory manner'.[19] Further, 'as moral concepts derive from many social, philosophical and religious traditions, limitations on the manifestation of FoRB for 'protecting morals' must not be based on principles deriving exclusively from a single tradition'.[20] States should provide full information on the scope and effects of any limitations made to FoRB.[21]

The UNHRC highlight that the omission of 'national security' from ICCPR Article 18(3) was intentional, as the term is vague and invites the risk of abusive application by unscrupulous governments. Fears of abuse have proved valid, since some public authorities have used potential threats from terrorist organisations to try to justify restrictions of legitimate expressions of belief, as, for example, seen in the 2017 trials of Jehovah's Witnesses charged with "extremism" in Russia.[22]

Is Freedom of Religion or Belief applicable globally?

Understanding how FoRB has been regarded around the world is valuable in understanding its implementation. Many human rights, including FoRB - and even the concept of human rights itself - come accompanied with a heavy sense of cultural, political, and historical baggage which can hinder their effective implementation. Throughout episodes in human history, it has been said that advancing human rights, including FoRB, is to impose a new form of 'Western imperialism' that has no relevance for non-Christian, non-Western countries. Such misplaced thinking has generated opposition to, and erroneous interpretations of FoRB that undermine its object and purpose. Human rights thinking is, in fact, aimed at challenging and countering this.

Examples of the recognition of FoRB can, however, be found across history and from all parts of the world. Possibly one of the earliest known codifications of FoRB dates to the Persian Achaemenid Empire. In 550 BC, King Cyrus the Great, wanting to be perceived as a liberator and not an oppressor declared in the 'Cyrus Cylinder' (found in Mesopotamia in 879 AD) that all Achaemenid Empire subjects were to be free to worship as they wished. Approximately two centuries later, Emperor Ashoka of the Mauryan Empire (modern day India), embraced religious freedom in his edicts, stating that while critique and debate between believers was permissible, different believers should be free to live alongside and share experiences with one another.

The Constitution of Medina, instituted by the Prophet Mohammed between 622-624 to bring peace between the Khazraj Arab tribe and their Jewish rivals, declares that the citizens of that newly established Islamic State are one, equal and indivisible, regardless of religion, 'be they 'heathen', people of the Book, or Muslim'.[23] The 1264 Polish Statute of Kalisz also outlined unprecedented protection and privilege for the Jewish communities, providing the basis for Europe's first formal codification of religious freedom in the 1573 Warsaw Confederation.

18   UN Human Rights Committee, *CCPR General Comment No. 22: Article 18 (Freedom of Thought, Conscience or Religion)*, CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.4, (30 July 1993), para. 8

19   *ibid*

20   *ibid*

21   *ibid*

22   Forum 18, 'Russia: Jehovah's Witnesses Now Banned', 18 July 2017, http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2297

23   Morrow, John Andrew, *The Covenants of the Prophet Muhammad with the Christians of the World*, (USA: Angelico Press/ Sophia Perennis, 2013), p.32

England itself was a place of persecution in the 16th century following the constitutional alignment of the Government and Monarch. This ultimately led to the fleeing of the pilgrims to America with a huge price paid by the native American population. It took the courage of people like Thomas Helwys, a Baptist minister who publicly advocated religious liberty at a time when to hold to such views could be dangerous, to help change English practice. He died in prison as a consequence of the religious persecution of Protestant dissenters under King James I. Helwys was the first person to outline in the English language what we now know as Article 18.

Following the end of the First World War, a system of protection for some vulnerable minority groups was established through specific treaty arrangements and under the auspices of the League of Nations.[24] It was, however, the Second World War (WWII) that galvanised the international community into drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (1966), drawing from thousands of years of human history and different traditions, including from the eighteen Muslim country representatives present, to construct the contemporary understanding of FoRB[25].

These early and post-WWII documented examples highlight that FoRB is not just a concept that can be rooted in 'Western' traditions but, reflecting its universal nature and applicability, is rooted in - and so can be implemented within - all religious and cultural contexts.

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24 For a list of instruments see: United Nations, *Special Protective Measures of an International Character for Ethnic, Religious or Linguistic Minorities* UN Doc. CN.4/Sub.2/214/Rev 1; UN Doc E/CN.4/Sub.2/221/Rev 1 (UN Sales No. 67. XIV3)
25 These States were: Afghanistan, Algeria, Egypt (UAR), Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Mauritania, Morocco, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen.

CHAPTER 2
THE IMPORTANCE OF FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF AND THE SCOPE OF VIOLATIONS

Religious moralities and belief systems have a profound impact on forming personal identity, values and social norms. These norms guide and instruct us on how to treat others, how to act and even how to dress. Equality, religious non-discrimination and fundamental rights are moral claims recognised and established within the constitutional and legislative framework of many modern states of world. Unfortunately, it is also the case that laws and politicspaceal and administrative policies adopted and implemented in many states and societies across the globe legitimise discrimination, intolerance and persecution of minority faith groups. Within such societies, minority or non-dominant faith groups are targeted, often leading to incarceration and physical violence against individual members of the religious groups in question (see 'Current Trends in FoRB Violations' below).

As a result, some may try to hide, or even to abandon, their beliefs. But this may not be so easy. As beliefs inform our very identity and how we relate to the world around us, many people undergo persecution and even face death, rather than renounce their beliefs. The following quotes provide a snapshot of this reality for many vulnerable victims around the world:

"'The day will come when they ring our doorbell and take mom and dad away to prison," Ava explained. **"When they come, don't worry.** *They will take us to prison, ask us some questions, and hit us. Then we will come back."* [26]

– Ava, a Christian in Vietnam, prepares for what she expects Government authorities to do.

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26   Open Doors, '3 Persecution Snapshots that Will Change the Way you Think', 11 July 2017, https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/stories/3-persecution-snapshots-will-change-way-think/

*"'One day, my brother and uncle came to me and lied to me. They invited me to go to their house, which I agreed to without hesitation. Little did I know that when we arrived at my uncle's house, they would beat me and tie me up with a rope [...] They tied me up and said that I should go back to my old faith, **if you won't go back, we will hit you until you die, they told me [...]** Though I miss my mother, and despite what happened to me, I am still very happy that I believe in Jesus and have peace because of this. For me, I will stay here in this village and I will live here because I can worship and nurture my faith freely. Nothing can stop my belief now, and I will not go back to the Hmong culture of worship."* [27]

– A convert to Christianity from Buddhism in Laos loses his family and community for his beliefs.

"My discovery could cost me my life. I was afraid to touch the Bible, but I couldn't just leave it there [...] To me all those stories and ideas were so interesting. But I realized it was dangerous. My father always emphasised not to share anything with anyone else." [28]

– Daughter of a North Korean underground Church leader recounts her experiences after escaping into South Korea.

Global FoRB Violations

Since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, there has been some growth in the recognition of the significance of FoRB. Nevertheless, violations of FoRB continue to take place across the world, both developed and developing. Currently, some of the most publicised atrocities are taking place in Africa, Asia and the Middle-East and urgent action is needed to address the violations. Within these regions there are some religious minorities which are publicly condemned. Individual members of some minority faiths are at risk of being put on watch lists, being denied access to public services, receiving corporal punishment in the form of hundreds of lashes or even of being assassinated in targeted killings. [29]

Despite global commitments to promote and protect FoRB, the scale of violations remains enormous, with approaching 80% of the world's population living in countries with "high" or "very high" levels of restrictions and/or hostilities towards certain beliefs. [30] These violations are truly global, occurring in most continents and in many different cultures. There is no one type of perpetrator or victim. Belief groups that face persecution in one country may be the persecutors in others.

Current Trends in FoRB Violations

FoRB violations are manifest in two different but intrinsically linked dimensions: direct State denial and State failures to protect this right. These forms are being manifested in different trends across different countries. We highlight three of these trends now:

In education:

The spread and use of intolerant narratives in school textbooks is a noticeable trend across different countries. For example, textbooks containing biased material, including hate speech about Hindus, Christians, Ahmadis, Sikhs and Shi'as, have been found in a number of provinces, including Sindh and Balochistan, in Pakistan. [31] School textbooks advocating intolerance on the basis of religion also appear

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27   Open Doors, ' Leaving Home', accessed 5 Oct. 2017 at: http://www.opendoorsyouth.org/article/leaving-home/
28   Open Doors, ' As a Young Girl in North Korea, She Was Afraid to Even Touch a Bible', 20 July 2017, http://www.open-doorsuk.org/news/stories/north_korea_150304.php
29
30   Pew Research Center, 'Global Restrictions on Religion Rise Modestly in 2015, Reversing Downward Trend', 11 Apr. 2017, http://www.pewforum.org/2017/04/11/global-restrictions-on-religion-rise-modestly-in-2015-reversing-downward-trend/
31   National Commission for Justice and Peace, *Education vs Fanatic Literacy: A Study on the Biased Material in Textbooks of Academic Year 2015-16* (2016); United States Commission for International Religious Freedom, 'Pakistan 2017', accessed 5 Oct. 2017 at: http://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/Pakistan.2017.pdf

in Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Turkey. Throughout primary, middle and secondary education, an extensive review by Human Rights Watch found that "students in Saudi schools are being taught hatred toward all those perceived to be of a different faith or school of thought".[32] The textbooks "disparage Sufi and Shi'a religious practices and label Jews and Christians "unbelievers" with whom Muslims should not associate".[33] In Egypt, children continue to be taught by intolerance textbooks that talk about non-Muslims as "infidels".[34] These are allegedly due to be reformed by 2022.[35] In Turkey, evidence indicates that the textbooks used in compulsory 'Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge" courses for primary and secondary children include 'misleading information about religions other than Islam' and until grade 12, state that the only correct and legitimate lifestyle is that of Sunni Islam.[36]

In blasphemy legislation:

The issue of blasphemy and laws treating blasphemy as a criminal offence have seen a resurgence in recent years. In UN Resolution 16/18, it was internationally agreed that only individuals' religious sensibilities, not religions themselves, can be offended, making punishment for blasphemy used in such a way a violation of international human rights law.[37] Despite this, blasphemy laws in Indonesia, Egypt,[38] Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Mauritania, Nigeria[39] and other nations are in place and continue to be used against those with different beliefs. Legislation strengthening and expanding constitutional restrictions on blasphemy was passed in the Nepalese Parliament in August 2017 and at the time of writing is waiting for Presidential approval.[40] In June 2017, Taimoor Raza, a Pakistani Shi'a Muslim, was handed a death sentence for allegedly insulting the Prophet Muhammed on social media and in September 2017, a Pakistani Christian man, Nadeem James, was handed the death sentence after being charged by a close friend with blasphemy after sharing social media content with him.[41] In May 2017, the Christian Governor of Jakarta in Indonesia, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (known as Ahok), was sentenced to two years imprisonment for his contestation that Muslims could vote for non-Muslims made during his election campaign.[42]

In anti-terrorism legislation:

A further trend , particularly within the past decade, is the increased use of anti-terrorism legislation to crack down on religious or belief groups. Despite recognition and protections for Christians in Iran's Constitution, in August 2016, five Christian members of a house church were arrested at a picnic and

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32 Human Rights Watch, 'Saudi Arabia: Religion Textbooks Promote Intolerance', 13 Sept. 2017, https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/09/13/saudi-arabia-religion-textbooks-promote-intolerance

33 *ibid*

34 Brought to the attention of the APPG via private email (Sept. 2017) / The Washington Institute, 'The Ideological Extremism of Al-Azhar', (3 March 2016), http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-ideological-extremism-of-al-azhar

35 United States Commission for International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), 2017 Annual Report: Egypt, (Apr. 2017), http://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/Egypt.2017.pdf

36 USCIRF, 2017 Annual Report: Turkey, (Apr. 2017), http://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/Turkey.2017.pdf; Nurcan Kaya, *Discrimination Based on Colour , Ethnic Origin, Language, Religion and Belief in Turkey's Education System*, (2015), http://minorityrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/EN-turkiye-egitim-sisteminde-ayirimcilik-24-10-2015.pdf

37 UN Human Rights Council, *Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence, and violence against persons based on religion or belief : resolution / adopted by the Human Rights Council*, A/HRC/RES/16/18, (12 April 2011)

38 Middle East Concern, 'Iran: Court Hearing for Imprisoned Christians', 18 May 2017, http://www.meconcern.org/2017/05/18/iran-court-hearing-for-imprisoned-christians/

39 *The Independent*, 'Nigerian Mob Burns Down House of Muslim Who Tried to Save Christian Accused of Blasphemy', 23 Aug. 2016, http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/nigerian-mob-burns-down-house-of-muslim-who-tried-to-save-christian-accused-of-blasphemy-a7205376.html

40 CSW, 'Bill Criminalises Religious Conversion', 22 Aug. 2017, http://www.csw.org.uk/2017/08/22/news/3677/article.htm

41 Aljazeera, 'Pakistan: Death Penalty for Blasphemy on Facebook', 12 June 2017, http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/06/pakistan-death-penalty-blasphemy-facebook-170612052000251.html ; *The Guardian*, 'Pakistan Man Sentenced to Death for Ridiculing Prophet Muhammad on Whatsapp', 16 Sept. 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/16/pakistan-man-sentenced-to-death-for-ridiculing-prophet-muhammad-on-whatsapp

42 Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 'Indonesia: UN Experts Call for the Release of Ahok', 25 May 2017, http://www.csw.org.uk/2017/05/25/news/3570/article.htm

charged with 'acting against national security'.[43] In China, the 2016 counter-terrorism laws have been used to restrict even mild expressions of Tibetan identity and culture.[44] The use of counterterrorism legislation on religious groups is particularly prevalent across Central Asia. In Uzbekistan, an estimated 15,000 individuals are imprisoned on charges related to membership of allegedly extremist religious groups.[45] In Tajikistan, the extremism law punishes 'extremist', 'terrorist' or 'revolutionary' activities without requiring them to incite violence.[46] Officials continue to monitor mosque attendees for views they deem extremist or critical of the government, and to restrict Muslim religious dress and limit the number and age of hajj (religious pilgrimage) participants under the guise of concerns over extremism. In July 2017, a Protestant Pastor was jailed for three years on grounds of 'extremism' after the raiding of his house church where songbooks and a book called *More than a Carpenter*, deemed "extremist", were found.[47]

Country-based FoRB Violations

Illustrations of the scale and diversity of FoRB violations globally are examined in the case studies below. The selection of these cases highlights the diversity of examples. It does not mean that the groups discussed are the only groups subject to persecution in the countries mentioned, that their persecution is necessarily the most extreme within those countries or that these groups or others are not being persecuted elsewhere.

1. MYANMAR: Rohingya Muslims

Since 1978, waves of violence carried out by State actors and the military has been directed against Rohingya Muslims who are viewed as Bengali (connoting them with illegal immigrants). In 1982 the Government passed a Citizenship Law making it almost impossible for Rohingyas to keep their citizenship.[48] Despite being given white cards enabling them to vote in 1993, these were revoked before the 2015 election meaning there is no longer any parliamentary representation for this community of around 1 million Rohingya, largely living in Rakhine State. Violence erupted in Rakhine State in October 2016 and again in August 2017, as the military cracked down on Rohingya Muslims following attacks against security forces. The most recent violence, described as ethnic cleansing by the UN, has killed approximately 1,000 people and forced over 500,000 Rohingya to flee to neighbouring Bangladesh.[49]

2. ERITREA: Christians

Hundreds of Evangelical Christians are thought to be detained indefinitely at any given time in unsatisfactory conditions such as metal shipping containers, and with insufficient access to food, water and medical treatment. Many of them are subjected to torture, for example, by being bound in contorted positions for lengthy periods, or through prolonged beatings. There are credible reports of female Christian prisoners being beaten on their wombs, allegedly to prevent them from bearing children. Following international pressure, the Orthodox Patriarch, Abune Antonios (90), who had been held in incommunicado detention for 10 years, was allowed to appear in public at a church in Asmara on 16 July 2017, but was not allowed to speak despite allegedly requesting to do so. He has not been seen in public since, and is believed to be in a new location and surrounded by guards.[50]

43   Middle East Concern, 'Iran: Court Hearing for Imprisoned Christians', 18 May 2017, http://www.meconcern. org/2017/05/18/iran-court-hearing-for-imprisoned-christians/
44   International Campaign for Tibet; FiDH, *China's New Counter-Terrorism Law*, (Nov. 2016) https://www.savetibet.org/ wp-content/uploads/2016/11/FIDH-ICT-Chinas-new-counter-terrorism-law-Implications-and-Dangers-for-Tibetans-and-Uy-ghurs-15-11-2016-FINAL.pdf
45   USCIRF, Annual Report 2017: Uzbekistan, (Apr. 2017), http://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/Uzbekistan.2017.pdf
46   USCIRF, Annual Report 2017: Tajikistan, (Apr. 2017), http://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/Tajikistan.2017.pdf
47   Forum 18, Tajikistan: Protestant Pastor jailed for 3 Years, 20 July 2017, http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2298
48   Republic of Myanmar, *Burma Citizenship Law*, (1982), www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/87413/99608/.../ MMR87413.pdf
49   UN News Centre, 'Rohingya Refugee Crisis', 28 Sept. 2017, http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=57770#. WdZffWhSzIU
50   Information provided by Christian Solidarity Worldwide (http://www.csw.org.uk/home.htm)

3. CHINA: Falun Gong Practitioners

Whilst action against Falun Gong practitioners has been ongoing for some time, since 2015, thousands of Falun Gong practitioners have reportedly been arrested and sent to detention or 'brainwashing centres'; extra-legal facilities that are known to involve torture, psychiatric and other medical experimentation and sexual violence.[51] Documented evidence in reports and books, as well as informal confirmation from Chinese hospitals, suggests that at least 65,000 organs each year are extracted from prisoners of conscience, primarily Falun Gong prisoners, in some cases from live detainees.[52] They are sourced for wealthy Chinese citizens and foreigners. Despite the Chinese medical establishment pledging to stop organ harvesting from prisoners in 2014, this practice seems only to have escalated since then.[53]

4. BANGLADESH: Hindus

Since achieving independence from Pakistan in 1971, Bangladesh's Hindu population has fallen from 19% to under 9%. This sharp decline is partly a consequence of the increased politicisation of religion by the state and partly due to active victimisation of the Hindu minorities. One key example of such persecution and victimisation is the arbitrary and continued application of the Empty Property Ordinance (1965).[54] The law, originally introduced by the Ayub Government in the West Pakistan, has been used in order to seize Hindu properties, described by the UN as 'sheer land grabbing'.[55] With the growth of Daesh in Bangladesh since September 2015[56], a large number of Hindu leaders have been targeted and violently murdered by Islamist militants, including veteran saint Sadhu Paramananda Gopalgonj and Priests Jogeswar Roy Adhikari and Anando Gopal Ganguly.[57]

5. IRAN: Bahá'ís

While the persecution of Baha'is in Iranian history has been a long standing phenomenon, since 1979, the Iranian authorities have killed or executed more than 200 Bahá'ís leaders, and more than 10,000 Baha'is have been dismissed from government or university positions.[58] The 7 Bahá'ís leaders, imprisoned in 2008, continue to serve their 20 year sentences. Over the past 10 years, nearly 1,000 Bahá'ís have been arbitrarily arrested and, as of February 2017, at least 90 Bahá'ís remain imprisoned.[59] Social and economic exclusion and violent attacks are common. In Yazd alone, in the last few years there have been dozens of imprisonments, raids and even attacks on Bahá'ís, their residences and businesses. For example, on 26 September 2016, Mr. Farhang Amiri (63) was found with several stab wounds to his chest and later died in hospital. His murderers, who have been released on bail by the court, have admitted that their 'aim was to kill a Bahá'í and that it didn't matter who'. Since his death, Mr. Amiri's children's business and residences have been searched by government agents and have had their laptops, telephones, and other items confiscated.[60]

51   USCIRF, Annual Report 2017: China, (Apr. 2017), http://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/China.2017.pdf

52   Conservative Party Human Rights Commission, *The Darkest Moment*, (June 2016), http://www.conservativehuman-rights.com/reports/submissions/CPHRC_China_Human_Rights_Report_ Final.pdf

53   *ibid*

54   RW Timm, *The Adivasis of Bangladesh* (London, Minority Rights Group) 1991.

55   UN General Assembly, *A/HRC/31/18/Add.2*, (22 Jan. 2016), http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Religion/A-HRC-31-18-Add2.pdf

56   Lapido Media, 'Bangladesh's Tryst with ISIS', 6 July 2016, http://www.lapidomedia.com/bangladesh-tryst-isis

57   Information provided by Nitin Palan (on behalf of Hindu Matters in Britain), Lakshmi Kaul and Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council (BHBCUC) (http://hindumattersinbritain.com/)

58   USCIRF, Annual Report 2017: Iran, (Apr. 2017), https://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/Iran.2017.pdf

59   *ibid*

60   Information provided by the Bahá'í Community of the United Kingdom (https://www.bahai.org.uk/)

6. RUSSIA: Jehovah's Witnesses & Muslims

In July 2016 severe restrictions on freedom of religion and belief and other rights were introduced seriously restricting among other things who can share religious beliefs, what beliefs can be shared and where they can be shared. Within eight days the restrictions were used nationwide and in the year since, 181 cases, primarily brought against Jehovah's Witnesses, Protestants and other religious communities, have been brought to court. The"Anti-extremism" campaigns against Jehovah's Witnesses and Muslims who read the works of theologian Said Nursi which began in late 2007 continue and have since resulted in: the nationwide banning of the Jehovah's Witnesses in July 2017; prosecutions of Jehovah's Witnesses and Muslims who meet together for prayers and the study of religious texts, which in June 2017 resulted in the jailing of Muslim Yevgeny Kim for three years; ongoing raids of worship, prayer and study meetings by officials carrying machine guns and wearing camouflage; nationwide literature bans, with the possessors of such texts being liable to criminal prosecution and unfair trials with the belief that officials have been planting evidence.[61]

7. SAUDI ARABIA: Atheists and Shi'a Muslims

Authorities of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have introduced counter-terrorism legislation in 2014 which branded "the promotion of atheism in any form" as terrorism. Atheists in Saudi Arabia have long faced social marginalisation and violence, and are liable to imprisonment, corporal punishment, and even execution under "apostasy" laws. In 2015 the poet Ashraf Fayadh was accused of writing 'atheistic' poetry and sentenced to death for "apostasy"; this was later commuted, but he remains imprisoned.[62] In 2017 a 29-year-old man, Ahmad Al Shamri, was sentenced to death on charges of 'atheism and blasphemy'.

Saudi authorities of have also, for years, arrested and detained and sometimes executed Shi'a Muslims for criticising the Government, participating in demonstrations, holding religious gatherings in private homes without permits, organising religious events or celebrating religious holidays and reading religious materials in private homes.[63] In 2017, Shi'as' access to government services and State employment continues to be limited.[64] As of May 2017, the predominantly Shi'a town of Al-Awamiyah has been the site of clashes between protestors and security forces forcing thousands of people to leave their homes.[65] Clashes began as attempts were made to evict residents to demolish and redevelop al-Masoura district in Al-Awamiyah. Satellite imagery shows entire housing blocks within al-Awamiyah demolished, which residents say is as a result of military shelling.[66]

8. VIETNAM: Hoa Hao Buddhists

Public security officials have been complicit in directing or supporting the harassment of Hoa Hao Buddhists, including physical assaults and preventing participation in celebrations associated with the anniversary of their faith.[67] Violent incidents were also reported throughout 2016, including the harassment and assault of more than 50 Hoa Hao Buddhists in An Giang Province by plain clothes and uniformed public security personnel. In May 2017, the Hoa Hao Buddhist Nguyen Huu Tan also died within 10 hours of being taken in police custody, his injuries suggested that he had been tortured.[68]

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61 Information provided by Forum 18 (http://www.forum18.org/)
62 International Humanist & Ethic Union, 'The Freedom of Thought Report: Saudi Arabia', accessed 5 Oct. 2017 at: http://freethoughtreport.com/countries/asia-western-asia/saudi-arabia/
63 USCIRF, Annual Report 2017: Saudi Arabia, (Apr. 2017) http://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/SaudiArabia.2017.pdf
64 Amnesty International, 'Saudi Arabia 2016/17', accessed 5 Oct. 2017 at: https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/saudi-arabia/report-saudi-arabia/
65 Aljazeera, 'Unrest in Saudi Arabia Town Displaces Thousands', 13 Aug. 2017, http://www.aljazeera.com/video/news/2017/08/saudi-arabia-unrest-forces-thousands-homes-170813142459213.html
66 *ibid*
67 USCIRF, Annual Report 2017: Vietnam, (Apr. 2017), http://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/Vietnam.2017.pdf
68 CSW, 'Vietnam Mini-Briefing', 25 Jul. 2017, http://www.csw.org.uk/2017/07/25/report/3643/article.htm

9. EGYPT: Coptic Christians

Daesh have killed or injured hundreds of Coptic Christians in attacks since June 2016.[69] In February 2017, they released a video vowing to kill all Egyptian Christians.[70] Despite positive Government rhetoric and attendance at Christmas masses, mob violence and Islamist attacks on churches, Copts and their property have increased over the past two years and no licences to build Churches have been granted.[71] Since 2011, over 550 Coptic girls have allegedly been abducted, converted to Islam and married.[72] Police are reported to have frequently refused to investigate cases against Copts.[73]

10. UK: Jewish and Muslim communities

According to data released by the Community Security Trust, the number of anti-Semitic incidents in the UK rose by more than a third to record levels in 2016. Such incidents, which range from verbal harassment to violent attacks, have occurred not only in the UK but throughout Western Europe. A poll by the Campaign Against Antisemitism found that nearly half of Britons surveyed thought that at least one anti-Semitic view presented to them was "definitely or probably true". Similarly, the number of hate crimes against Muslims recorded by the London Metropolitan Police has increased from 343 incidents in 2013 to 1,260 by 2016. The *Casey Review* highlighted that '2015 polling showed at least 55% of the general public believed there is a fundamental clash between Islam and British society values'.[74] Muslims in the UK also face discrimination in terms of employment, housing and education. As the Home Affairs Select Committee has highlighted, 'most legal provisions in islamophobia and anti-Semitism predate the era of mass social media, it recommends that the UK Government immediately review the entire legislative framework governing online hate speech, harassment and extremism and ensure it is up-to-date.[75]

For more information on any of these cases please contact the All-Party Parliamentary Group on International Freedom of Religion or Belief at amro.hussain@parliament.uk.

69   The Coptic Orthodox Church Centre, 'Reflection by His Grace Bishop Angaelos', 27 May 2017, http://copticcentre.blog-spot.co.uk/2017/05/reflection-by-his-grace-bishop-angaelos.html
70   USCIRF, Annual Report 2017: Egypt, (Apr. 2017), http://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/Egypt.2017.pdf
71   *ibid* ; Watani, 'Church Opened, Church Closed', 14 December 2014, http://en.wataninet.com/coptic-affairs-coptic-affairs/sectarian/church-opened-church-closed/12716/
72   Christian Today, '550 Christian Girls Kidnapped and Forced to Convert in Egypt Since 2011', 17 June 2014, http://www.christiantoday.com/article/550.christian.girls.kidnapped.and.forced.to.convert.in.egypt.since.2011/38177.htm
73   *ibid*
74   Dame Casey DBE CE, *The Casey Review*, (December 2016), https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-casey-review-a-review-into-opportunity-and-integration
75   House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, *Hate Crime: Abuse, Hate and Extremism Online*, (25 Apr. 2017), https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmhaff/609/609.pdf

Refugee children queue behind barbed wire. Credit: Janeb13 (2 March 2008), flickr

CHAPTER 3
INTERNATIONAL RESPONSES TO FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

There has been a plethora of international governmental and inter-governmental initiatives, particularly within the last five years, with different characteristics, aims and approaches to moving FoRB from rhetoric to reality. It remains to be seen whether these will be effective.

International initiatives which have contributed to a denser network of FoRB-related bodies include:

The Observatoire Pharos was established in 2012 to monitor, evaluate and inform about social and legal developments affecting the realisation of FoRB in different countries.[76] The Council of Europe's Venice Commission – established in 1990 - provides legal assistance to countries in the process of legislating on

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76   See statements defining the Observatoire Pharo' mandate, (France, 2012) and Observatory on Religious Minorities in the World and on the Respect for Religious Freedom (Italy,July 2017). Both initiatives were conceived as partnerships between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and civil societies. L'*Observatoire Pharos* is a "projet d'une structure professionnelle d'information au service du pluralisme des cultures et des religions" (http://www.observatoirepharos.com/). It has "la mission spécifique – et innovante – de l'Observatoire est d'évaluer dans divers pays l'état du pluralisme et de porter cette évaluation à la connaissance de tous, et d'abord des autorités publiques nationales et internationales, politiques, culturelles et religieuses"(http://www.observatoirepharos.com/); The [Italian] Observatory conducts surveys and analyses and proposes actions to strengthen the protection of religious minorities in the world in cooperation with the Italian overseas diplomatic network. (http://www.esteri.it/mae/resource/doc/2017/07/decreto_osservatorio.pdf)

FoRB, bringing such legislation in line with international law.[77] The U.S. State Department's International Religious Freedom Office collects data and conducts policy analysis to evaluate the implementation of policies aimed at advancing FoRB.[78] The annual G20 Interfaith Summit brings together scholars, lawyers and political leaders with faith and interfaith leaders from around the world for three days to explore ways to facilitate peace and harmony between people of different religious and philosophical traditions.[79]

Multi-national and trans-national networks advancing FoRB have also arisen in recent years. There is also an increasing interest working with Commonwealth countries to uphold FoRB. The inter-governmental International Contact Group on FoRB (ICGFRB), established in 2015, and the International Panel of Parliamentarians for FoRB (IPPFoRB), established in 2014, further aim to strengthen international coordination and cooperation on FoRB beyond the West among Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Parliaments respectively.

Thirty parliamentarians from around the world brought IPPFoRB into being in 2014 by signing an unprecedented joint statement committing to advance FoRB for all in Oslo.[80] IPPFoRB has since been able to catalyse, convene, train and capacity-build concerned parliamentarians – up to about 100 at a time - and take small groups of parliamentarians on fact-finding and solidarity visits to Myanmar and Nepal.[81] IPPFoRB has also sent 17 advocacy letter to Heads of State which have contributed in three prisoners of conscience's sentences being shortened and being released or charges against them dismissed.[82]

While less than five years old, IPPFoRB has illustrated the importance of including parliamentarians in efforts to address FoRB violations. Parliamentarians play a unique role in the legislative process and in holding the executive to account and can shape political and public debate and create space in which civil society can function.[83] Positive action can help create an atmosphere where religious communities are able to co-exist peacefully and the government respects, protects, fulfils and promotes FoRB. Parliamentarians may be in a better position that civil society to speak out on behalf of those who are persecuted in their own countries or overseas, privately or in public. It is therefore crucial that the UK and other countries support IPPFoRB and parliamentarians globally to advance FoRB.

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77 See the Council of Europe's Venice Commission and the OSCE-ODIHR panel of expert on freedom of religion and belief. The Venice Commission defines its mission as: 'providing legal advice to its member states and, in particular, to help states wishing to bring their legal and institutional structures into line with European standards and international experience in the fields of democracy, human rights and the rule of law' (http://www.venice.coe.int/WebForms/pages/?p=01_Presentation). The panel of experts provides "legislative reviews for governments, on request, to help them to bring their legislation into line with international standards on freedom of religion or belief, expert opinion specific FoRB issues & advice FoRB and related issues to the ODIHR and other OSCE institutions and missions.' (http://www.osce.org/odihr/25454).

78 The *Office of International Religious Freedom of the U.S. Department of State* e.g. 'promotes religious freedom as a core objective of U.S. foreign policy [...] and monitors religious persecution and discrimination worldwide, makes recommendations to implement policies in respective regions or countrie, and on developing programs to promote religious freedom' (http://www.state.gov/j/drl/irf/). *United States Commission on International Religious Freedom* is also "an independent, bipartisan U.S. federal government commission, the first of its kind in the world, dedicated to defending the universal right to freedom of religion or belief abroad. USCIRF reviews the facts and circumstances of religious freedom violations and makes policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State, and Congress" (http://www.uscirf.gov/about-uscirf.html). The *UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion* or belief, appointed by the UN Human Rights Council, has a similar mandate: "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". Similarly, in 2016 the *EU appointed its* first ever *Special Envoy* for the promotion of freedom of religion or belief outside *the EU.*

79 See G20 Interfaith Summit at: https://www.g20interfaith.org/

80 See: IPPFoRB, 'Charter for Freedom of Religion or Belief', accessed 5 Oct. at: http://ippforb.com/charter-for-freedom-of-religion-or-belief/

81 For more information, see IPPFoRB's website at: http://ippforb.com

82 IPPFoRB, 'IPPFoRB's Strategic Workplan, 2016-19', accessed 5 Oct. at: http://ippforb.com/work-plan/

83 *ibid*

UN Initiatives

In November 2016, Dr Ahmed Shaheed took on the mandate of UN Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Religion or Belief from his predecessor, Prof. Heiner Bielefeldt. Dr Shaheed's reports to the UN Human Rights Council and General Assembly as well as his country visits are indicative of a more programmatic approach (an outline of his priorities can be found in UN Document A/HRC/34/50) to advancing FoRB globally through the UN mandate. Initiatives such as the Fez Process and Faith for Rights Initiative, which Dr Shaheed has been active in, focus on moving from rhetoric to reality by addressing the prerequisites necessary for FoRB and demonstrate this more programmatic approach. These initiatives were established following the 2012 *Rabat Plan of Action on the Prohibition of Advocacy of National, Racial or Religious Hatred that Constitutes Incitement to Discrimination Hostility or Violence.*[84]

The *Rabat Plan of Action* was the culmination of a global research group elaborating guidelines for States on tackling hate and incitement on belief ground. It provides a comprehensive framework for tackling the most serious forms of intolerance and hatred, encouraging States to pursue societal pluralism in which all communities are given opportunities to make meaningful contributions to national discussions and input into responses to hate speech. The Plan further encourages States to define incitement to discrimination narrowly, and to measure restrictions on expression by the three-part test: legality, proportionality and necessity. It provides six factors for national courts to consider when assessing specific cases, including the context, speaker, intent, content or form, extent of the speech, and likelihood – including imminence – of inciting hatred.[85] The *Rabat Plan of Action* was developed from the *UN Resolution 16/18* (2011), a landmark resolution determining that it is individuals not religions that can be 'defamed'.[86] It further encouraged States to speak out against intolerance, and to provide the expertise, resource and capacity to address tension between different belief communities.[87]

The Faith for Rights and Fez Process initiatives stem from the Plan's recognition that political and religious actors need to take responsibility in combating intolerance and discrimination and advancing collaboration and coexistence along religious or belief lines.

The Faith for Rights Initiative is led by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and was launched in Beirut in March 2017.[88]

Expanding on the responsibility of political and religious leaders to tackle incitement, the initiative welcomed a broad range of faith-based and civil society actors, communities and believers. Those present at the conference committed together to 'uphold the dignity and equal worth of all human beings and fully respect diversity', values that have common roots in all cultures.[89] Eighteen commitments were made and validated in Dakar in May 2017 as result of this first meeting. They include 'preventing the use of the notion of "State religion" to discrimination against individuals or groups', 'refraining from oppressing critical voices, urging States to repeal any existing blasphemy or anti-apostasy laws' and 'refining curriculums, teaching materials and textbooks where needed'.[90] A follow up meeting is also envisaged in Rabat in December 2017 to provide the opportunity for a meeting for States, national human rights institutions, religious authorities and faith-based civil society actors to build on this Initiative.

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84   OHCHR, *Rabat Plan of Action*, (5 October 2012), http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/adviser/pdf/Rabat_draft_out-come.pdf
85   *ibid*
86   UN Human Rights Council, *Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence, and violence against persons based on religion or belief : resolution / adopted by the Human Rights Council*, A/HRC/RES/16/18, (12 April 2011)
87   *ibid*
88   See OHCHR, 'Beirut Declaration and its 18 Commitments on "Faith for Rights"', accessed 5 Oct. 2017 at: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomReligion/Pages/FaithForRights.aspx
89   *ibid*
90   *ibid*

The Fez Process addresses prevention of incitement to violence that could lead to atrocity crimes and is run under the auspices of the UN Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on Genocide Prevention and the UN Special Adviser on the Responsibility of Protect. Advancing FoRB is important to this initiative because systematic violations of FoRB are one of the indicators of crimes against humanity and Genocide.[91] The Fez process is a consultative process which has been developed since 2015 by the UN Office on Genocide Prevention and the 'Responsibility to Protect' with the participation of '232 religious leaders and actors from 77 countries including Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Jews, Muslims, Sikhs, Baha'i, Candomblé, Kakai, Yazidi and Humanists' in the following locations: Fez, Morocco (April 2015), Treviso, Italy (September 2015), Amman, Jordan (November 2015), Washington D.C., USA (February-March 2016), Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (May 2016), Bangkok, Thailand (December 2016).[92]

The regional consultations were held by the UN Secretary General in New York in July 2017 in advance of the final launch of the *Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes*. As religion or belief often constitute the grounds for incitement to violence in different contexts, specific regional insights and strategies were seen to be critical. The resulting Plan of Action offers concrete recommendations to a range of actors and seeks to "strengthen communities' resistance to incitement, and build mechanisms for a united response".[93]

Other notable international actions relating to FoRB include:

• The Amman Declaration (17-18 November 2013), called for a coalition and calling upon the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to help religious leaders clarifying their roles and responsibilities beyond the issue of hate speech

• Manama consultation, convened by OHCHR (2014) for civil society in Bahrain

• Tunis meetings (16-18 October 2014 on the role of Media; and 20-21 April 2015, with the participation of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights), creating the Arab coalition to combat incitement to hatred

• Beirut event (2-3 December 2015) for Arab judges on the judicial implementation of the Rabat Plan of Action

• Nicosia conference (6-8 October 2015) on broadening cross-boundary communication in the MENA region, including follow-up on the Rabat Plan of Action and countering incitement

• The Marrakesh Declaration (2016), convened Muslim leaders to make recommendations on the rights of religious minorities.

• Amman workshop on developing a model curricula on continuing education on combatting incitement to hatred and promotion of freedom of expression, for judicial academies in the MENA region (9-10 January 2017)

• The Beirut Declaration (2017), an interreligious platform and message to advance the role religious communities can play in fostering Human Rigths including FoRB.

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91   See: UN, *Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes: A Tool for Prevention*, (2014), http://www.un.org/en/preventgeno-cide/adviser/pdf/framework%20of%20analysis%20for%20atrocity%20crimes_en.pdf
92   See UN Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, *Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes*, (July 2017) https://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news/united-nations-secretary-general-launches-first-action-plan-for-religious-leaders-to-prevent-incite-ment-to-violencely
93   *ibid*

The International Response to ISIL/*Daesh*'s Treatment of Religious Minorities

The international response to ISIL/*Daesh*'s treatment of minority religious communities in Iraq, one of the most extensive FoRB violations of our time must also be analysed. ISIL/*Daesh* began its offensive to take over Northern Iraq in June 2014. In the following two months, its profiling, targeting and killing of Iraqi religious minorities including Yazidis, Christians (Chaldeans/Assyrians/Syriacs/Melkites/Armenians), Shi'a Muslims and other religious minorities because of their beliefs intensified.

In June 2016, the UN Commission of Inquiry on Syria determined that ISIS had committed genocide as well as multiple crimes against humanity and war crimes against the Yazidis.[94] 'ISIL', the Commission stated, has "sought to destroy the Yazidis through killings; sexual slavery, enslavement, torture and inhuman and degrading treatment and forcible transfer causing serious bodily and mental harm…. erasing their identity as Yazidis".[95] An estimated 250,000 Yazidis fled Mount Sinjar where they lived and hundreds perished before a coordinated rescue operation.[96] Homes, religious sites and properties were looted and destroyed making it difficult for Yazidis to return.[97]

According to data collected by USCIRF, ISIL attacks targeting Shi'a Muslims and other religious minority communities resulted in at least 1,777 deaths and 3,077 injuries in 96 separate incidents between 2014 and 2016.[98] Christian leaders estimate that there are now fewer than 250,000 Christians in Iraq, down from a pre-2003 estimate of 1.4 million.[99] The Christian population of Mosul largely fled in 2014 during the early days of the ISIL's takeover of Nineveh Province, and has not been able to return. ISIL fighters marked homes and businesses once owned by Christians with the letter "ن" ("the letter "N" in Arabic, which is used to indicate the Arabic term for Christians, "Nasara", originating from the term "Nazarene").[100] At least 33 churches in and around Mosul were partially or completely destroyed and religious artefacts were stolen and sold on the black market.[101] In September 2017, an estimated 70 mass graves are suspected of containing the remains of 'ISIL' victims.[102] Thus far, no international co-ordinated effort to gather together evidence of ISIL's crimes has begun.

A number of countries and international organisations have also recognised and raised 'ISIL''s horrific crimes against religious minorities, amounting to genocide, including the United States Congress,[103] European Parliament,[104] Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly,[105] UK House of Commons,[106] Scottish Parliament[107] and France's Assemblée Nationale.[108]

Iraq is not a signatory to the International Criminal Court (ICC)'s *Rome Statute*, which allows the court to investigate and, where warranted, try individuals charged with the gravest crimes such as genocide. Despite this, much pressure was put on the UN Security Council to refer the case to the ICC and establish an *ad hoc* international tribunal to investigate and try ISIL perpetrators. However, recognising

94 UN Human Rights Council, *"They Came to Destroy": ISIS Crimes Against Yazidis*, A/HRC/32/CRP.2, (15 June 2016), http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/CoISyria/A_HRC_32_CRP.2_en.pdf

95 *ibid*

96 Yazda, *An Uncertain Future for Yazidis*, (September 2017), https://www.yazda.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Yazda-Report-2017_an-Uncertain-Future-for-Yazidis_A-Report-Marking-Three-Years-of-an-Ongoing-Genocide.pdf

97 *ibid*

98 USCIRF, Annual Report 2017: Iraq (Apr. 2017), http://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/Iraq.2017.pdf

99 *ibid*

100 *ibid*

101 *ibid*

102 Yazda, *An Uncertain Future for Yazidis*, (September 2017), https://www.yazda.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Yazda-Report-2017_an-Uncertain-Future-for-Yazidis_A-Report-Marking-Three-Years-of-an-Ongoing-Genocide.pdf

103 *H.R. Con. Res. 75*, (2016), https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-concurrent-resolution/75

104 http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+MOTION+B8-2016-0154+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN

105 Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, *Resolution 2091: Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq*, (2016), http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-EN.asp?fileid=22482&lang=en

106 HC Deb (20 April 2016), Vol. 608, col. 598, https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2016-04-20/debates/16042036000001/DaeshGenocideOfMinorities

107 The Scottish Parliament, *Motion S5M-04130: Justice for Yazidi People*, (21 Feb. 2017), http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5M-04130

108 Assemblee Nationale de France, Compte Rendu Integral, (8 Dec. 2016), http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/14/cri/2016-2017/20170075.asp

the urgent need to collect the disappearing evidence, this process had to be stalled and a UN *Security Council Resolution 2379* was adopted on 21 September 2017 to "create an independent investigative team to support domestic efforts to hold ISIL/Daesh accountable for its actions in Iraq".[109] The Resolution, ratified by the UK, recognises that the actions may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.[110]

Despite the need for Iraq's Penal Code to be brought in line with ICC standards, trials of ISIL perpetrators are still continuing in domestic courts.[111] Until September 2017, such perpetrators have been tried in domestic courts under 'anti-terrorism' charges which carry the death penalty, a punishment that is not consistent with international human rights standards.[112] Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch also report that the courts have relied on coerced "confessions" to convict defendants of serious charges in "flagrantly unfair trials" and arrest warrants have been issued for lawyers representing ISIL suspects in Iraqi[113] courts.[114] There are also reports of extra-judicial killings of suspected ISIL militants and militia-led retribution, highlighting the lack of order and the rule of law after the extensive fighting between government and non-government forces.[115]

It remains to be seen whether the leaders of the team will have the necessary internationally-recognised credentials and that the team will have the necessary funds to carry out wide-ranging evidence gathering and consultation with civil society. Yazidi persecution is widely documented by ISIL and due to the existence of mass graves. However, there is no such systematic evidence for Christians who fled in different directions before and during their targeting by ISIL, making it critical that the investigatory team speak first with Church leaders and other civil society groups to gather evidence. It is critical that the UK Government ensure that this is possible and that the evidence is followed-up so that there is justice for the thousands of victims persecuted and killed for their beliefs. This will require significant resourcing.

The APPG is grateful that the UK *Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme* has been expanded to accept non-Syrian nationals affected by the Syrian conflict.[116] Such individuals include thousands of Yazidis who fled or were forcibly brought over the border and have since managed to flee to other countries.[117] It is crucial that measures are in place to reach these individuals, many of whom will not necessarily have registered with UNHCR camps. Even when attempts are being made to register with UNHCR camps, the APPG has received reports that interviews with local UNHCR workers are resulting in delayed referrals.[118] The current UNHCR vulnerability criteria assessment recognises vulnerability on the basis of sex or gender but not on the basis of religion or belief, another aspect of an individual's identity.[119] It is important that the UK and other nations ensure that the vulnerability criteria upon which refugees are being referred to them by the UNHCR includes the recognition of members of a particular religious community and/or their 'being persecuted for reasons of religion', as the Refugee Convention (1951) recognises that some refugees may have experienced.[120]

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109   UN Press, *Meetings Coverage: Security Council 8052nd Meeting, SC/12998,* (21 Sept. 2017), https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/sc12998.doc.htm

110   *ibid*

111   Ibid; *Iraqi Penal Code* (IPC) no. 111 of 1969

112   International Criminal Court, 'Rome Statue of the International Criminal Court: Some Q & As', accessed 5 Oct. at: http://legal.un.org/icc/statute/iccq&a.htm ; Republic of Iraq, *Anti Terrorism Law*, no.13 of 2005.

113   Human Rights Watch, 'Iraq: Lawyers Arrested for Work in ISIS Courts', 10 Aug. 2017, https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/08/10/iraq-lawyers-arrested-work-isis-courts

114   *ibid*; Amnesty International, 'Iraq: "Punished For Daesh's Crimes"', 18 Oct. 2016, https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde14/4962/2016/en/

115   BBC News, 'Iraq 'Investigating Mosul Cliff Killing Video', 13 July 2017, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-40593405; Amnesty International, 'Iraq: Banished and Dispossessed', 20 Jan. 2016, https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde14/3229/2016/en/

116   *The Guardian*, 'Non-Syrians Can Come to UK as Part of Refugee Programme, says Rudd', 3 July 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jul/03/non-syrians-uk-refugee-programme-amber-rudd-unhcr

117   Information provided by Sally Becker, Road to Peace, see: https://www.roadtopeace.org.uk/

118   Information and documentation provided by Sally Becker, Road to Peace – https://www.roadtopeace.org.uk/ - and Richard Meryon, who has travelled to UNHCR camps in Jordan

119   UNHCR, *Vulnerability Screening Tool*, (2016), http://www.unhcr.org/uk/protection/detention/57fe30b14/unhcr-idc-vulnerability-screening-tool-identifying-addressing-vulnerability.html

120   UN General Assembly, *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 28 July 1951, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 189, p. 137

Crowds queue during Kumbh Mela, a mass Hindu pilgrimage of faith in which Hindus gather to bathe in a sacred or river. Credit: Trapuzarra (April 2016), pixabay

CHAPTER 4
FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF AS A POLICY TOOL

A. Freedom of Religion or Belief and Sustainable Development

While Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) is understood to be a vital element of personal autonomy, it is also of central importance for society more generally and supports the achievement of a variety of important social objectives. FoRB clearly contributes to a number of agendas including preventing violent extremism ad addressing root causes of the displacement of people. In this chapter the link between FoRB and Sustainable development will be considered. This link is important because, since the first edition of this report, the UN has set out an ambitious agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015. This agenda specified 17 goals (SDGs) to be reached by 2030 that include ending hunger and poverty and 'promoting peaceful and inclusive societies' (SDG 16).[121] The UK is committed to achieving these goals and has developed its own Strategic Objectives that support the implementation of the SDGs. These Strategic Objectives include: 'S*trengthening global peace, security and governance'*, '*promoting global prosperity'* and '*tackling extreme poverty and helping the world's most vulnerable'*.[122] The Department for International Development's UK Aid Connect July 2017 funding call further

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121   UN General Assembly, *A/RES/70/1*, (25 Sept. 2015), http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E

122   Department for International Development, 'Single Departmental Plan: 2015 to 2020', (1 Sept. 2016), https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfid-single-departmental-plan-2015-to-2020/single-departmental-plan-2015-to-2020

recognises that intolerance of different beliefs and violations of FoRB provide a key challenge to implementing development objectives.[123]

The Role of Freedom of Religion or Belief within the Development Agenda

"The new Agenda is guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, including full respect for international law. It is grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)…"

- Article 10, 2030 Agenda

The 2030 Agenda recognizes that development must be based on a framework of human rights, of which FoRB is fundamental. FoRB is not only a vital human right in and of itself, it is also vital for protecting and upholding other human rights. Where individuals are unable to manifest their beliefs not only is the freedom of religion or belief put as risk, but so are many other rights, such as freedom of expression, association and assembly. Similarly, FoRB can contribute to conflict reduction, and as the next section outlines, where it is not upheld even the right to life and freedom from torture are put at risk.

FoRB restrictions that inherently target specific belief groups frequently lead to the denial of other rights that the SDGs seek to realise, such as non-discrimination (SDG 5,10) and education (SDG 4). Approaching development in a way that fails to take account of FoRB and its power to enhance the realisation of many other human rights will mean that an important dimension is lacking and significant opportunities lost to realise the SDGs.

It is impossible to achieve the goals of the sustainable development agenda in times of violent conflict.[124] The importance of conflict reduction is highlighted in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16, which is specifically dedicated 'to promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development and providing access to justice for all'. Actionable progress indicators to achieve SDG 16 include 'significantly reducing all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere' and 'promoting and enforcing non-discriminatory laws and policies', which include laws relating to FoRB.[125]

While conflict is a complex multi-dimensional phenomenon with often no single root cause, there is a growing body of evidence that finds that the denial of FoRB and targeting individuals on the basis of their religion or belief is closely associated with high levels of social conflict.[126] Countries that place significant restrictions on the enjoyment of FoRB, or in which there is significant social tension between belief groups, tend to perform poorly on measures of conflict, displaying high levels of both violent conflict and terrorism.[127]

123   GOV. UK, 'UK Aid Connect', 6 July 2017, https://www.gov.uk/international-development-funding/uk-aid-connect#contact
124   World Bank, 'Impact of Conflict', Feb. 2007, http://siteresources.worldbank.org/PSGLP/Resources/ImpactofConflict.pdf
125   UN Dept. Economic and Social Affairs, 'Sustainable Development Goal 16', https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg16
126   Finke R.; Martin, R., 'Religious Freedom and Conflict', accessed 5 Oct. 2017 at: http://blogs.thearda.com/trend/prim-ers-tutorials/religious-freedom-and-conflict-a-review-of-the-evidence-by-roger-finke-and-robert-r-martin/
127   Countries with high FoRB restrictions cross-referenced against Institute for Economics and Peace's Global Peace and Global Terrorism indices. See: Pew Research Center, *Trends in Global Restrictions on Religion*, (23 June 2016), http://www.pewforum.org/2016/06/23/trends-in-global-restrictions-on-religion/Institute of Economic and Peace, *Global Peace Index*, June 2017, http://visionofhumanity.org/indexes/global-peace-index/

Eleven of the Pew Forum Research Center's top sixteen countries with 'very high' government restrictions on FoRB rank within the bottom 18% of countries in the Global Peace Index.[128] Additionally, nine out of the sixteen countries are ranked within the top 15% of countries globally experiencing the highest levels of terrorism, according to the Institute of Economics and Peace's Global Terrorism Index, making them some of the most violent countries on the planet.[129]

Ten of Pew's top Eleven countries with 'very high' levels of social hostility between religious communities are ranked within the bottom 15% of countries on the Global Peace Index (6 of them within the bottom 8%).[130] The six countries with the highest social hostility ratings assessed by Pew – Iraq, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Pakistan, Syria, Yemen - also rank as the top six countries experiencing the highest levels of terrorism globally.[131] All but one of Pew's eleven 'very high' social hostility countries rank within the top 25% of countries on the Global Terrorism Index.[132] These statistics are further supported by the United States Commission for International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). Seven of USCIRF's sixteen 'Tier 1: Countries of Particular Concern' rank within the bottom 8% of countries on the Global Peace Index, experiencing high levels of violence, instability and terrorism.

The close correlation between violations of FoRB and instability and violence, and conversely, FoRB and peace and stability is supported by the Association of Religious Data Archives (ARDA)'s research which found that:

"There is a sharp jump in violence from states with no restrictions to states that have any restrictions on religious freedoms, regardless of the measure used. The relationship is especially striking for violence related to religion. None of the countries [in the global study] with a low score on government restrictions were reported to have widespread violence related to religion. In contrast, 45% of the countries with high government restrictions had such widespread violence across the country."[133]

Does restricting Freedom of Religion or Belief contribute to conflict and instability?

In the countries with most severe violations of Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB), specific religious or belief communities (usually numerically inferior, but not always so) are often demonised, victimised, targeted and ostracised.

Some religious or belief community members, who are already be vulnerable for being female or having a disability, for example, may face 'double discrimination', further heightening their vulnerability. When unable to publicly practice their beliefs, they can be at even higher risk of societal exclusion, violence and be denied basic services. Young Hindu women in Pakistan are, for example, particularly vulnerable because of their gender and faith, with at least 300 experiencing some form of kidnapping, forced marriage and conversion each year.[134] Because of this reality, the failure to protect FoRB and other rights means that efforts will need to be redoubled to meet the SDGs by ensuring that no one is left behind, as Article 4 of the Agenda 2030 pledges.

128 Pew Research Center, *The Changing Global Religious Landscape*, (5 April 2017), p.8, http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2017/04/07092755/FULL-REPORT-WITH-APPENDIXES-A-AND-B-APRIL-3.pdf; Institute of Economic and Peace, *Global Peace Index*, June 2017, http://visionofhumanity.org/indexes/global-peace-index/
129 Institute of Economic and Peace, *Global Terrorism Index*, Nov. 2016 http://visionofhumanity.org/indexes/terrorism-index/
130 Institute of Economic and Peace, *Global Peace Index*, June 2017, http://visionofhumanity.org/indexes/global-peace-index/
131 Institute of Economic and Peace, *Global Terrorism Index*, Nov. 2016 http://visionofhumanity.org/indexes/terrorism-index/
132 *ibid*
133 Finke R.; Martin, R., 'Religious Freedom and Conflict', accessed 5 Oct. 2017 at: http://blogs.thearda.com/trend/primers-tutorials/religious-freedom-and-conflict-a-review-of-the-evidence-by-roger-finke-and-robert-r-martin/
134 Aurat Foundation; Trocaire, *Forced Marriages and Inheritance Deprivation*, (Oct. 2014), http://www.af.org.pk/pub_files/1416847483.pdf

Members of 'other' religious or belief groups may be perceived by State actors and adherents to the majority religion as a 'threat' to the current social hierarchy by their advancing alternate 'truths' and which can, in their opinion, 'necessitate' restrictive policies and legislation. The fear of religious or belief groups deemed a 'threat' may also stem from long-standing cultural prejudices that influence State officials, empowering and legitimising governments in implementing restrictive laws and policies on communities' freedom to practice their beliefs. Such restrictions come in many forms, including exclusion from public life and denial of access to services like education and healthcare. Ahmadi Muslims in Pakistan are for example denied access to even emergency healthcare treatment [135] and Iranian Baha'is are denied entry to study in Universities.[136]

By not protecting the right to FoRB, governments help legitimise feelings of mistrust or fear towards religious groups within the society and encourage hostility. Fear and hostility amongst members of religious groups leads to an increased risk of social tensions and potential conflict.[137] Government restrictions on FoRB can therefore create a vicious cycle in which underlying grievances and hostilities are built-up and communication between religious groups breaks down, driving violent conflict and the instability initially feared by the State.[138]

If Governments protected FoRB and promoted social and religious cohesion, instead of restricting the rights of religious groups and promoting segregation, vicious cycles of conflict could be ameliorated. As Professors Brian Grim and Roger Finke highlight, 'it is not *religious identity* itself that is the force behind much religious conflict, but legal and social restriction of *FoRB*'.[139] The Institute for Economics and Peace's research corroborates that 'respect for the rights of others' and 'allowing religious plurality and space for people to practise their beliefs' are key prerequisites for a peaceful society.[140] Implementing FoRB helps to move sustainable development goals from rhetoric to reality.

FoRB and Economic Prosperity

The UK has further determined 'promoting global prosperity' as one of its four strategic international development objectives.[141] This objective is reflected in SDG 8 which calls for sustained and inclusive economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. Economic development is key to achieving these objectives.[142] The "inextricable link" between economic growth, human rights, equality and development is further highlighted in the LSE Investment and Human Rights Project analysis.[143]

Other recent studies have shown that FoRB can promote economic development and prosperity.[144] A 2014 study which examined economic growth in 173 countries and considered two-dozen different factors that could impact this growth found that "religious freedom contributes to better economic and business outcomes and that advances in religious freedom…[contribute] to successful and sustainable enterprises that benefit societies and individuals".[145]

135   APPG International FoRB, *Freedom of Religion or Belief in Pakistan and UK Government Policy*, (Feb. 2016), https://appg-freedomofreligionorbelief.org/in-parliament/pakistan-report/

136   See: Baha'i institute for Higher Education - http://www.bihe.org/

137   Finke, Roger and Jaime Harris, "Wars and Rumors of Wars: Explaining Religiously Motivated Violence." In *Religion, Politics, Society and the State*, Jonathan Fox, ed., (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011)

138   UNFPA, *Religion and Development post-2015*, (May 2014) https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:ggtCdGvgtFUJ:https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/DONOR-UN-FBO%2520May%25202014.pdf+&cd=2&hl=es-419&ct=clnk&gl=uk&client=firefox-b-ab#34

139   Grimm, B.; Finke, R., *The Price of Freedom Denied*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2011)

140   Institute of Economic and Peace, *Global Peace Index*, June 2017, http://visionofhumanity.org/indexes/global-peace-index/

141   Department for International Development, 'Single Departmental Plan: 2015 to 2020', (1 Sept. 2016), https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfid-single-departmental-plan-2015-to-2020/single-departmental-plan-2015-to-2020

142   *ibid*

143   LSE, *Guide to Implementing the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights in Investment Policymaking*, (March 2016), http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/investment-and-human-rights/files/2016/04/LSE_UNGPs_Guide_en.pdf

144   Alon, I.; Li Shaomin; Wu, J., *Religious Freedom, Interference in Religion, and Economic Growth*, accessed 5 Oct. at: http://www.rollins.edu/political-science/documents/ilan-alon-shaomin-li-and-jun-wu-religious-freedom-interference-in-religion-and-economic-growth.pdf

145   Grim, B., 'Is Religious Freedom Good for Business', *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion*, (Vol.10, Art. 4: 2014)

This study found that high levels of violent religious conflict create an unstable environment which, in turns, deters investment, drives young entrepreneurs away and disrupts economic sectors.[146] For example, religious violence in Jordan in 2004 caused earnings from tourism to fall by £1bn in the first six months of 2005.[147] Steps taken to reduce religious violence and conflict by promoting FoRB can help reduce violence and also promote economic development and prosperity.[148] Further analysis and research is needed, however, to determine how such steps can be taken.

Ensuring "No One is Left Behind" in the Development Agenda

The importance of interacting and partnering with religious and faith-based organisations is recognised in Article 4 of the 2030 Agenda which pledges that "no one will be left behind" because at their best, they provide a good means of reaching vulnerable people and reducing conflict with other groups.[149] They are therefore key partners for achieving the peace and stability called for in SDG 16 and DfID's Strategic Objectives. This was recognised in DfID's Faith Partnership Principles in 2012[150] but appears not to have been developed since. The International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD), of which UKAid is a member, further recognises the importance of bringing together governmental and intergovernmental entities with religious and value-driven organisations for achieving sustainable development goals, including SDG 16.[151]

In the Pew Research Center's global survey, nearly 85% of the world's population is affiliated with a religion and considers religion to be very important in their lives.[152] The majority of people worldwide are affiliated or have interaction with some form of faith or belief-based organisation or institution such as mosques, churches and other religious establishments, as well as faith-based NGOs. Crucially, for religious and belief-based organisations and similar bodies to exist and operate, FoRB, as outlined in international human rights law, must be fully respected.

Faith and belief-based organisations are often important – sometimes vital - channels for disaster relief and aid delivery. Faith and belief-based organisations can offer "safe spaces for victims of humanitarian emergencies, respond[ing] immediately to emergencies and turn[ing] churches into hospitals, mosques into kitchens, and temples into first aid centres."[153] In 2013, "around 15-17% of all international funds for humanitarian aid were allocated to and implemented by faith and belief-based organisations".[154] In certain developing countries, the percentage of healthcare services provided by faith and belief-based organisations can be as high as 40%.[155] Religious and value-driven organisations are therefore important partners in achieving SDGs including SDG 3: good health and wellbeing.[156]

In addition to delivering humanitarian aid, community groups and human rights defenders may provide the most productive means of reaching vulnerable belief-based communities. This is particularly the case within fragile States. These organisations are able to build trust with such communities, interacting

146 ibid
147 *The Guardian*, 'Tourists Shun Resorts from Egypt to Turkey in Wake of ISIS Attacks', 16 Jan. 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/16/mediterranean-resorts-fall-in-tourism-numbers-due-to-isis-attacks
148 Grim, B., 'Is Religious Freedom Good for Business', *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion*, (Vol.10, Art. 4: 2014)
149 UN General Assembly, *A/RES/70/1*, (21 Oct. 2015)
150 Department for International Development, *Faith Partnership Principles*, (2012), https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67352/faith-partnership-principles.pdf
151 See: International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD) - http://www.partner-religion-development.org/
152 Pew Research Center, *The Changing Global Religious Landscape*, (5 April 2017), p.8, http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2017/04/07092755/FULL-REPORT-WITH-APPENDIXES-A-AND-B-APRIL-3.pdf
153 Nitschke, Ulrich; Gabriel, Bennet, *The International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development / PaRD*, (2017), http://www.partner-religion-development.org/fileadmin/Dateien/Resources/Knowledge_Center/Nitschke_et_al-2016-The_Ecumenical_Review.pdf
154 ibid
155 Kagawa, R.; Anglemyer, A.; Montagu, D., *The Scale of Faith Based Organization Participation in Health Service Delivery*, (PLoS One: 2012; 7(11)) https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3495941/
156 Swedish Mission Council, 'Religions are Partners to Achieve Agenda 2030', 30 Sept. 2017, http://www.missioncouncil.se/en/2017/09/30/religions-are-partners-to-achieve-agenda-2030/

with groups in a sensitive and relevant manner and holding a deep understanding of the local belief context, making them best placed to speak to communities' religious or belief identity. These organisations' unique position means they can also play a vital role with others in promoting peace and understanding between groups in conflict with each other. The organisations often form an integral part of civil society and can play a key role in achieving development objectives in a way that FoRB restrictions threaten to undermine.

There are, of course, examples of religious and belief-based organisations encouraging harmful practices and/or conflict. Such malpractice may be driven by economic or political interests, using religion to justify their actions. Under the international human rights framework (including Article 18(3)), guidance is given on when limitations of the manifestation of religion or belief may be justified.[157] Advancing FoRB does not mean supporting organisations who seek to harm the interests of others.

It should also be remembered that imposing unwarranted restrictions and/or refusing financial support for faith and belief-based organisations not only infringes their members' rights but can also exacerbate their members' perception of being targeted and alienated. This perception can make members of such organisations more susceptible to extremist views and less responsive to positive change. Given the number of individuals who are involved with faith and belief-based organisations in countries where development objectives most urgently need to be met, it is important to engage with them and encourage interaction between different groups in order to foster positive societal relations and reduce the space for conflict.

There are a number of examples of the positive impact faith and belief-based organisations can have on social change and encouraging peace. From the mass mobilisation of Christian women to end fourteen years of civil war in Liberia,[158] to the founding of Islam-inspired grassroots organizations to advance women's empowerment and civic dialogue in Bosnia-Herzegovina,[159] faith and belief-based organisations supported movements which advance FoRB for social good have played a critical role in peace-building and development.[160] If the right to FoRB is not protected, and in turn, faith and belief-based organisations' activities restricted, meeting the development objectives set out in the SDG's and DfID's strategy objectives will be made more difficult.

B. Freedom of Religion or Belief and Preventing Violent Extremism

Recently, a number of serious incidents of terrorism have taken place within the UK, France, Belgium, Germany, Sweden, Spain and elsewhere around the world. In January 2016, the then UN Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon, presented a Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism to the General Assembly and called upon all States to develop national action plans to counter and prevent violent extremism.

There is growing recognition globally that protecting and promoting FoRB can help to prevent violent extremism because FoRB provides a fundamental building block for nurturing and fostering cohesive communities.[161] The UN Plan of Action recognised that obstructions of FoRB can be counterproductive, saying they "incite those who feel disenfranchised to embrace violent extremism as a vehicle for advancing their goals".[162] The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE),[163] which

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157 For an outline of what constitutes 'harm', see Article 18.3 of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (1966).

158 See: Nobel Prize, 'Leymah Gbowee', accessed 5 Oct. 2017 at: https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laure-ates/2011/gbowee-bio.html

159 Siljak, Zilka, 'Women, Religion and Peace Leadership in Bosnia and Herzegovina', Dec. 2014, http://www.eiz.hr/wp-con-tent/uploads/2014/12/Zilka-Spahic-Siljak-ENG.pdf

160 Sheker, Manini, 'Can Religion be A Positive Force for Social Change?', 5 July 2016, https://www.opendemocracy.net/transformation/manini-sheker/can-religion-be-positive-force-for-social-change

161 GOV.UK, 'Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon's Speech at the Launch of the 2016 Annual Human Rights Report', 25 July 2017, https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/lord-ahmad-of-wimbledons-speech-at-the-launch-of-the-2016-annual-human-rights-report

162 UN General Assembly, *Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism*, A/70/674, (24 Dec. 2015), para. 26

163 The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), is an organisation primarily aimed at enhancing

currently has 57 participating States including the UK, acknowledges that 'environments that support FoRB become better positioned to reject violent ideologies'.[164] The final Act of its first Summit further recognises FoRB and security as 'complimentary and mutually re-enforcing'.[165]

The UK FCO has recognised this point on several occasions, most recently in its July 2017 Human Rights and Democracy Report.[166] FoRB is also emphasised as a key priority by Lord Ahmad, the FCO Minister of State. The Minister recognises that tolerant and inclusive communities are "more immune to the disease of violent extremism, and the ideological basis of non-violent extremism".[167] These tolerant and inclusive communities foster strong respect for diversity and equal opportunities for different belief groups and peaceful interaction.[168]

Although a variety of factors lead individuals into terrorism, an extensive UNDP report focussing on Boko Haram and al-Shabbab highlights that religion is exploited by terrorist groups to provide an ideology that can be rallied around. This has resulted in many recruits – over half of the 495 interviewed - stating that religion is a key factor in recruitment for violent extremism.[169]

This use of religion by a few should not automatically be taken to indicate an issue with the religion itself.[170] Indeed, Professor Malcolm Evans cautions against religious identities assuming prominent roles in PVE measures. This helps ensure that 'public space' is not a place where disputes concerning religious belief or affiliation are played out, something that is difficult to remove once introduced. The Global Counter Terrorism Forum's 'Ankara Memorandum on Good Practices for a Multi-Sectoral Approach to CVE' also recognises that PVE programming should avoid identification of violent extremism with any one religion.[171] This approach could alienate those very members of the community whose cooperation is important for the programme to succeed.[172] Advancing FoRB promotes the concept of equality, regardless of belief, helping to limit the likelihood of conflict situations.

Post 9/11, however, there has been a global increase in government repression of FoRB in the name of combatting terrorism.[173] This trend is not limited to any one country or region or religious group. In Myanmar, the Buddhist state uses the fight against terrorism to justify the 'ethnic cleansing' (as determined by the UN) of Rohingya Muslims.[174] In China, the 2016 counter-terrorism laws have been used to crackdown on even mild expressions of Tibetan identity and culture.[175] In Uzbekistan, there are an estimated 15,000 individuals imprisoned on charges related to membership of allegedly extremist

security and co-operation within Europe, providing early warning on FoRB violations, conflict prevention, crises management and post-conflict rehabilitation. The OSCE was originally not designed to concentrate on the promotion and protection of human rights but has, over the years, had a much greater involvement withchissues. Prior to 1 January 1995, the organization was known as the Conference on the Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE). The OSCE currently consists of 57 participating States from Europe, Central Asia and North America and with such participation also represent the single largest regional security organisation of the world. See http://www.osce.org/ (last accessed 5 Oct. 2017).

164 Information provided by Kishan Manocha, OSCE/ODIHR Senior Advisor for FoRB – in meeting with APPG, March 2017
165 CSCE Final Act (Helsinki Accord) 1 Aug. 1975, 14 ILM (1975) 1292. See http://www.osce.org/helsinki-final-act
166 UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Human Rights and Democracy Report 2016, (July 2017), https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/human-rights-and-democracy-report-2016
167 ibid
168 Community Cohesion Panel, The End of Parallel Lives?, (July 2004), http://www.tedcantle.co.uk/publications/012%20The%20end%20of%20parallel%20lives%20the%202nd%20Cantle%20Report%20Home%20Off.pdf
169 UNDP, Journey to Extremism in Africa, (Sept. 2017), http://journey-to-extremism.undp.org/en/reports
170 http://legalresearch.blogs.bris.ac.uk/2017/06/the-freedom-of-religion-a-threat-to-global-security-or-a-means-of-enhancing-it/
171 Global Counterterrorism Forum, Ankara Memorandum, (March 2013), https://www.thegctf.org/Portals/1/Documents/Framework%20Documents/A/GCTF-Ankara-Memorandum-ENG.pdf?ver=2016-09-01-114735-333
172 ibid
173 Saiya, Nilay, 'A Necessary Step? Examining Religious Freedom and Counterterrorism', 28 June 2017, https://www.religiousfreedominstitute.org/cornerstone/2017/6/27/a-necessary-step-examining-religious-freedom-and-counterterrorism
174 The Guardian, 'Who are the Rohingya and What is Happening in Myanmar?', 6 Sept. 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/sep/06/who-are-the-rohingya-and-what-is-happening-in-myanmar
175 International Campaign for Tibet; FiDH, China's New Counter-Terrorism Law, (Nov. 2016) https://www.savetibet.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/FIDH-ICT-Chinas-new-counter-terrorism-law-Implications-and-Dangers-for-Tibetans-and-Uyghurs-15-11-2016-FINAL.pdf

religious groups.[176] In January 2017, the US temporarily banned citizens of seven Muslim countries from entering the United States for a period of 90 days.[177] There are many more examples and countries from France which has carried out 'discriminatory' house raids and arrests on Muslims[178] to Russia which has banned Jehovah's Witnesses,[179] cite the fight against terrorism and protecting national security as justification. It is important that the UK consistently reiterates that limiting the rights should be 'necessary, reasonable and proportional' and not disproportionate.

Restricting human rights, including FoRB, in the name of national security or counter-terrorism often results in a vicious cycle of alienation, tension and, potentially, violence.[180] Excessive restrictions of FoRB and other rights breaks down trust between Governments and belief communities, making it *"far less likely that individuals from those communities will cooperate with law enforcement officials on counterterrorism efforts."*[181] Indeed, it may provide individuals drawn to terrorism with the grievances to follow through in their plans.

The counter-productiveness of limiting FoRB in the name of counterterrorism, regardless of the motive, is indicated in the Pew Research Center's findings. Nine of Pew's top sixteen states with highest Government restrictions on FoRB rank within the top fifteen percent of countries experiencing the highest levels of terrorism, according to the Institute of Economics and Peace's Global Terrorism Index.[182] The six states experiencing the highest levels of terrorism, according to the 2017 Global Terrorism Index, are also within the Pew Research Center's top ten countries experiencing 'very high' levels of social hostility between religious or belief communities.[183]

Respecting FoRB is one weapon in the fight against terrorism which no government can afford to neglect – especially against terrorists who claim to have a religious motivation.[184]

Freedom of Religion or Belief and Current UK PVE Policy

The 2015 UK Counter Extremism Strategy and the 2016 *Casey Review on Opportunity and Integration* acknowledge that building cohesive communities is integral to preventing violent extremism.[185] The *Casey Review* recommended that a key measure to achieve this is through the promotion of 'British Values'.[186] This term that has become controversial among certain groups, partly due to the lack of clarity over precisely what constitutes the 'Values'. The *Casey Review* determined 'Mutual respect, tolerance and understanding of different faiths and beliefs' as a British Value.[187] Open Society Justice Initiative question, however, as to whether this British Value is being pursued and whether current measures are in practice limiting FoRB rather than promoting it, potentially rendering the measures counterproductive.[188]

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176   USCIRF, Annual Report 2017: Uzbekistan, (Apr. 2017), http://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/Uzbekistan.2017.pdf

177   The New York Times, 'Trump Asks Supreme Court to Dismiss Travel Ban Cases', 5 Oct. 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/05/us/politics/trump-supreme-court-travel-ban.html

178   Human Rights Watch, 'France: Abuses Under State of Emergency', 3 Feb. 2016, https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/02/03/france-abuses-under-state-emergency

179   Forum 18, 'Russia: Jehovah's Witnesses Now Banned', 18 July 2017, http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2297

180   Finke, R.; Harris, J., *Wars and Rumors of Wars: Explaining Religiously Motivated Violence*, (2011), http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.572.5177&rep=rep1&type=pdf

181   Saiya, Nilay, 'A Necessary Step? Examining Religious Freedom and Counterterrorism', 28 June 2017, https://www.religiousfreedominstitute.org/cornerstone/2017/6/27/a-necessary-step-examining-religious-freedom-and-counterterrorism

182   Institute of Economic and Peace, *Global Terrorism Index*, Nov. 2016 http://visionofhumanity.org/indexes/terrorism-index/

183   *ibid*

184   Information provided by Forum 18 for the APPG FoRB's *Queen's Speech Debate Briefings on CVE measures across Central Asian States* (June 2017)

185   Home Office, *Counter-Extremism Strategy*, (19 Oct. 2015), https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/counter-extremism-strategy; Dame Casey DBE CE, *The Casey Review*, (December 2016), https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-casey-review-a-review-into-opportunity-and-integration

186   *ibid*

187   *ibid*

188   Open Society Justice Initiative, *Eroding Trust*, (Oct. 2016), https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/sites/default/files/eroding-trust-20161017_0.pdf

While the objectives of the PREVENT strategy are positive and it aims to engage with communities, it has been criticised for alienating Muslims by indiscriminately profiling and targeting their communities. The lack of consensus around the definition of terms such 'extremism' has contributed towards this and has led, in some cases, to a divisive 'us' versus 'them' mentality.[189] There have been a number of occasions when this mentality has been reinforced. For example, from July 2015 – June 2016 4,611 people, including more than 2,000 children and teenagers, were earmarked for possible intervention by the 'Channel scheme', part of the 'Prevent' strategy but there was considerable anxiety that some of these were mis-referrals.[190] Government statistics also show that 3,934 referrals were made between April 2007 and 31 March 2014, of which about 80% were set aside and deemed to have been wrongly referred.[191] In one case a child's joke about using 'bombs and guns' to get hold of chocolate at the prom resulted in him being referred to Prevent.[192]

A Prevent referral does not result in a criminal record. That said, referral under the Prevent programme (or otherwise having been suspected of involvement in terrorism) results in stigmatisation of the recipient and on their part, a strong sense of alienation from British values.[193] Despite recent claims of its success in bringing to light additional potential attacks, both David Anderson QC and the Open Society Foundation warn that Prevent needs reform.[194] They caution that it 'sows fear and mistrust in Muslim communities', Open Society remarking that it 'creates a serious risk of human rights violations, including Freedom of Expression and FoRB.[195] The UK Government recognises that *"some parts of the community [feel] that they have been victims of state 'snooping'"*.[196]

The anxiety amongst British Muslims from the significant number of mis-referrals has been exacerbated by the negative portrayal of Islam in the national media and other platforms. This has caused some British Muslim and non-Muslims to be extra-sensitive to their differences, resulting in heightened suspicion of each other. The 2016 Casey Review highlighted polling in 2015 which showed that: *"more than 55% of the general public agreed that there was a fundamental clash between Islam and the values of British society, while 46% of British Muslims felt that being a Muslim in Britain was difficult due to prejudice against Islam"*.[197] As recommended by David Anderson QC, analysis is urgently needed to assess whether current UK PVE policies such as Prevent are, even unintentionally, leading to environments where FoRB is not being protected, much less promoted, in the name of security.

Arguably failing to ensure the full realisation of human rights such as FoRB and Freedom of Expression in practice, Prevent risks continuing not to realise its desired results. These include reducing feelings of alienation and ostracisation and enhancing community cohesion, which will enable communities to be more resilient to 'violent extremism'.[198] As the UK seeks to share good practice at the international level, it will be critical to ensure that the UK's PVE measures align with international best practice. Inter-departmental conversations will be vital for the success of this.

189 *ibid*
190 ITV News, 'Referrals to Government De-radicalisation Programme 'Increased Sharply in 2015/16'', 12 Sept. 2016, http://www.itv.com/news/2016-09-12/referrals-to-government-deradicalisation-programme-increased-sharply-in-2015-16/
191 Open Society Justice Initiative, *Eroding Trust*, (Oct. 2016), https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/sites/default/files/eroding-trust-20161017_0.pdf
192 *ibid*
193 *ibid*
194 David Anderson QC, 'Prevent Strategy Can Work Against Radicalisation … If It is Trusted', *The Evening Standard*, 15 Feb. 2017, https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/david-anderson-qc-prevent-strategy-can-work-against-radicalisa-tion-if-it-is-trusted-a3467901.html ; See also: BBC Radio 4, 'Understanding Prevent', 30 July 2017, http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08yp16m
195 *ibid*; Open Society Justice Initiative, *Eroding Trust*, (Oct. 2016), https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/sites/default/files/eroding-trust-20161017_0.pdf
196 Home Office, *Prevent Strategy*, (June 2011), https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf
197 Dame Casey DBE CE, *The Casey Review*, (December 2016), https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-casey-re-view-a-review-into-opportunity-and-integration
198 Open Society Justice Initiative, *Eroding Trust*, (Oct. 2016), https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/sites/default/files/eroding-trust-20161017_0.pdf

Suggestions for Governments in Advancing Community Cohesion

The Global Counterterrorism Forum Countering Violent Extremism Working Group, which the UK co-chaired until September 2017, has detailed a number of good practice recommendations for building cohesive communities in its 2012 *Ankara Memorandum.* Good Practice 7 encourages States to take simultaneously a "whole-of-society" and "whole-of-government" approach to PVE.[199] The Friends of Europe think tank 2016 security consultation - with over 2,500 participants from the government, think tanks, businesses and NGOs – likewise concluded that "local, bottom-up initiatives involving peers, parents, communities and faith leaders are more effective in preventing the radicalisation of vulnerable youth than one-size-fits-all programmes associated with State authorities."[200] Where lack of trust in communities towards a government is prevalent - making government messaging ineffective - a range of actors including 'NGOs, religious organisations and different positive voices emanating from different groups in any given community' should be supported by that government to 'provide narratives that breed mutual understanding, promote tolerance and present alternative and non-violent means to reach shared goals'.[201] Singapore has utilised a 'whole society' approach to mitigate its terrorist threat and has been ranked as one of the safest countries in the world by the Global Terrorism Index.[202]

Good Practice 12 highlights the importance of governments' 'facilitation of dialogue – including inter-religious dialogue – to build cohesive communities that appreciate difference' in the process of building resilience to extremism.[203] As the role of religious ideology and identity is both a 'push' and 'pull' factor in radicalisation, the CVE Working Group endorses the building of mutual respect through the facilitation of dialogue and the advancement of positive narratives on different beliefs to realise the objectives of PVE measures.

The impact of school and university education in which respect for others' beliefs is explored can be particularly be transformative. The October 2016 the FCO FoRB & PVE conference recognised the need to 'support programmes reviewing textbooks, curricula and teacher training to ensure students are taught to value and respect those from other religious backgrounds'.[204] Good practice may potentially be found through the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change 'Generation Global' Project which teaches and instils children with confidence and skills of dialogue, critical thinking and 'religious literacy'.[205] The impact of advancing tolerance and respect for different beliefs is further demonstrated in the following case-study:

"A group of students in Devon, United Kingdom, participating in Face to Faith, for instance, were, according to their teacher, "in a fixed-mind-set about Islam. [They had a] deep-rooted ignorance that all Muslims are terrorists and should 'go home'." After using the Face to Faith resources and being connected with a group of Muslim students who could challenge these stereotypes and prejudices, the teacher reports that, "The change in attitude these boys had after the videoconference was extraordinary – one of the most memorable moments of my teaching career."[206]

Building understanding and respect for others' beliefs through the mass media is also highly significant. The Anna Lindh Foundation conducted a survey, interviewing 13,000 people, across the Euro-

199 Global Counterterrorism Forum, *Ankara Memorandum*, (March 2013), https://www.thegctf.org/Portals/1/Documents/ Framework%20Documents/A/GCTF-Ankara-Memorandum-ENG.pdf?ver=2016-09-01-114735-333
200 European Union; Friends of Europe, *2016 Security Jam*, (2016),
201 Global Counterterrorism Forum, *Ankara Memorandum*, (March 2013), https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/SECJAM_ REPORT_full_report_HIRES.pdf https://www.thegctf.org/Portals/1/Documents/Framework%20Documents/A/GCTF-An-kara-Memorandum-ENG.pdf?ver=2016-09-01-114735-333
202 Gunaratna, R., *Countering Extremism*, (Imperial College Press: May 2013)
203 Global Counterterrorism Forum, *Ankara Memorandum*, (March 2013), https://www.thegctf.org/Portals/1/Documents/ Framework%20Documents/A/GCTF-Ankara-Memorandum-ENG.pdf?ver=2016-09-01-114735-333
204 FCO; University of Sussex, 'Preventing Violent Extremism', accessed 5 Oct. 2017 at: http://forbforeignpolicy.net/prevent-ing-violent-extremism/
205 Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, 'Co-Existence', accessed 5 Oct. 2017 at: http://institute.global/co-existence
206 Malone, J., 'How to Prevent Extremism and Policy Options', 27 Jan. 2016, http://www.tonyblairfaithfoundation.org/ foundation/news/how-prevent-extremism-and-policy-options.

Mediterranean region on their concerns and values. The study found that cultural and religious tensions in Europe have less to do with a clash of values and more with *"the 'culturalisation' of conflicts promoted by some media and political narratives".*[207] This highlights the power of the media and the importance of engaging the media to create social environments in which FoRB can be protected, encouraging community cohesion. The October 2016 FCO FoRB and PVE conference specifically recognised the need to support 'media training programmes to ensure that inflammatory reporting does not exacerbate tensions between communities'.[208]

Hate speech or incitement to hatred and violence that impacts upon societal and individual security must be tackled alongside promoting positive narratives. As Chapter 1 highlights, protecting and advancing FoRB does not mean permitting action or speech which risks incitement to hatred or violence. It is alarming that media channels from overseas which broadcast messages that legitimise violence towards others because of their beliefs continue to be broadcast directly into UK homes.[209] This is another reason why a well-resourced and dedicated whole- society approach to tackling 'dangerous' rhetoric and advancing FoRB is required to make PVE efforts a success in reality.

207 Anna Lindh Foundation, 'New Survey Reveals that the Euro-Med Region is Not a Victim of a Clash of Civilisations', accessed 5 Oct. 2017 at: http://www.annalindhfoundation.org/new-survey-reveals-euro-med-region-not-victim-clash-civilisations
208 FCO; University of Sussex, 'Preventing Violent Extremism', accessed 5 Oct. 2017 at: http://forbforeignpolicy.net/preventing-violent-extremism/
209 Information provided to the APPG by Maryam Kanwer and Professor Javaid Rehman

Children join hands together. Credit: lores_felipe (13 May 2015), pixabay

CHAPTER 5
WHAT DOES A FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF REALITY LOOK LIKE?

FoRB is important for the attainment of key policy goals such as promoting sustainable development and preventing violent extremism. However, FoRB must also be pursued for its own sake and not just for other policy ends. Advancing FoRB as a policy goal in its own right is vital for protecting the fundamental human rights of the countless people across the globe who are persecuted, often violently, for their beliefs.

Tackling intolerance, xenophobia and violence requires the development of policies and practices that address the numerous, wide-ranging and complex political, social and economic factors that lead to their manifestation. Failure to do so and to tackle the broader phenomenon of intolerance of religious people or beliefs will inevitably have devastating effects on individual communities as well as on the increasingly interconnected global community of States and societies. In addition, to address growing global hostility to people's religion or belief, a concerted effort must be made to tackle the narrative legitimising it and put an end to the FoRB violations that result from it.

Effectively advancing FoRB internationally, requires governments to adopt a creative approach that involves both them and civil society. Civil society can help to improve the human rights situation even when a government is not responsive to direct State-to-State diplomatic efforts. Even when governments are supportive of FoRB, care needs to be taken not to simply impose the cultural narrative change necessary for FoRB to exist. Space should be created for these narratives to emerge organically.

Good Practice

These good practice suggestions originate from the evidence that has been submitted to this APPG by stakeholders and experts working in the field:

1. Track and Audit Government Aid and Investment

As part of a stocktake of the strengths and weaknesses of existing programmes and their approaches, it would be helpful for the UK Government to track and audit its current funding and investment streams in relevant departments including DfID. This will help ensure that funding is not being channelled directly or indirectly to bodies, organisations and individuals that advance an intolerant narrative which encourages violence towards minority belief adherents.

It would be helpful if DfID could ensure that all its overseas projects are thoroughly vetted for promoting human rights and FoRB; this process should be made compulsory, and stringent criteria established. All funding applications should then satisfy this criteria prior to approval. In addition, strict procedures need to be established to ensure that all approved funding or aid is monitored. National newspapers have highlighted this in their coverage.[210] Pakistan provides an example of failure in such monitoring and scrutiny. While funding for education is provided by the US and UK governments, there has been a corresponding failure to track these funds. Some of this funding has been given to the provincial government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in Pakistan.[211] In 2016, this provincial government gave $3 million to Darul Uloom Haqqania seminary, known as the University of Jihad'.[212] This religious institution supports the Taliban and religious radicalisation within Pakistan. It is not clear whether US or UK funds were included in the funds given by the Provincial Government.

There are related yet distinct concerns with regard to business and trade deals with regimes that consistently violate fundamental human rights including FoRB. The UK and US governments have been criticised for entering into military and trade agreements with States with a record for violating human rights such as Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Kuwait. In the case of Saudi Arabia, there is evidence of the governmental pursuit of a sectarian hard-line Wahhabi agenda.[213] This agenda has filtered through to the next generation via school textbooks and teaching that promotes intolerance, and even hatred, towards others with different beliefs. Discriminatory textbooks also continue to be found in other countries including Egypt[214] and Pakistan.[215] Effective control of the destination of funds could help prevent such malpractice.

2. Increase Religious and FoRB 'Literacy'

The first step for governments interested in advancing FoRB is to increase the religious and FoRB 'literacy' of country and thematic Desk Officers at home and abroad, Embassy staff and Ministers in relevant Departments. Religious literacy involves training staff to develop an understanding of different

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210 *The Mail on Sunday*, 'Ian Birrel: Britain's Patronising Aid Policy Fuels Corruption Among Charity Chiefs', 24 Sept. 2017, http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4913930/Britain-s-patronising-aid-policy-fuels-corruption.html; *The Mail Online*, 'Ministers Launch Last-minute Frenzy to Spend Your Money on Foreign Aid with up to 98% of Budgets Handed out in Three Months so the Government Can Hit Its Targets', 18 July 2017, http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4705246/Foreign-aid-just-t-spend-enough.html; *The Sun*, 'Aid Check Call: Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson Under Fire Over Wasted Foreign Aid Spending – with a Quarter of the Budget Disappearing into a Black Hole', 10 Oct. 2017, https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/4648801/boris-johnson-foreign-aid-spending-scrutiny/

211 National Commission for Justice and Peace, *Education vs Fanatic Literacy: A Study on the Biased Material in Textbooks of Academic Year 2015-16* (2016)

212 Tim Craig, 'Pakistan's 'University of Jihad' is getting millions of dollars from the government', *The Washington Post*, 22 June 2016 https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/06/22/pakistans-university-of-jihad-is-getting-millions-of-dollars-from-the-government/?utm_term=.a731423424b5

213 Information provided by Maryam Kanwer – in APPG evidence session, June 2017.

214 USCIRF, 2017 Annual Report: Egypt, (Apr. 2017), http://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/Egypt.2017.pdf

215 National Commission for Justice and Peace, 'Education vs Fanatic Literacy: A Study on the Biased Material in Textbooks of Academic Year 2015-16' (2016)

religions and their historical contexts, an understanding of the diversity of expressions and traditions within those religions and an understanding of the role that religious dynamics play in social, economic, political and cultural life within local contexts.[216] FoRB literacy develops the ability to recognise where and why oppression and conflict between different belief groups occur and how to address them.

Religious literacy and FoRB literacy are different and complementary and both are necessary for different officials working overseas to influence political, economic or social developments. In-depth training in one, the other or both will vary depending on the official's role. This complementary training will assist the monitoring and tracking of religious dynamics, including tensions amongst religious groups, and FoRB violations when in post so as to have established an early warning system to respond appropriately to conflict when it breaks out.

The UK Home Office, working with a group of experts convened by this APPG, has already developed its religious literacy and changed its training and country guidance for caseworkers working on asylum applications from Pakistan. Previously, Pakistan country guidance underestimated a number of vital FoRB issues that impacted the success of certain asylum applications, including the threats faced by Christians and Ahmadi Muslims throughout the country, even after internal relocation. Caseworkers now have a better understanding of the FoRB violations on the ground. This means that the asylum process is more just for persecuted religious minorities in the UK. Religious minorities would be helped even further if UNHCR were to add being persecuted on the basis of religion or belief to its vulnerability criteria.

In addition to the religion and foreign policy training that the London School of Economics' Faith Centre is providing for FCO staff, the FCO has also produced a toolkit to improve FoRB literacy. The toolkit is designed to help FCO posts "to understand the human rights issues involved in freedom of religion or belief, and to provide some ideas about how to promote this human right in practice and to combat violations of it".[217] It includes an introduction to the issues for FCO posts and desks, an analytical matrix to identify problems, some general responses to frequently raised issues, and other resources for those who wish to go deeper into the subject. Effective monitoring of its use will continue to increase FoRB literacy in the FCO. Other useful documents to help with building 'FoRB literacy' include the *Rabat Plan of Action*[218] and the *Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes*.[219] FoRB Literacy can be supported by maximising the use of the guidance in these documents.

3. Develop a Better Understanding of Key Issues as Experienced by those at Risk to Help Design Effective Solutions for Local Needs and Facilitate Peacebuilding

Good research and engagement with local communities that facilitates, understanding local contexts and needs, is vital for accurate tailoring of FoRB projects. It is not a 'one size fits all' process. It requires a multi-dimensional approach to identify key issues and potential solutions. In addition, different civil society groups and religious leaders will be best placed to engage with vulnerable communities and to understand and address their needs. Particular attention should be paid to consulting directly with those locally who are affected by intolerance and violence – both those carrying out the persecution and those being persecuted. This gives a better understanding of the real causes, concerns and flashpoints. Due to their own lived experiences, these individuals are often far more able to identify

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216 The Center on Religion & The Professions, 'What is Religious Literacy', accessed 5 Oct. 2017 at : http://religionandprofes-sions.org/religious-literacy-toolkits/what-is-religious-literacy/

217 FCO, *Freedom of Religion or Belief Toolkit*, (2016), https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attach-ment_data/file/561516/Freedom_of_Religion_or_Belief_Toolkit_-_2016.pdf

218 OHCHR, *Rabat Plan of Action*, (5 October 2012), http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/adviser/pdf/Rabat_draft_out-come.pdf

219 This framework helps others assess precursors and triggers for the kind of violence that can lead to genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity in any situation worldwide. One such precursor is patterns of FoRB violations including hate speech and incitement, particularly when linked to religion. See: UN, *Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes: A Tool for Prevention*, (2014), http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/adviser/pdf/framework%20of%20analy-sis%20for%20atrocity%20crimes_en.pdf

the most pressing concerns in complex situations and are sometimes able to provide more immediate solutions for addressing the problems they face. There will be a balance to strike between consulting with groups and ensuring that no one agenda takes precedence.

In addition, there is wide scope for training and in-country support in faith-based mediation, enabling community and religious leaders to be agents for reconciliation and peace in regions that have been affected by intolerance and violence. Patience and a long-term vision are vital to this work, as is identifying leading community members and figures of influence who are trusted in their communities and can bring people together. This is where Britain and other partners can contribute as facilitators and conveners, creating the space for both the persecutors and the persecuted to come together, share stories and begin to work together to create a shared vision for the future of their communities.

Examples of best practice include Rose Castle Foundation - https://www.rosecastle.foundation/ - , an international centre of reconciliation, based in the north of England, offering safe space in which to address misunderstanding of the "other", particularly those of different religious traditions. Located in Cumbria, it is a peaceful haven in which to transform conflict within and between faith communities, and to train up a generation of leaders equipped as faith-based mediators. Corrymeela - https://www.corrymeela.org/ - in Northern Ireland, Glencree -http://glencree.ie/ - in the South of Ireland, Tree of Life - http://treeoflifezimbabwe.org/contact - in Zimbabwe and the Institute for Healing of Memories - http://www.healing-memories.org/ - Cape Town are also examples of such work. It is crucial, that governments ensure that its partners are FoRB literate and do not discriminate on the basis of religion or belief. To implement FoRB effectively, simultaneous efforts must be made to support civil society and government in making a narrative shift advancing FoRB.

- *See 1, 3, 7 and 9 below for examples of such practice.*

4. Work with and Support Civil Society to Change Cultural Narratives around FoRB

Advancing FoRB requires changing the cultural narrative around FoRB with different belief groups. There are limits, however, to the power and influence of governments and the legitimacy of programmes to shift culture, particularly with a sensitive topic such as religion. Changing narratives requires an all-inclusive approach that involves community ownership and a deep understanding of the local contexts. The role of the governments should therefore be to support and create space for civil society actors to engage in building understanding between groups. These actors will include human rights and faith and belief-based organisations, religious leaders, human rights defenders and other community and youth groups. Collectively, they have a unique ability to speak to a specific community's culture and, because of this, promote peace and reconciliation between groups in conflict with each other. Partnering with individuals and organisations from the private sector should also be considered due to their unique reach and influence amongst their employees and local communities.

Support of civil society actors can be given through:

• Identifying community actors (particularly young people), NGOs – especially faith and belief-based organisations, religious leaders and businesses that are working, or willing, to promote FoRB, to challenge stereotypes and to promote positive interaction between groups,

• In recognition that trust and understanding takes time to build, ensuring that funds are provided over a sufficiently long period of time,

• In recognition that many community groups will not have the resources to bid for large funds, ensuring that there is funding, including small pots, available for them,

• Ensuring that the communities in question are consulted and involved throughout the process of advancing FoRB and take responsibility and ownership of the positive narrative. This can be enhanced by organising consultations with members of religious communities designed to enable them to articulate their most pressing concerns, which may not necessarily be those of the international community NGO or

others. Listening to the voices of those at risk can be an effective means of identifying the most pressing drivers of tension and violence and assist in identifying practical solutions for ameliorating the situation and reducing conflict.

- Facilitating knowledge-sharing and/or sharing of best practice to guide and maximise impact and,

- Supporting civil society actors in peace-building efforts with experienced mediators to increase understanding between groups, increase lasting dialogue and advance respect for different beliefs.

- Helping them to improve their capacity to administer FoRB projects and also to monitor and evaluate effectively so that they can improve future interventions. Currently standardised indicators for the efficacy of FoRB programming do not exist so governments should invest in their creation, as well their own technical capacity to monitor and evaluate FoRB programmes.

Internationally, the UK Government should engage with other governments diplomatically to ensure that civil society actors are allocated space and resources to operate and build understanding between belief groups. This is especially important given the rise of government restrictions on civil society, in countries including Nepal,[220] Russia,[221] Kazakhstan,[222] Turkmenistan,[223] and Turkey,[224] ostensibly as "anti-terrorism" measures but, in practice, to control civil society. For example, the Government of Kazakhstan has banned the Muslim movement Tabligh Jamaat on the grounds of it being "extremist" despite a 2013 study commissioned by the State police and religious affairs committee finding the group to be neither extremist nor terrorist.[225] Civil society, in most instances, support and establish alternative platforms wherein minorities and other vulnerable communities can voice concerns and challenge the position posited by the hostile and inconsiderate state machinery.

- *See 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8 and 9 below for examples of work with civil society.*

5. Be Wary about Highlighting Government Involvement

In programmes which outside governments are involved in, it is helpful if they are low key about their involvement with civil society, and especially faith and belief-based organisations. This is because awareness of government interference, particularly of foreign governments on such a sensitive issue can significantly undermine, if not totally remove, the impact of the work of civil society. Community members may, for example, see these activities as another expression of governmental control or a version of 'Western imperialism'. Similarly programmes must use careful language that is relevant and contextualised within the indigenous culture ; this narrative must not point towards foreign influence or interference. For example, FoRB programmes under the title of "civic activism" in Pakistan have often had better take up among community members than programmes under the title of FoRB because this is seen as a "Western issue".[226]

6. Support Positive Messaging about FoRB

Under International Law, FoRB and freedom of expression do not grant an unfettered right to openly manifest or promote beliefs that incite violence, discrimination or hostility towards others and limit their freedoms.

Unfortunately, abuse of the right to FoRB has sometimes enabled and legitimised advocacy and incitement of religious hatred that has been manifested in school curricula and textbooks on television, social media and other

220 CSW, 'Bill Criminalises Religious Conversion', 22 Aug. 2017, http://www.csw.org.uk/2017/08/22/news/3677/article.htm
221 Forum 18, Russia : 'Religious Freedom Survey', 13 Jan. 2017, http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2246
222 Forum 18, 'Kazakhstan : More Legal Restrictions to Reach Parliament', 18 Aug. 2017, http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2308
223 Forum 18, 'Turkmenistan: Religious Freedom Survey', 6 Jan. 2017, http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2244
224 Forum 18, 'Turkey: Freedom of Belief and Security Threats', 13 Oct, 2016, http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2224
225 USCIRF, 2017 Annual Report: Kazakhstan, (Apr. 2017), http://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/Kazakhstan.2017.pdf
226 Information provided by Maryam Kanwer in an APPG IFoRB Stakeholder Meeting, 6 July 2017

media platforms. School curricula can be a sensitive topic in State-to-State diplomacy but governments can support local civil society to counter or mitigate the effect of such education; for example, the development of after-school programmes or the publication of children's books that contain pro-FoRB messaging.

In order to advance FoRB, beliefs which demonise and promote violence against other groups should be de-legitimised. The ICCPR and Rabat Plan of Action have called for any form of advocacy of religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination or violence to be made a criminal offence and punished effectively by the state institutions.

It is therefore important for governments to engage energetically with individuals, communities and organisations that are actively delegitimising hate or 'dangerous speech'[227] resulting in discrimination or violence. It is helpful if governments cast a wide net and provide consistent long-term support to ensure that pro-FoRB messaging is repeated across the whole of society, maximising its impact. As well as the vital importance of working with and through civil society, as indicated above, working with the private sector should not be neglected. This will ensure that the important message of FoRB will continue to be disseminated through the provision of jobs and opportunities to religious minorities and other vulnerable groups.

- **See 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14 below for examples of positive messaging.**

7.   Work with the Media

Media can potentially play a critical role in influencing societal attitudes and changing entrenched, prejudicial narratives of religious minorities. The power of the media to promote positive narratives of tolerance and respect towards different groups, is evident for example in the scale and speed of narrative change towards LGBTQI+ people that has occurred in Western countries over the past few decades.[228] Similarly, great strides have been made in promoting gender equality through TV, cinema and music. Similar efforts are needed at an international level to remove discriminatory social discourses and inculcate cultural values that do not discriminate on the basis of colour, race, religion as well as gender or sexual orientation.

Governments could work with media organisations, religious leaders and civil society to encourage pro-FoRB messaging that can be easily shared. The Amazon 2016 Christmas advert, which portrays a positive inter-faith friendship between a Christian priest and an Imam, made the national news. This example of effective pro-FoRB media was widely shared online.[229]

Positive results can also be obtained when government funding is made available for programmes that monitor social and digital media hate speech and incitement to violence. For example, the UK Government awarded a grant to Cardiff University in February 2017 to research online hate speech following the post-Brexit upsurge in this type of activity and to create a real-time monitoring tool that the Government could see how events spark online abuse, the type of abuse and how to mitigate it.

- **See 6, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14 below for examples of working with the media.**

8.   Use alternative methods to advance FoRB

While the traditional inter-governmental dialogue on human rights issues and the often lengthy process to alter legislation and policy, that directly or indirectly contributes to FoRB violations must continue, realising FoRB requires use of alternative avenues.

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227 See Dangerous Speech Project, last accessed 5 Oct. 2017 at: https://dangerousspeech.org/

228 Engaging in homosexual behaviour was still a criminal offense in the Republic of Ireland in 1992. By 2015 the Irish public had voted for the recognition of gay marriage by the state through a national referendum and by 2017 had an openly gay Prime Minister. According to the Pew Centre, majorities in most Western Europe countries now believe homosexuality to be acceptable whereas most had laws criminalising homosexual behaviour until the latter half of the 20th Century.

229 See Amazon Christmas advert 2016 at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=djLExtZD9yI

Celebrities

For example, mass public awareness and action about FoRB issues can be generated by having celebrity and other external endorsement. Such awareness and subsequent lobbying from the public of parliamentarians can dramatically speed up the process of legislation and policy change. Overseas governments under scrutiny may also have their attention drawn to the issues in a manner that drives them to change their action or legislation. This area of human rights has not, however, yet been directly supported by celebrity endorsement. The involvement of Amal Clooney in the prosecution of ISIL's crimes against Yazidis has done much to raise the profile of their plight.

Business Leaders

Working with leaders in the private sector is also important for addressing FoRB violations. The Religious Freedom and Business Foundation has taken the initiative in this area and incentivises businesses to champion interfaith understanding and peace by recognising business leaders who have done so in their Global Business and Interfaith Peace Awards.[230] British companies including BG Group, Shell and Ophir, GlaxoSmithKline, Rolls Royce and Unilever all operate in Myanmar. Paul Polman, Unilever's CEO, is a major advocate for Corporate Social Responsibility and personally signed an open letter to the UN in February 2017 raising concerns about Myanmar's military offensives in Rakhine State.[231] Making such public statements and practical gestures such as withdrawing investment or other support indicates that failure to address human rights, and in this case, FoRB, will have a detrimental effect on a country's balance sheet. Governments can also help raise business leaders' awareness of FoRB violations in the countries in which they conduct business by facilitating meetings and workshops.

Examples of Good Practice Implementation

The following examples have been selected to demonstrate the diversity of effective programming that can be supported to advance FoRB:

1. **Christian Solidarity Worldwide/Communion of Churches in Indonesia – Promoting Tolerance and Religious Freedom - Burma and Indonesia**

   This project was funded by the FCO and involved an inter-faith group of Burmese and Indonesian participants. It included a programme of roundtable discussions on FoRB issues, as well as training and field visits to different religious places of worship. The project offered the group the chance to share challenges and experiences, advocacy ideas and strategies. Local knowledge was vital for creating a programme relevant to the context and participants. To avoid negative reaction from authorities and extremists, the project was kept low profile and participants were selected carefully, with advice from local partners. Feedback from the programme was incredibly positive. Participants from both Burma and Indonesia valued the opportunity to learn about freedom of religion issues in the two countries, compare experiences, identify common challenges, and develop ideas for addressing the challenges.

   http://archive-3.mizzima.com/opinion/features/item/18578-interfaith-visit-to-indonesia/18578-interfaith-visit-to-indonesia

2. **National Lobby Delegation - Pakistan**

   A 14-member National Lobby Delegation (NLD) consisting of representatives of religious minorities

230 See: Religious Freedom and Business Foundation, 'Awards 2018', accessed 5 Oct. at: https://religiousfreedomandbusiness.org/awards2018

231 #WeAreAllRohingyaNow, 'Unilever, Myanmar and the Rohingya Genocide', 20 Feb. 2017, https://allrohingyanow.org/act/unilever-myanmar-rohingya-genocide/

of national repute working as writers, rights activists, lawyers, civil society members and journalists was funded by the Department for International Development and UK Embassy in Pakistan to lobby for safeguarding the rights of religious minorities in the country. The NLD campaigned for passage of Hindu Marriage Bill 2017 from Parliament of Pakistan and was successful in persuading the Punjab government to pass a resolution under article 144 of the constitution relegating power to federal for enacting uniform Hindu marriage Act. This act means that for the first time in Pakistan's 70-year history, marriages between Hindus can be registered with the government. Prior to this legislation, Hindu couples risked being convicted of extramarital sex under the Zina ordinances of Pakistan, an offense which carries the potential punishment of stoning to death. Due to a lack of proof of marriage, Hindu women were also more likely to be forced into another marriage, as they could not easily prove that they were already married, and Hindu couples faced difficulty in basic activities such as opening bank accounts, applying for visas, getting national identity cards and shares of property. The establishment of the NLD is a good example of supporting groups to advocate for their own rights.

3. Danmission – Forum for Intercultural Dialogue (FID) - Egypt

The FID brings people of different age groups and different socio-economic, religious, and cultural backgrounds together to discuss their differences and the changing political climate and to learn to work together to advocate for their rights. This is a positive example of project that can advance FoRB without necessarily having an overt FoRB component and thus maybe more palatable in the specific context.

- http://www.partner-religion-development.org/resources/world-map/map-detail/map/show/Location/forum-for-intercultural-dialogue-fid/

4. Strengthening Democracy through Youth Leadership - Pakistan

This project was funded by the German Government and involved the creation of six clusters of 150 youths in three provinces of Pakistan to give university students with leadership potential much needed platforms to engage in open discussions about democratisation and human rights violations, particularly in relation to religious minorities in Pakistan. The youth leaders in the University of Sindh, Mirpur Khas Campus, successfully lobbied for official celebration of Holi, a Hindu festival. This promotion of tolerance is a remarkable achievement given that Mashal Khan, a student of Abdul Wali Khan University in Mardan, was killed by an angry mob of university students who accused him of blasphemy. The programme has also successfully signed memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with five partner universities in Lahore, Faisalabad, Mirpurkhas, Hyderabad and Peshawar.[232]

5. Valuetalks: Reducing Support for Violent Extremism in All its Forms – Pakistan

Another initiative – Valuetalks: Reducing Support for Violent Extremism in All its Forms - was funded (non-publically) by USAID and was implemented by the local youth-based NGOs. These interactive sessions engaged 2000 youth through a series of 100 workshops around Lyari, the most extremist-influenced area of Karachi. The project increased the opportunities for the youth to learn and develop values and beliefs that undermine the attraction of violent extremist groups. The activity reinforced values of tolerance and peace through social action projects, group activities and collective activities. Given that the area of Lyari is considered the most conflict-ridden in Pakistan, successful youth engagement was considered to be as significant achievement.[233]

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232 Information provided Morris Johns at APPG IFoRB Stakeholder Meeting, 6 July 2017
233 Information provided Maryam Kanwer at APPG IFoRB Stakeholder Meeting, 6 July 2017

6. Saakshi Project – South Asia

This project is a network of local communities promoting peace building in South Asia - http://www.saakshiproject.com/. They have organised consultations of journalists, lawyers, youth activists and other groups to promote best practice in preventing violence and anti-FoRB messaging. They also launched a useful website with publicly available resources for anyone interested in these issues, thereby helping to train others who wish to advance FoRB.

7. Dúchas Oral History Archive - Bridging Oral History Project - Northern Ireland

The Bridging Oral History project - http://www.duchasarchive.com/ - which was managed by a steering group of people from both sides of the conflict in Belfast, consisted of interviews, regular meetings and discussions between religious communities on both sides with the aim of building a cross-community oral history archive detailing the conflict. The project provided a platform for intra, and inter, community relationship building that helped participants to produce a shared understanding of the contested past. This shared understanding helped to reduce tensions and to support participants in moving on from the conflict.[234] Participants of such projects can be supported to hold further meetings and discussions and develop a network of hubs of cross-community oral history building. An Ulster University study which assessed the programme found that:

"Working together with the contested past as the centre-point of the process, can nurture cross-community alliances, create new networks and deliver a community artefact that symbolises the experiences of a community in the throes of conflict. Most importantly, working together in a shared present shifts the notion of a shared future from a distant concept to one of mutually beneficial positive interdependence."

8. AMAR International Charitable Foundation - Combating Religious Discrimination - Iraq

In 2014, International NGO AMAR - https://www.amarfoundation.org/ - began a project funded by the European Union to tackle religious discrimination in three provinces in southern Iraq – Maysan, Basra and Thi-Qar.[235] The project follows a 'training the trainer' model where by civil society organisations, religious leaders, school teachers, activists and government officials receive training from experts and experienced trainers on mediation peace-building, FoRB literacy, human rights and tolerance, as well capacity-building training such as public speaking and administration. These actors then give sermons and organise field trips, sports tournaments, plays and many other activities which promote these positive messages. This model is both effective and sustainable because the message comes from credible actors in the community and because, once the initial training is done, the trainees can deliver the message throughout their careers. The programme is due to end in 2017 when a full evaluation will be carried out but initial feedback from community members and participants has been highly positive and there are many accounts of religious disputes being resolved through the involvement of the trainees. This Training the Trainer model is both effective and sustainable because the message comes from credible actors in the community and because, once the initial training is done, the trainees can deliver the message throughout their careers.

9. Open Doors – Bangui Declaration Central African Republic

In 2013, in Central African Republic, prominent church leaders representing all known

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234   Moloney, M., *Reaching Out From The Archive: The Role of Community Oral History Archives in Conflict Transformation in Northern Ireland*, (University of Ulster: 2014), http://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?did=1&uin=uk.bl.ethos.604655

235   CNN, 'Combating Religious Discrimination in Iraq', 2 Dec. 2016, http://edition.cnn.com/2016/12/01/opinions/iyw-religious-tolerance-iraq-amar-foundation/index.html

denominations presented the Bangui declaration,[236] which they had drafted at a three-day conference in Bangui hosted by the Christian NGO Open Doors. This declaration points out clearly that the church leaders condemn violence originating from any source, stresses that Muslims and Christians belong to the same family as descendants of Abraham and encourages all Central Africans to engage in a process of reconciliation. The declaration sets a useful benchmark of appropriate conduct that religious leaders have the authority to set due to their positions of moral leadership and which could not simply be set by State authorities or legislation – a good reason why governments should engage with religious leaders. These leaders carried out a peace building tour throughout the country and, in collaboration with the Islamic community, have launched various initiatives to promote the country's process of reconciliation including a campaign that involves calls on national radio to restrain violence, and public meetings for both Muslims and Christians to convey the need for forgiveness.

In addition the religious leaders launched a National Interfaith Peace Platform and are setting up more than 20 community peace committees in Bangui and outside the capital in order to promote dialogue in the villages. The peace committees document incidents of violence to identify reasons for and the trends of micro-level conflict and one of the committees also plans to help rebuild a local mosque. A regional NGO also displayed posters on various street corners picturing the Archbishop Dieudonné Nzapalainga talking with one of the imams with a clear message underneath: "Christians and Muslims, the same blood, the same life, the same country". The religious leaders plan further projects including the establishment of interconfessional schools, neutral health centres, as well as holding joint Sunday celebrations for Christians and Muslims, which have already been initiated in Bangui, and equipping each village with a radio so they can hear reconciliation messages they intend to broadcast. This example provides a comprehensive picture of how religious leaders working with other sectors of society can promote messages of tolerance.

10. European Union - Civil Society Empowerment Programme

The Civil Society Empowerment Programme is an initiative under the umbrella of the EU Internet Forum, which was launched in 2015 by Dimitris Avramopoulos, Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, to tackle terrorist content online. This programme offers capacity building, training, partnering with Internet and social media companies, and general support for organisations and campaigns aiming to reach those at risk of radicalisation and recruitment by organisations classified as extremist by the EU. It specifically focuses on the development of counter campaigns and narratives. Training takes place in all member states and is open to any organisation working to counter hate speech. The majority of the 50 organisations who have participated said they now better understand how to run effective counter campaigns.

https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/civil-society-empowerment-programme_en

11. Exit USA - USA

Exit USA is a platform established by individuals previously involved with neo-Nazi groups who advocate racial and religious hatred and offers advice and guidance on leaving these groups to radicalised individuals through an online website and a phone call service. Exit USA does not aim to actively identify and challenge members of such groups to change, which can sometimes be counterproductive, but rather offers an effective non-judgmental approach that supports people who have doubts.

www.exitusa.org

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236 Open Doors, 'Bangui Declaration II: 04 February 2014', accessed 5 Oct. 2017 at: http://www.opendoorsuk.org/campaign/documents/Bangui_II.pdf

12. Panzagar - Burma

"Panzagar" or "Flower Speech" is a multi-platform campaign designed by activities to combat Burmese nationalist and anti-Muslim propaganda, which has spread quickly over the Internet in the wake of recent violence. The campaign uses a combination of animation, collaboration with celebrities and artists, social media, written pamphlets and music videos to spread its message.

https://www.facebook.com/supportflowerspeech/

13. UN Alliance of Civilisations - Plural+

PLURAL + is a youth-produced video festival and online platform organised by the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations - https://www.unaoc.org/ - a UN body established in 2005 to reduce conflict, celebrate diversity and promote social cohesion. Plural+ supports young people globally to create videos that explore these issues. Since 2009, over 1,500 entries from 110 countries have been created. Winning videos can be found online and have been screened in dozens of festivals, cinemas and broadcast on television networks throughout the world. This is a positive example of how youth and media can be engaged and supported to create pro FoRB messaging.

https://pluralplus.unaoc.org/

14. UN Alliance of Civilisations - #Spreadnohate

This initiative is a combination of large-scale conferences and social media campaigning that engages media outlets in a dialogue about how to prevent both deliberate and unintentional negative portrayals of immigrants and refugees that are often found in the media. The conferences have taken place in different countries with the support of different media and governmental organisations and the social media campaign has reached millions of people. This is a good example of how different types of activities can be merged to support one another to amplify their impact.

https://www.unaoc.org/what-we-do/projects/hate-speech/

Monument to the Murdered Jews of Europe (Berlin) in commemoration of the Holocaust which drove nations to write the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This picture highlights the 'bumpy' path to realising human rights.

Credit: Ildigo (8 Sept. 2017), pixabay

CHAPTER 6
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UK POLICY AND ACTION

This chapter builds on previous chapters by bringing forward a number of key recommendations for the UK Government to enhance the international protection of the right to Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB). Members of Parliament and Peers have an important role in drawing these recommendations to the attention of Government. These will include Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions in both Houses; instigating and speaking in debates on FoRB-related matters in both Chambers; meeting with and writing letters to Ministers and initiating Early Day Motions. This APPG will be happy to provide advice, briefings and speeches on all these areas.

The 2013 *Article 18: An Orphaned Right* report noted a number of key prerequisites for constructing and implementing policy on Freedom of Religion or Belief. They remain important in progressing FoRB from rhetoric to reality. They are:

• Clear commitment across Government based on the recognition of the importance of FoRB as a fundamental right for all.

• International action that is reflective of, and grounded in, a full respect for FoRB in UK domestic policy.

- International action that is grounded in UDHR Article 18, and therefore focused on fundamental rights for all, irrespective of the nature of their religion or belief.

- Broad-based consultation across the spectrum of religion or belief.

Recommendations:

1) Identify FoRB as a Political Priority of the Foreign Secretary, and establish a FoRB programming funding stream within the Foreign and Commonwealth Office

- Following the declaration of advancing FoRB as a political priority by the FCO Minister of State for the UN and Commonwealth, we call upon the Foreign Secretary to identify FoRB as a political priority.

- We also call on the FCO to establish a specific funding stream for advancing FoRB. Given the new close-working relationship between the FCO and DfID, who now share Ministers, we ask for some funding to be transferred from DfID for this purpose.

2) Identify FoRB as a strategic priority in the Department for International Development's work

- We welcome the UK Aid Connect funding for a consortia to analyse how best to support tolerance and FoRB.[237]

- We ask DfID to ensure that this analysis informs a sustained programming and funding stream advancing FoRB and that this is recognised as part of the UK helping to realise the Sustainable Development Goals and its own international development strategic objectives. This funding stream should not replace efforts to ensure that displaced vulnerable belief communities are able to return home as humanitarian support is greatly needed alongside community peacebuilding and mediation efforts.

3) Resource the International Investigative Team into ISIL's Crimes and ensure that the evidence collated is used to bring ISIL Perpetrators to justice in line with international law

- We urge the UK Government to allocate specific DfID/FCO funding to ensure that the independent investigative team into ISIL's crimes in Iraq is adequately resourced given the scale of the task that they face.

- We also urge the Gov't to ensure, whether by UN Security Council Resolution or otherwise, that the evidence gathered forms the basis of prosecutions of ISIL perpetrators.

- We further urge the UK to work with the Iraqi authorities to ensure that the trials of ISL perpetrators are in line with international human rights standards.

4) Support parliamentarians and institutional partners globally to advance FoRB

- We request the UK Government to support the capacity building of parliamentarians who are seeking to advance FoRB. Parliamentarians may be in a better position than civil society to speak out on behalf of those who are persecuted. Positive action taken by parliamentarians can also help shape political and public debate and create an atmosphere where religious and belief communities are able to co-exist peacefully.

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237 GOV. UK, 'UK Aid Connect', 6 July 2017, https://www.gov.uk/international-development-funding/uk-aid-connect#contact

- We also call upon the Government to partner with international institutional partners such as the OSCE, Council of Europe, the Commonwealth and United Nations to advance FoRB. In particular, we call upon the UK to uphold its 2017 pledge to the UN Human Rights Council that it will "stand up for FoRB" and raise FoRB issues within the UNHRC and work with other countries to address them.[238] As the host of the Commonwealth Summit in 2018, we ask the UK to encourage Commonwealth Governments to put FoRB on the agenda for the Summit.

5) Ensure that aid is channelled to organisations and programmes that support and demonstrate a clear understanding of FoRB

- We urge the UK Government to track and audit its current funding and investment streams in relevant departments, including DfID, to ensure that funding is not being channelled, directly or indirectly, to Governments, organisations or individuals that do not support and demonstrate a clear understanding and strong respect of FoRB.

- Where aid is granted or contracts awarded overseas, recipient organisations should satisfy previously-established criteria demonstrating their clear understanding and strong respect of FoRB prior to approval through compulsory vetting and monitoring processes. (See Ch.5)

6) Increase religious and FoRB 'literacy' among Embassy staff and civil servants

- We call upon the UK Government to enhance religious and FoRB literacy among Embassy staff and all country-specific civil servants, including Country Desk Officers, across relevant Government Departments. Prior to work overseas, all relevant staff should undergo religious and FoRB literacy training to provide officials with the necessary skillset including the tools, principles, and practice to use them.[239] Maximising usage of current toolkits, frameworks and religious literacy training will facilitate more effective solutions to FoRB violations.[240]

- Knowledge and experience of the network of organisations working on FoRB across the world should be used so that Government officials have access to expertise and are confident and prepared to prevent and respond to FoRB violations. (See Ch.5)

- Local consultation with affected groups will increase understanding and facilitate solutions for FoRB violations. Government facilitation of a safe space or persecutors and persecuted to create a shared vision for the future will enhance reconciliation (See CH.5)

7) Undertake a baseline evaluation of the extent, quality and impact of FoRB in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in order to mainstream FoRB throughout work streams

- We urge the FCO to stock-take the strengths and weaknesses of existing projects and programme approaches that work with groups who are discriminated against or persecuted for their beliefs.

- This should include investment in developing standardised indicators of the efficacy of FoRB programming as well as the technical capacity to monitor and evaluate FoRB programmes at

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238 Foreign and Commonwealth Office, *UN Human Rights Council: United Kingdom 2017-19 Candidate*, accessed 5 Oct. at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/510637/FCO905_UK_UNHRC_re-election_brochure-A5L_web3-2.pdf

239 The Center on Religion & The Professions, 'What is Religious Literacy', accessed 5 Oct. 2017 at : http://religionandprofessions.org/religious-literacy-toolkits/what-is-religious-literacy/

240 See e.g.: FCO, *Freedom of Religion or Belief Toolkit*, (2016), https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/561516/Freedom_of_Religion_or_Belief_Toolkit_-_2016.pdf ;OHCHR, *Rabat Plan of Action*, (5 October 2012), http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/adviser/pdf/Rabat_draft_outcome.pdf ; UN, *Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes: A Tool for Prevention*, (2014), http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/adviser/pdf/framework%20of%20analysis%20for%20atrocity%20crimes_en.pdf

fixed intervals so as to determine progress. Systematically monitoring and evaluating FoRB programming, including learning from the practical difficulties with advancing FoRB in-country in consultation with UK Government officials, is necessary for improving future interventions and ensuring FoRB programming is effective.

8) Develop and share understanding of key FoRB issues, in conflict situations and facilitate peace-building

- We call for the UK Government to facilitate local consultations with those directly affected by intolerance and violence on the basis of beliefs to understand better the real causes, concerns and flashpoints. This understanding will help overseas posts' work in local contexts by understanding the context-specific drivers of intolerance and ensure that work on conflict issues is more effective.

- Building on this, we also call for the UK Government to facilitate a safe space for both persecutors and the persecuted to come together to create a shared future vision in reconciliation sessions. These sessions should be led by community members and figures of influence who are trusted in the communities. Supporting such work over a long period of time is crucial to its success. (See Ch.5)

9) Revise the FCO Magna Carta Human Rights and Democracy Fund to support longer-term civil society-led projects and make available smaller grants to fund small projects advancing FoRB

- We call upon the FCO to revise the Magna Carta Human Rights and Democracy Fund to support projects that advance FoRB over longer timeframes than current funding allows so that the trust that is required for engaging with vulnerable groups can be built-up. This should not, however, prohibit annual calls for proposals and funding to be awarded so as to allow projects to address urgent needs that emerge over the year and respond to the ever-changing dynamics regarding discrimination and persecution on the basis of belief.

- We also ask that non-Governmental organisations and individuals have the facility to bid and help determine content for Magna Carta Fund projects. This will ensure that the projects address the needs on the ground as understood by those with specialist local expertise.

- We further ask that smaller grants can be made available for smaller projects and with a streamlined application process, giving the opportunity for smaller local organisations to apply for funding in communities to carry out the important peacebuilding work between religious groups that is required to realise FoRB. (See Ch.5)

10) Recognise religious persecution within the UNHCR vulnerability criteria

- We ask the UK Government to call on UNHCR to add being a 'member of a religious or belief group' and/or being a 'victim of religious persecution' to its vulnerability criteria. The *Refugee Convention* (1951) recognises that persecution on the basis of religion is a specific ground upon which an individual may be determined as a refugee.[241] The current UNHCR vulnerability criteria assessment recognises vulnerability on the basis of sex or gender but not on the basis of religion or belief, another aspect of an individual's identity.[242]

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241 UN General Assembly, *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 28 July 1951, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 189, p. 137
242 UNHCR, *Vulnerability Screening Tool*, (2016), http://www.unhcr.org/uk/protection/detention/57fe30b14/unhcr-idc-vulnerability-screening-tool-identifying-addressing-vulnerability.html

11) Establish a cross-Governmental programme to support pro-FoRB messaging and narratives on and offline.

- We urge the Government to establish a cross-departmental programme that creates space across a range of media and educational platforms for pro-FoRB messaging and narratives which de-legitimises 'dangerous speech' condoning violence against those with different beliefs.[243] For a narrative change within any country– a wide range of platforms on and off-line need to be utilised. They can include messaging in school assemblies and lessons, community clubs, social media, online video sites, magazine articles, television and cinema adverts. The creative content of the narrative change, while supported by Government, must be publicly produced by non-Governmental bodies so as to ensure the legitimacy of the messaging. Such messaging across simultaneous platforms above will support PVE measures by helping to build respect and understanding between people, and in turn cohesive communities. (See Chs 4 & 5)

12) Integrate the FCO's recognition of FoRB's role within PVE measures across UK Government and then share this best practice internationally

- We ask that the Extremism Analysis Unit carries out research to add to the current evidence base to analyse the role of religion as a driver of extremism and evidence the role that promoting tolerance on the basis of religion or belief plays in building societies resilient to extremism.

- In addition, we ask the FCO Minister of State for the UN and Commonwealth, in conjunction with organisations working on FoRB and PVE, to encourage cross-departmental meetings to discuss how the advancement of FoRB may be integrated into PVE work. This should include meetings between the relevant FCO teams and the International Counter Terrorism Unit. We urge such teams to include that religion is a potential factor in radicalisation and therefore, advancing FoRB is a potential means of building resilience against radicalisation.

- We further ask for consultative meetings between Government departments (including the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Home Office) to discuss the contribution advancing FoRB can make to their work.

- We call for the results of this best practice to be shared within the Global Counterterrorism Forum CVE Working Group as well as in its partnership with the UN, and including the UN Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee, the Commonwealth, EU and other bilateral and multilateral partners. (See Ch.4)

13) Work with local civil society, including faith and belief-based organisations, to implement conflict reduction programming between religious or belief communities

- We urge the UK Government to engage with local civil society groups, including faith and belief-based organisations and religious leaders to improve the administration, monitoring and evaluation of FoRB projects. Such groups are able to build trust with vulnerable communities by interacting in a culturally-sensitive and relevant manner. This work is particularly urgent in the Middle East, and especially Iraq and Syria, where the building of cohesive and equal multi-faith communities that respect each other regardless of beliefs and are represented in the local and national government, is critical for ensuring long-term stability in the region.

- We further encourage relevant Government departments, including the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department for International Development, to commission research into who may be the best partner to engage with vulnerable belief communities to ensure a multi-

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243 See Dangerous Speech Project, last accessed 5 Oct. 2017 at: https://dangerousspeech.org/

dimensional approach to identifying key issues and potential solutions for FoRB violations. Such research will provide helpful indicators and best-practice for identifying potential partners who do not support and demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of FoRB and thereby avoid the indirect support of harmful practices and/or conflict. (See Ch.5)

14) Convene an expert group to scope initiating an international FoRB Convention

- We continue to urge the FCO to convene an expert group to scope the issues involved in initiating a process to consider a convention on Freedom of Religion or Belief at the international level. (Recommendation 10; 'Article 18: An Orphaned Right' (2013))

All Party Parliamentary
Group for International
Freedom of Religion or Belief

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