



IPPFoRB

International Panel of Parliamentarians
for Freedom of Religion or Belief

STRATEGIC PLAN

2016-2019

The challenge

1. 75% of the global population live in countries restricting the free and peaceful practice of religion. Violations are perpetrated by either state or non-state actors, and sometimes both in conjunction with each other, against individuals and entire faith communities for not following the ‘state’ or ‘official’ religious belief or simply adhering to/following the ‘wrong’ belief. Abusive governments and extremist groups increasingly prevent individuals from practicing their faith through violence or repression.
2. This prevalence is more than just a human rights problem - it affects national and international security as well as wider humanitarian concerns. Situations of religious repression breed instability and foster extremism, generate refugee flows and mass migrations, while threatening other fundamental rights including freedom of expression, association and assembly.
3. The perpetrators of severe violations of religious freedom and religious persecution are increasingly networked. Authoritarian governments often share “best practices” in repression and protect each other in international bodies like the United Nations. Extremist groups are developing transnational linkages, be it groups pledging allegiance to ISIS or Burmese Buddhist monks sharing their tactics with Buddhist extremists in Sri Lanka and Thailand.

The response

4. As these challenges go beyond the capabilities of any one government or organization, a new international effort is being developed to meet the growing enormity of the task. Parliamentarians from around the world have created a new network to leverage their collective political capital to advocate against religious persecution and to advance freedom of religion or belief for all.

5. The International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief (IPPFoRB) was launched in November 2014 at the Nobel Peace Center in Oslo, Norway, where 30 parliamentarians from around the world signed an unprecedented joint statement committing themselves to advance religious freedom for all. This statement, the *Charter for Freedom of Religion or Belief*, committed parliamentarians to promote religious freedom or belief for all persons through their work and respective institutions and to enhance global cooperation.
6. The IPPFoRB is an international network of parliamentarians and legislators committed to combatting religious persecution and advancing freedom of religion or belief, as defined by Article 18 of the UN Universal Declaration for Human Rights. All participating parliamentarians agree to the Charter's principles to advance religious freedom for all, including the right to believe or not believe, change faith, and share faith with others

Vision and mission

7. The IPPFoRB is a politically and religiously diverse transnational network of parliamentarians committed to promoting FoRB.
8. IPPFoRB has an overarching vision - a world in which everyone enjoys their inalienable right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief as guaranteed by Article 18 of the UDHR. To this end the Oslo Charter, the IPPFoRB's founding document, commits the IPPFoRB to actively work to:
 - Promote freedom of religion or belief for all persons through their work and respective institutions;
 - Enhance global cooperation by endeavoring to work across geographical, political, and religious lines; and
 - Undertake efforts to jointly promote freedom of religion or belief, share information, and mobilize effective responses.
9. The Oslo Charter serves as strategic reference point to shape and guide the work of parliamentarians participating in the IPPFoRB and commits them to action.

Values

1. The 'DNA' of the IPPFoRB is freedom of religion or belief for all. For this reason, the IPPFoRB is committed to regional, political, and religious diversity. The IPPFoRB is a relational and results-focused network committed to transparency and inclusivity.

Theory of change

2. Parliamentarians must be included in efforts to identify ways to address the challenges at hand. They play a unique role in the legislative process and in holding the executive to account. They also have an important role to play in shaping political and public debate and in creating the space in which civil society can function.
3. IPPFoRB seeks to resource and equip parliamentarians to be change makers for the good in their respective countries and to support one another in this endeavour across geographic, political and religious boundaries.
4. Positive change comes about at least in part because of informed and enlightened parliamentarians creating and enacting appropriating legislation and or modifying existing legislation. This in turn can help create an atmosphere where religious communities are able to co-exist peacefully and the government respects, protects, fulfills and promotes human rights, including the right to freedom of religion or belief for all.

Working methodology

5. There is no formal membership, but the IPPFoRB includes parliamentarians from around the world committed to combatting persecution on the grounds of faith or belief and advancing freedom of religion or belief for all, as defined by UDHR Article 18. IPPFoRB's great added value is its ability to act as a catalyst and convener for collective action by concerned parliamentarians in defence of Article 18.

Leadership

6. The IPPFoRB is led by an informal steering committee of parliamentarians and a volunteer secretariat of advisors. Members of both groups participate in their individual capacity, not representing their parliament, government, or organization. There is no official IPPFoRB office.

Steering Committee

- David Anderson – Member of the House of Commons, Canada
- Elizabeth Berridge – Member of the House of Lords, United Kingdom
- Leonardo Quintao – Member of the Chamber of Deputies, Brazil
- Abid Raja – Member of Parliament, Norway

Volunteer Secretariat

- Ed Brown – Norway
- Tristan McLaughlin – Canada

- Dwayne Leslie – United States
- Charles Reed – United Kingdom
- Uziel Santana – Brazil
- Knox Thames – United States

Past work activities

7. The IPPFoRB's work to date has aimed to:
 - Respond to cases where religious freedom is threatened. To date the IPPFoRB has written several letters to heads of state to raise concerns about religious freedom issues – Burma, Pakistan, North Korea, Indonesia, and Sudan.
 - Encourage the formation of national groupings of parliamentarians committed to combatting religious persecution and advancing freedom of religion or belief. To date the IPPFoRB has assisted the efforts of parliamentarians in Brazil, Norway and Pakistan.
 - Encourage the formation of regional groupings of parliamentarians committed to combatting religious persecution and advancing freedom of religion or belief. IPPFoRB Latin America was established in 2015
 - Support parliamentarians around the world who stand up for religious freedom often at significant personal risk to themselves. The IPPFoRB's website (www.ippforb.com) provides a secure space for parliamentarians to seek support and advice in the area of religious freedom.
 - Grow the network of parliamentarians. In September 2015 the IPPFoRB in partnership with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation hosted an international meeting on freedom of religion or belief involving 92 parliamentarians from 47 countries and from 8 religious traditions.

Future work streams

8. Over the next 3 years the IPPFoRB will commit to specific actions to help realise the vision of a world free of persecution on the grounds of faith or belief through 2 work streams: grow the IPPFoRB as a self-supporting transnational network of parliamentarians and build the capacity among parliamentarians to act as agents of change in support of FoRB at home and abroad.

9. The IPPFoRB will grow as a self-supporting transnational network of parliamentarians by:

- hosting an annual high level meeting of parliamentarians that showcases the work of the IPPFoRB while resourcing existing participants and recruiting new participants especially from non-OECD countries. By 2019 the number of non-OECD participation in the network to increase from 70 parliamentarians as of 2015 to 120. Particular attention will be given to recruiting parliamentarians from those countries where FoRB is under duress.
- supporting the formation of national and regional groupings of parliamentarians committed to combatting religious persecution and advancing freedom of religion or belief. By 2019 IPPFoRB will have established 10 new national groups of Parliamentarians committed to FoRB and 3 new regional networks.
- developing the IPPFoRB website as a communication hub to keep the network of parliamentarians aware of respective efforts and latest FoRB developments. By 2019 the IPPFoRB website will be redesigned to provide an online forum for parliamentarians to resource themselves and a blog space for parliamentarians to share reflections with a wider audience.
- fostering contacts, co-ordination, and the exchange of experience among parliaments and parliamentarians of all countries and especially of those countries where FoRB is under stress. To this end the IPPFoRB will organise up to 2 solidarity and fact finding missions per year involving 2-5 parliamentarians meeting with parliamentarians in countries where FoRB is under duress with a view to identifying ways to support host parliamentarians in their efforts to be agents of change.
- developing the IPPFoRB's governance structures to ensure transparency, accountability and ownership of activities. The IPPFoRB's Steering Group will reflect the political, regional, and religious diversity of the network and will consult with those attending the annual meetings on appropriate next steps.
- creating financial and non-financial strategic partnerships to help resource and support the IPPFoRB in its work.

10. The IPPFoRB will build the capacity among parliamentarians to act as agents of change in support of FoRB at home and abroad by:

- hosting workshops and training modules, both online via the website and in person at the annual meeting of IPPFoRB, to enhance the level of literacy on FoRB related issues.

- developing a tool kit for parliamentarians to evaluate the impact of existing and draft legislation on FoRB. As part of this effort the IPPFoRB will produce a ‘Rule of thumb FoRB Guidelines for new and existing laws’.
- building knowledge based links with academic and NGO networks that both deepens and broadens the expertise of parliamentarians to acts as effective FoRB advocates.
- developing educational and advocacy resources for parliamentarians to assist them to engage both with their own government and the media on FoRB related issues.
- creating a platform for parliamentarians to engage in shared advocacy on particular FoRB related issues agreed by the Steering Group. Over the next 3 years IPPFoRB will arrange up to 6 advocacy initiatives per year. By the end of the three years IPPFoRB will have developed a reputation as a responsive mechanism for informed and coordinated advocacy by parliamentarians in the field of international religious freedom.
- Providing research and casework personnel and expertise to assist parliamentarians who lack this capacity within their own parliament
- Resourcing and equipping parliamentarians to be FoRB advocates in multilateral forums
- Providing a mentoring system and leadership development programme for young and emerging parliamentarians interested in being FoRB advocates.

Funding

11. For the first time parliamentarians are coordinating across political, regional and religious boundaries to advance freedom of religion or belief for all. Yet these efforts are embryonic, needing additional resources to ensure they take root and become durable. Successfully answering this global challenge requires additional resources.
12. To date, funding organizations include the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the British Council, the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, providing in-kind donations include the International Religious Liberty Association, UK All Party Parliamentary Group on FoRB the Stefanus Alliance, USCIRF, the Church of England and St Mary’s University. Additional donor support will be needed, however, to grow and resource the network along the lines set out in this Strategic Plan (2016-19). To this end the IPPFoRB Steering Group and Secretariat will look to develop creative funding proposals.

Evaluation

13. The IPPFoRB is a results-focused network of Parliamentarians committed to coordinated advocacy in defense of freedom of religion or belief. To this end, the Secretariat is committed to evaluating on an annual basis progress in implementing this work plan and taking additional measures deemed necessary by the Steering Committee to realise its vision. A more far-reaching review will be undertaken after three years, the results of which will shape IPPFoRB's future strategic direction.

*London
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