



ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY
GROUP FOR INTERNATIONAL
FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR
BELIEF

Annual Report 2025

This is a report of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for or International Freedom of Religion or Belief. This is not an official publication of the House of Commons or the House of Lords. It has not been approved by either House or its committees. All-Party Parliamentary Groups are informal groups of Members of both Houses with a common interest in particular issues. The views expressed in this report are those of the group.

Table of Contents

CONTENTS

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	1
About	2
APPG FoRB Team	4
Stakeholders	6
Debates	8
Delegations	12
Current Work	18
Prisoner of Conscience	21
How We can Help	23
Acknowledgments	24

APPG FoRB Report 2025

About us

The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for International Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) is a cross-party group of more than 100 parliamentarians from both the House of Commons and the House of Lords. The APPG is dedicated to championing Freedom of Religion or Belief as a fundamental human right, as set out in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

The APPG FoRB's mission is to raise awareness and the profile of international Freedom of Religion or Belief among parliamentarians, the media, Government, and the wider public in the United Kingdom, and to increase the effectiveness and visibility of the UK's contribution to international institutions tasked with protecting this right.

Through parliamentary activity, briefings, events, delegations, and engagement with civil society, the APPG works to ensure that violations of FoRB are recognised, addressed, and acted upon within UK foreign policy and international engagement. Established in 2012, the APPG FoRB operates as an informal parliamentary group, as do all APPGs. It is not an official publication of the House of Commons or the House of Lords. Its work is supported by a diverse range of stakeholder organisations with expertise in human rights, religious freedom, humanitarian assistance, and community engagement. These stakeholders provide both substantive expertise and financial support, enabling the APPG to carry out its programme of work.

Freedom of Religion or Belief and Article 18

Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 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.”

Freedom of Religion or Belief protects the rights of individuals and communities to hold beliefs of their choice, to change those beliefs, or to hold no belief at all, without fear of discrimination, coercion, or violence. It encompasses the freedom to manifest belief publicly or privately, individually or collectively, and underpins a wide range of other human rights, including freedom of expression, association, and assembly.

The APPG FoRB’s work is grounded in this universal framework. It seeks to ensure that FoRB is understood not as a niche or sectarian issue, but as a foundational human right essential to peaceful, pluralistic, and democratic societies. The APPG engages on FoRB violations affecting people of all faiths and beliefs, including religious minorities, non-believers, converts, and those targeted on the basis of conscience or identity.

APPG FoRB Team

Our Officers

- Jim Shannon MP - Jim Shannon is the Democratic Unionist Party MP for [Strangford](#), and has been an MP continually since 6 May 2010.
- Ruth Jones MP - Ruth Jones is the Labour MP for [Newport West and Islwyn](#), and has been an MP continually since 4 April 2019.
- Lord Alton of Liverpool - Lord Alton of Liverpool's full title is The Lord Alton of Liverpool. His name is David Patrick Paul Alton, and he is a current member of the House of Lords.
- Lord Jackson of Peterborough - Lord Jackson of Peterborough's full title is The Lord Jackson of Peterborough. His name is Stewart James Jackson, and he is a current member of the House of Lords.

Julie Jones

Julie Jones is the Director of the APPG for International Freedom of Religion or Belief. Prior to joining the APPG, Julie served as a trustee and director on the Interfaith Network UK and acted as the interfaith representative for Wales within the devolved nations framework.

She was also Chair of the Interfaith Council of Wales (ICW) and an elected member of the ICW for the Welsh Government.

Julie has played a significant role in increasing awareness of different faiths and belief communities, promoting interfaith dialogue, and strengthening social cohesion across Wales. Her extensive experience in interfaith engagement, policy-facing work, and community leadership informs the strategic direction of the APPG FoRB and supports its engagement with parliamentarians, Government departments, and civil society partners.

The FoRB Foundation: Secretariat

The FoRB Foundation serves as the secretariat to the APPG for International Freedom of Religion or Belief and manages all donations to the Group. The FoRB Foundation is a registered charity (1205578) in the United Kingdom and is also registered as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organisation in the United States.

The work of the FoRB Foundation is structured around three core pillars:

- **Raising Awareness:** Drawing attention to key Freedom of Religion or Belief issues around the world and engaging relevant stakeholders, including parliamentarians, policymakers, and civil society actors.
- **Recovering Rights:** Providing consultation, training, and support to delegations and partners working to uphold FoRB rights and address violations.
- **Rebuilding Lives:** Supporting and assisting individuals and communities who have suffered as a result of FoRB violations, discrimination, and prejudice. Through its role as secretariat, the FoRB Foundation enables the APPG to function effectively, transparently, and in line with charitable and parliamentary requirements.

<https://theforbfoundation.org/>

<https://appgfreedomofreligionorbelief.org/>

Stakeholders

The APPG FoRB benefits from the expertise and support of a broad and diverse range of stakeholder organisations. These stakeholders represent different faith traditions, belief systems, academic institutions, and human rights organisations, and contribute specialist knowledge, regional insight, and practical experience.

- **Ahmadiyya Muslim Association** – Promotes peace, human rights, interfaith harmony, and service through education and integration, grounded in Islamic teachings; with a global presence and advocacy focus in regions where Ahmadi Muslims face persecution.
- **ADF International** are a global, faith-based legal advocacy organization that protects religious freedom, free speech, and the sanctity of life. Operating as the international arm of the US-based Alliance Defending Freedom, they actively litigate in courts worldwide and lobby major international institutions to defend Christian communities and fundamental human rights.
- **Aid to the Church in Need** – Supports persecuted and impoverished Christians worldwide through pastoral aid, religious education, humanitarian relief, and Church infrastructure.
- **Al-Khoei Foundation (London)** – Advances interfaith and intrafaith relations, religious education, community cohesion, women’s empowerment, and countering extremism, grounded in Shia Islamic values.
- **Bahá’í Community of the United Kingdom** – Promotes unity, equality, and spiritual development across diverse communities, grounded in the teachings of the Bahá’í Faith.
- **Buddhist Society** – Encourages the study and practice of Buddhist teachings and meditation through education, community activity, and public engagement in the UK.
- **Brigham Young University (BYU)** – Advances global religious freedom through academic research, legal reform, education, and international collaboration.
- **BPUR International** – Leads a global campaign to establish an *International Treaty to Ban the Political Abuse of Religion*, tackling religious discrimination and conflict worldwide.
- **Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW)** – Works across Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East to ensure that Freedom of Religion or Belief is upheld and protected for all.
- **Coalition for Jewish Values** – Promotes religious liberty, human rights, and

classical Jewish values in public policy, primarily within the United States.

- **Coptic Orthodox Church** – Advocates for human rights and religious freedom, with a particular focus on Egypt and the Middle East, while supporting community and ecumenical engagement in the UK and Europe.
- **The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church)** – Promotes religious tolerance, Freedom of Religion or Belief, and global humanitarian work, with active engagement in FoRB forums at the EU and UN.
- **Middle East Concern** – Defends religious freedom for Christians in the Middle East and North Africa through advocacy, legal aid, and humanitarian support.
- **Mosaic Middle East** – Supports vulnerable and persecuted minorities in the Middle East through humanitarian aid, sustainable development, and peacebuilding.
- **Open Doors UK** – Supports persecuted Christians through practical and spiritual assistance and advocates globally for greater Freedom of Religion or Belief.
- **Religious Freedom and Business Foundation** – Educates the global business community on the social and economic benefits of religious freedom and inclusion in the workplace.
- **Dewa Trust Foundation** – A UK-based charity empowering Afghan girls through education, with a focus on technology-based community schooling and long-term rights and independence for women and girls.

Debates 2025

Freedom of Expression (Religion or Belief System) - Nick Timothy MP (10/06/25)

On Tuesday 10 June 2025, MPs debated the Freedom of Expression (Religion or Belief System) Bill, focusing on concerns that laws were being used to restrict legitimate criticism or debate about religions and beliefs. Speakers emphasised protecting free speech, ensuring no faith is beyond scrutiny, and preventing misuse of public order laws. The motion passed, allowing the Bill's first reading and future consideration.

Link to debate:

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2025-06-10/debates/49A1BE3A-99FE-4F94-82-E7-8EB7841787F9/FreedomOfExpression\(ReligionOrBeliefSystem\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2025-06-10/debates/49A1BE3A-99FE-4F94-82-E7-8EB7841787F9/FreedomOfExpression(ReligionOrBeliefSystem))

Freedom of Religion or Belief: UK Foreign Policy - David Smith MP (17/07/25)

MPs debated Freedom of Religion or Belief in UK foreign policy, stressing the need to make it central to international human rights work. Speakers highlighted persecution of religious minorities worldwide, called for stronger engagement with civil society and faith-based partners, and urged clear strategies and adequate resources. The Government confirmed its commitment to embedding FoRB across foreign policy and continuing diplomatic efforts to protect religious freedom globally.

Link to debate:

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2025-07-17/debates/25071742000001/FreedomOfReligionOrBeliefUKForeignPolicy>

Supporting Freedom of Religion or Belief Abroad - David Smith MP (16/10/25)

MPs debated supporting freedom of religion or belief abroad, highlighting ongoing global restrictions and the need for effective UK action. Speakers welcomed the Government's new FoRB strategy, emphasised engagement with persecuted communities and civil society, and called for consistent diplomatic pressure. The Government confirmed its commitment to defending freedom of religion or belief and implementing strategies to protect religious rights.

Link to debate:

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2025-07-17/debates/25071742000001/FreedomOfReligionOrBeliefUKForeignPolicy>

You can view all the debates from our Peers on our [website](#).

Previous debates

Freedom of Religion or Belief: 40th Anniversary of UN Declaration - Fiona Bruce

MP (25/11/21)

The House of Commons marked the 40th anniversary of the UN Declaration on Freedom of Religion or Belief by highlighting the global rise in religious persecution and discrimination. Members referenced UK actions including implementation of the Bishop of Truro's recommendations, FoRB training for diplomats, and international advocacy through alliances and sanctions. The debate reaffirmed Parliament's commitment to defending Freedom of Religion or Belief as a core human right and to strengthening practical UK leadership on the issue.

Link to the debate:

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2021-11-25/debates/38AFBAC1-320A-4FD9-890A-69176A3BCE36/FreedomOfReligionOrBelief40ThAnniversaryOfUNDeclaration>

Freedom of Religion or Belief: International Conference - Fiona Bruce MP (26/04/22)

The House of Commons discussed the UK's preparations for hosting the International Ministerial Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief, noting the continued deterioration of FoRB conditions globally. Members highlighted the importance of inclusive participation by governments, civil society, faith groups and victims of persecution, and the need for the conference to deliver practical outcomes rather than symbolic commitments. The debate reaffirmed the UK's leadership role on FoRB and stressed the importance of sustained follow-up to ensure international commitments translate into real protection for affected communities.

Link to the debate:

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2022-04-26/debates/D516A2E5-1852-4078-9C2B-DA25740F25F2/FreedomOfReligionOrBelief>

Freedom of Religion or Belief: International Conference - Fiona Bruce MP (19/09/23)

The House considered the state of Freedom of Religion or Belief internationally, with Members raising concerns about increasing persecution and discrimination against religious minorities in multiple regions. Ministers reiterated that FoRB remains a long-standing UK human rights priority, highlighting diplomatic engagement, implementation of existing recommendations, and cooperation with international partners. The debate underscored cross-party agreement on the importance of sustained UK leadership and practical action to protect FoRB globally.

Link to the debate:

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2023-09-19/debates/C845845A-CAC0-4C2F-849F-BCB464FFAB3B/FreedomOfReligionAndBelief>

International Freedom of Religion or Belief Bill - Fiona Bruce MP (26/01/24)

The House of Commons held the Second Reading of the *International Freedom of*

Religion or Belief Bill, introduced to put the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for FoRB on

a **statutory footing** in order to cement the UK's long-term commitment to promoting and protecting Freedom of Religion or Belief internationally and to implement recommendation 6 of the Bishop of Truro review. Members from across parties expressed support for the Bill's aims—highlighting rising global persecution, the centrality of Article 18, and the importance of sustained UK leadership—while also noting potential issues such as ensuring flexibility and respect for other human rights.

The Bill was agreed to its Second Reading and committed to a Public Bill Committee for further scrutiny. Link to debate:

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2024-01-26/debates/7075D340-A666-4091-9F>

[EE-B6AA24494FA4/InternationalFreedomOfReligionOrBeliefBill](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2024-01-26/debates/7075D340-A666-4091-9F/EE-B6AA24494FA4/InternationalFreedomOfReligionOrBeliefBill)

Freedom of Religion and Belief in Nigeria - Jim Shannon MP (06/02/24)

MPs in Westminster Hall debated serious violations of Freedom of Religion or Belief in

Nigeria, focusing on violent attacks, killings, kidnappings and discrimination affecting Christians and other religious communities amid broader insecurity, extremism and inter-communal conflict. Speakers highlighted concerns over the Nigerian Government's response, impacts of Sharia law in some states, high casualty figures, and cases such as death sentences for blasphemy, while urging stronger UK diplomatic engagement and practical support for peace-building and protection of rights. The Government affirmed its commitment to press for constitutional protections, support peace and resilience programmes, and work with Nigerian authorities and partners to address violence and uphold religious freedom.

Link to debate:

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-02-06/debates/98F5C871-AA63-4DD6-A>

[B34-01D71B355C10/FreedomOfReligionAndBeliefInNigeria](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-02-06/debates/98F5C871-AA63-4DD6-A/B34-01D71B355C10/FreedomOfReligionAndBeliefInNigeria)

Nicaragua: Freedom of Religion - Fiona Bruce MP (30/04/24)

Westminster Hall considered serious violations of Freedom of Religion or Belief in Nicaragua, highlighting harassment, detention, and exile of religious leaders, restrictions on independent churches, and limits on public worship amid wider human rights abuses. Speakers raised concerns over the Nicaraguan Government's suppression of dissenting faith communities and called for stronger UK diplomatic action. The Government reiterated its commitment to press for respect for religious freedom, engage with international partners, and support measures to protect and uphold the rights of religious communities.

Link to debate:

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2024-04-30/debates/F2DC6D36-A440-4F08-88>

[0D-6EACD49AEC25/details](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2024-04-30/debates/F2DC6D36-A440-4F08-88/0D-6EACD49AEC25/details)

Pakistan: Freedom of Religion - Jim Shannon MP (28/11/24)

MPs debated Freedom of Religion in Pakistan, highlighting widespread persecution and discrimination against religious minorities including Christians, Hindus, Ahmadis and Shi'a Muslims, amid misuse of blasphemy laws, mob violence, forced

conversions and attacks on places of worship. Speakers expressed deep concern over Pakistan's failure to protect minorities and called for stronger UK diplomatic pressure and international engagement to uphold religious freedom and human rights. The Government acknowledged these issues and outlined ongoing diplomatic efforts to raise concerns with Pakistani authorities.

Link to debate:

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-11-28/debates/DBCE917C-5AE8-4D6B-A81-6700B71705C3/PakistanFreedomOfReligion>

2025

As part of our responsibilities to protect and advocate for the freedoms of religious minorities from all over the world, we go on regular delegations to the countries of these religious minorities to see firsthand their experience and bring back recommendations to our government of how we can protect them further.

Thailand/Malaysia - December 2025



In December 2025, the APPG for International Freedom of Religion or Belief undertook a delegation to Thailand and Malaysia to examine the situation of religious minority refugees, including Uyghur Muslims, Rohingya Muslims, Ahmadiyya Muslims, and Christians. The delegation met refugees in immigration detention centres and refugee camps, alongside faith leaders, government officials, and civil society actors, to hear firsthand about their challenges. While noting limited progress, such as Thailand's introduction of work rights for some long-staying refugees, the delegation found that the lack of legal recognition under the 1951 Refugee Convention remains a critical concern.

From this delegation, the main recommendation was for Thailand and Malaysia to strengthen legal protections for refugees, improve humanitarian conditions, and enhance dialogue with faith communities to ensure the rights and dignity of refugees fleeing religious persecution.

Egypt - November 2025



<https://appgfreedomofreligionorbelief.org/report/egypt-delegation-report-2025/>

In 2025 the APPG FoRB and Jim Shannon MP, Dr Rupa Huq MP, Julie Jones, and representatives of the Bahá'í community of UK and Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints went on a delegation to Egypt. We met Christian leaders and unrecognised religious minorities, including Bahá'ís and other belief communities, to hear about their concerns about legal recognition, discrimination, and the impact of Egypt's religious ID system on daily life and civic rights. From this delegation, the main recommendation was for Egypt to reform its legal and ID frameworks to recognise all religions and beliefs and ensure equal citizenship for all.

Previous Delegations

Nigeria - November 2023

<https://appgfreedomofreligionorbelief.org/report>

Violations of the right to Freedom of Religion or Belief have continued and intensified in Nigeria since the publication of the last APPG report in 2028. In the call for evidence, the situation in Nigeria showed no improvement between 2020 and the present. The delegation produced a report to show the International law being broken on Religious minorities, specifically on Christians and Ahmadiyya Muslims.

India - November 2024

[Dare to Overcome](#) (DTO) is a premier global event emphasizing diversity, equity, and inclusion in business, aligning with the UN Sustainable Development Goal 16 for peace, justice, and strong institutions. Supported by global leaders like former Brazilian President Michel Temer, former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, and former Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama, DTO fosters allyship through forums and awards. Ruth Jones and Baroness Verma were the key speakers at the Dare to Overcome event in December 2024.

Tunisia - July 2023

<https://appgfreedomofreligionorbelief.org/media/20231123-Tunisia-Report-Final.pdf>

On 3 July 2023 the APPG FoRB went on a delegation to Tunisia. We met religious minorities including Baha'is, Jews and Christians to hear about their concerns around lack of legal recognition, discrimination and increasing restrictions on civil society. From this delegation, the main recommendation was for stronger legal protections and greater engagement by the Tunisian authorities to uphold freedom of religion or belief.

Nepal - January 2023

<https://appgfreedomofreligionorbelief.org/report>

On 3–7 January 2023 the APPG FoRB and Tommy Sheppard MP, Julie Jones, David Burrowes, Professor Mark Hill KC, and Rachel Miner went on a delegation to Nepal. We met Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Humanist, indigenous belief communities and Tibetan Buddhists, to hear about their concerns about the misuse of anti-conversion laws, discrimination against minority faiths, caste-based persecution, and restrictions on religious expression. From this delegation, the main recommendation was for Nepal to amend Section 158 of the Criminal Code and ensure constitutional protections for freedom of religion or belief are applied equally in law and practice.

Pakistan - November 2023

<https://appgfreedomofreligionorbelief.org/media/Pakistan-Report-November-2023.pdf>

On 11–18 February 2023 the APPG FoRB and Jim Shannon MP, Fleur Anderson MP, Julie Jones and representatives from Ahmadiyya, Christian and human rights organisations went on a delegation to Pakistan. We met Christian, Hindu, Sikh and Ahmadi Muslim communities, as well as Government officials and civil society, to hear about their concerns about the misuse of blasphemy laws, persecution of Ahmadi Muslims, and the abduction and forced marriage of minority girls. From this delegation, the main recommendation was for Pakistan to reform and repeal discriminatory laws—particularly blasphemy and anti-Ahmadi legislation—and to strengthen legal protections for all religious minorities.

Current work

Parliamentary Work

As an All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG), we consistently raise the profile of Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) within Parliament. We work with MPs to highlight persecution, insecurity, and human rights abuses affecting individuals and communities worldwide. Through parliamentary scrutiny and debate, we ensure FoRB remains firmly on the political agenda.

Written Questions + Business Questions

We table **20 written questions per week**, directed on behalf of our stakeholders to relevant Government departments. These questions are used to maintain pressure, seek accountability and draw sustained attention to FoRB violations.



Student Council – The FoRB Foundation

In 2025, we launched the **FoRB Student Council of Ambassadors (FSCA)** to engage and equip the next generation of FoRB advocates. The Council brings together young adults aged 18–25 through youth-led organisations to develop leadership, advocacy, and policy engagement skills. Members benefit from structured training, networking opportunities, and direct collaboration with the APPG FoRB. The Council operates with youth-led governance, supported by the FoRB Foundation to ensure safeguarding, inclusion, and alignment with organisational objectives. As the initiative grows, it is designed to expand nationally and internationally, strengthening global FoRB advocacy. We will continue raising FoRB awareness among young people throughout 2026.



Events

We regularly host events in Parliament, providing opportunities for MPs and stakeholders to engage directly with those affected by FoRB violations. These events offer first-hand insights into conditions on the ground and help inform effective parliamentary action and policy discussion.

APPG FoRB strives to highlight FoRB issues happening around the world and in our own community. These events provide opportunities for MPs and stakeholders to work closely on and to take direct action FoRB-related issues. Here is a recap of some of the events FoRB was able to host and attend to bring further action to suffering religious communities.





Light the World – November 2025

Pre-Launch of the “Light the World” Campaign Jim Shannon MP and Brendan O’Hara MP joined Church and charity representatives at the pre-launch of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints’ “Light the World” campaign, an annual initiative encouraging acts of service throughout the Christmas season.

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/welcome/christmas/light-the-world?lang=eng>

Red Wednesday - ACN - Aid to the Church in Need 2025

Aid to the Church in Need commemorated its annual Red Wednesday campaign for persecuted Christians worldwide with an outstanding event held in the Jubilee Room of the annexe to Westminster Hall, UK Parliament

<https://www.cardiffcathedral.org.uk/event/aid-to-the-church-in-need-red-wednesday-mass/>

FoRB for All Event October 2025

The APPG for Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) joined with the LGBT+ FoRB Coalition, Humanists UK, and Sikh representatives to explore how faith, belief, and

identity can coexist in harmony. Speakers including Rev. Marian Edmonds-Allen, Simran Stuelpnagel, Andrew Copson, and Prit Paal Singh shared how collaboration across differences strengthens freedom for all. From protecting the vulnerable to celebrating shared human dignity, participants affirmed that defending one group's rights means defending everyone's. Together, we committed to continue building understanding, challenging stereotypes, and standing united for the universal right to freedom of belief and identity.

FoRB for Pakistan October 2025

On 20th October, the APPG FoRB held an event to discuss the situation of FoRB in Pakistan and the ongoing persecution of religious minorities, including the Christian and Ahmadiyya communities. Contributions on outlining key issues of FoRB violations in the country, and how we can best use policy to hold the Government accountable was discussed.

World Watch List – Open Doors

The World Watch List is compiled by Open Doors' analysts using real-world data from experts on the ground in 150 countries. Persecution in each country is recorded using a points system which tracks violence and pressure. This measures the number and severity of violent incidents against.

<https://www.opendoorsus.org/en-US/getinvolved/resources/wwl/2025-WWL-top-50-map>

Youth Forum meetings 2025

On 25 November 2025, we brought together over 40 students, young adults and FoRB advocates to celebrate the growing momentum behind youth-led action for religious freedom. The evening highlighted the belief that young people, with energy, fresh perspectives, and commitment to justice, are essential to sustaining long-term progress on freedom of religion or belief (FoRB). A key focus of the meeting was the public launch of the UK FoRB Student Council of Ambassadors (FSCA), the young adult-focused arm of the FoRB Foundation. The FSCA brings together individuals and youth-led organisations aged 18–25, offering training, networking, and a structured pathway for participation in both grassroots and parliamentary advocacy. The FSCA represents a vital step in giving young advocates a seat at the table, offering opportunities to engage with policy, design campaigns, and work in close collaboration with the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Freedom of Religion or Belief (APPG FoRB).

Future Events:

Faith Leaders' Roundtables:

Religious leaders, gather together to identify practical responses to FoRB issues across the globe. These discussions foster respectful, interfaith dialogue that helps strengthen community resilience and helps inform on policy matters.

Dare to Overcome

Dare to Overcome (DTO) is the premier global event for business leaders to share and celebrate best practices, virtues, and values in being allies of differing communities, faiths and cultures in workplaces and marketplaces, thereby building peace. The FoRB Foundation is working with Dr Brian Grim on an exciting project called the Common Growth Fund. The Common Growth Fund will be launched during the Dare to Overcome event.



Prisoners of Conscience

APPG FoRB launched the Prisoner of Conscience Scheme in 2025, enabling parliamentarians to adopt and advocate for individuals imprisoned solely for the peaceful exercise of their beliefs. **The scheme is delivered in collaboration with Alliance Defending Freedom International (ADF)**. Through this partnership, participating parliamentarians receive verified case information and legal safeguards, including written consent from the families of prisoners of conscience, ensuring that advocacy does not cause additional harm, retaliation, or legal repercussions. The programme also provides responsible advocacy mechanisms to raise awareness, pursue accountability, and apply diplomatic pressure, while minimising risks to both prisoners and their families.

A prisoner of conscience (PoC) is an individual who is detained, imprisoned, or otherwise deprived of liberty solely because of their religion or belief, ethnicity, political opinion, identity, or peaceful expression, and who has not used or advocated violence. Their detention results from the peaceful exercise of fundamental rights, including freedom of religion or belief, freedom of expression, association, and conscience. Articles 18 and 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) affirm that everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, as well as the right to freedom of opinion and expression. These rights include the freedom to hold opinions without interference and to manifest religion or belief in practice, worship, and observance. Despite these internationally recognised protections, governments around the world continue to imprison individuals solely on the basis of their identity or peaceful beliefs.

Aida Najaflou

Aida, an Iranian Christian convert, is detained in Evin Prison. She suffered a spinal fracture in a fall on 31 October but was returned to prison without proper medical care. Arrested in February 2025 for “propaganda” and “collusion” linked to her faith, she also faces charges over alleged social media posts supporting the “Women, Life, Freedom” protests and opposing Hassan Nasrallah.

Mahvash Sabet

Mahvash Sabet, a prisoner of conscience, has been repeatedly persecuted for her religious beliefs. She was sentenced to 20 years in prison in 2010, briefly reduced to 10 years, then reinstated, and released in 2017 after serving her sentence. She was re-arrested on 31 July 2022 after a raid on her home and reportedly severely mistreated. Following a brief trial, she was sentenced to 10 years in prison, upheld on appeal in 2023. Her health has seriously deteriorated in prison, with severe respiratory, lung, and cardiac conditions, and she has been repeatedly denied adequate medical care.

Nguyen Bac Truyen

Nguyen Bac Truyen, a Vietnamese human rights defender and Hoa Hao Buddhist, was imprisoned in 2017 after being abducted by police for his rights work. In 2018, he was sentenced to 11 years for alleged anti-government activities and suffered serious mistreatment, including leading a hunger strike in 2019. He was unexpectedly released on 8 September 2023, shortly before President Biden's visit to Vietnam, and relocated to Germany. Now in exile, he continues his human rights advocacy while rebuilding his life with his wife.

Cao Thi Cuc

Cao Thi Cuc, leader of the independent TABBVT Buddhist Monastery, was arrested on 12 May 2022 and charged with "abusing democratic freedoms" for criticizing authorities and the state-backed Buddhist Church.

Her monastery had been targeted since November 2021, with police raids and accusations of fraud and religious abuse. Cuc was sentenced to three years on 21 July 2022, her appeal was rejected, and she remains detained, highlighting Vietnam's crackdown on independent religious groups.

Maira Shahbaz

Maira, a 14-year-old Christian girl from Faisalabad, Pakistan, was abducted in April 2020, forced into marriage, and pressured to convert to Islam. Despite evidence of her age, Pakistani courts ruled in favor of her abductor, Mohamad Nakash, though she later escaped. Her case has drawn international attention, with UK MPs and human rights groups advocating for her asylum, highlighting the risks faced by religious minority girls in Pakistan.

Pastor Huang Yizi

Pastor Huang Yizi, a church leader in Wenzhou, Zhejiang, was arrested on 26 June 2025 alongside four other church members. Two were released on bail, while Huang and another remained detained.

On 30 July, he was formally charged with "illegal business operations" for distributing sermon recordings, a charge often used against church leaders, raising concerns over the lack of transparency in his arrest.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Myanmar's former leader and Nobel laureate, spent her 80th birthday imprisoned under harsh conditions, serving a 27-year sentence after the 2021 military coup. She has been held incommunicado for over four years, amid a crackdown detaining over 22,000 political prisoners.

Her detention highlights the repression in Myanmar and calls on the international community to support democracy, sanction the junta, provide aid, and hold perpetrators accountable.

How We Can Help You

We support APPG FoRB members by assisting with drafting written questions, speeches, and organising debates on FoRB-related issues. We also provide guidance on using parliamentary mechanisms to maximise impact.

For more information see

<https://appgfreedomofreligionorbelief.org/>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to acknowledge the people and organisations who contributed to this report.

We thank you for your continued support in our efforts to promote and advocate for international freedom of religion or belief



All Party Parliamentary
Group
For International Freedom
of
Religion or Belief

www.appgfreedomofreligionorbelief.org