

All Party Parliamentary  
Group for International  
Freedom of Religion or Belief



# ARTICLE 18. FROM RHETORIC TO REALITY





# ARTICLE 18: FROM RHETORIC TO REALITY

October 2017

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This is a report of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for International Freedom of Religion or Belief (hereafter APPG). It is not been produced by a Select Committee or any other Committee appointed by the House.

This report was published in October 2017.

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The conclusions made in this report, if not directly referenced as stemming from a specific individual or organisation, are those solely of the APPG Officers. The APPG takes full responsibility for its conclusions.

Design and setting by First Presence.

Cover Photo: A Chechen Muslim man prays for peace during the Battle of Grozny. Credit: Mikhail Evstafiev (1 Jan. 1995)

We are very grateful to the International Center for Law and Religion Studies, J. Reuben Clark Law School, Brigham Young University for their generous financial donation which has enabled us to produce and launch this report.

The work of the APPG is made possible by financial support from the APPG's Stakeholders, whose names can be found on the APPG's website at the following web link: <https://appgfreedomofreligionorbelief.org/about/stakeholders/>

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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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> With the support of the new UN Special Rapporteur for International FoRB, Dr Ahmed Shaheed, initiatives such as the Faith for Rights 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

<sup>1</sup> 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/>

<sup>2</sup> For more information, see IPPFoRB’s website at: <http://ippforb.com>

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.<sup>3</sup>

## 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.<sup>4</sup> Recent studies have also shown that FoRB can positively impact economic development and prosperity.<sup>5</sup> In this way, FoRB helps achieve SDGs - particularly SDG16 and SDG8 - and, in turn, the Department for International Development's Strategic Objectives.<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup> 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.
- Develop a better understanding of key FoRB issues for those affected by conflict to help design

3 UN Press, *Meetings Coverage: Security Council 8052<sup>nd</sup> 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)

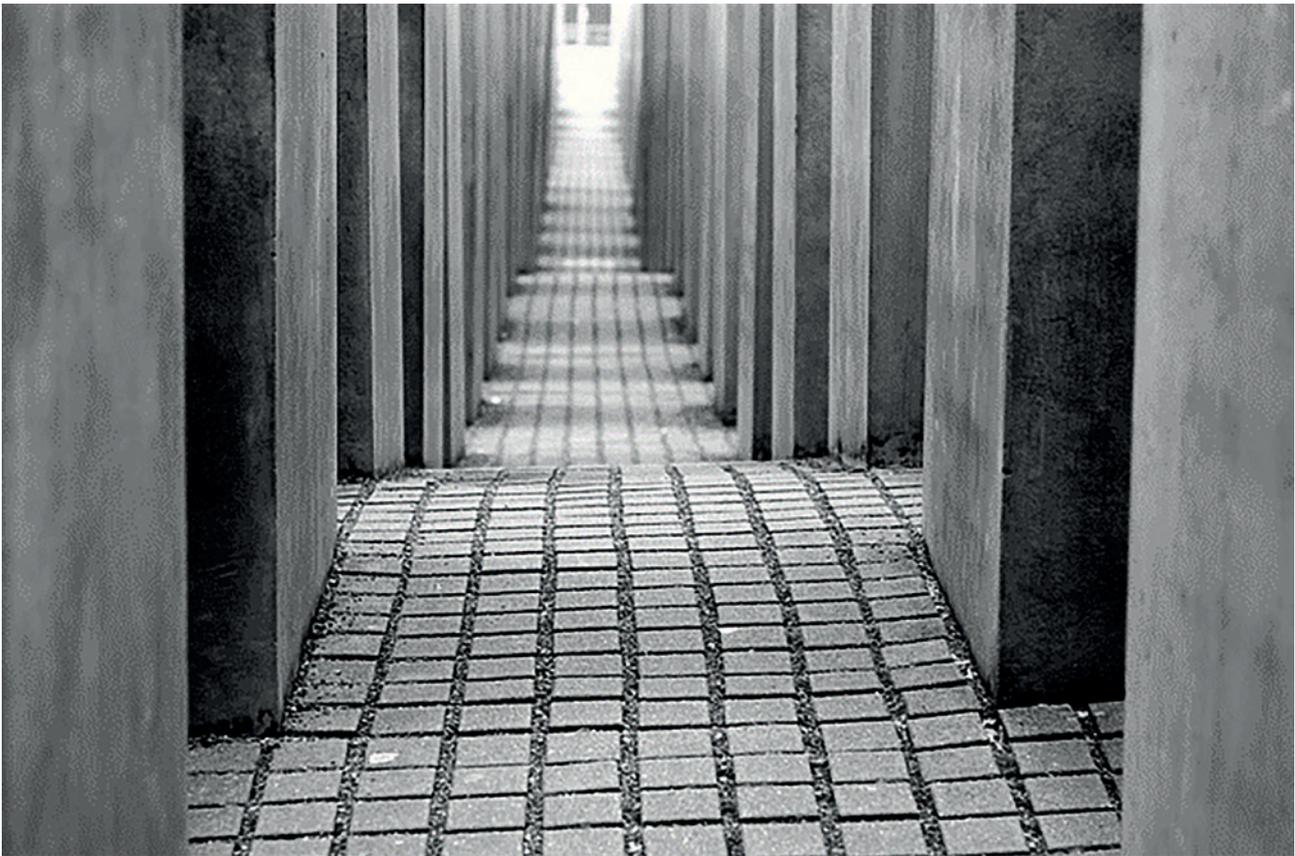
effective solutions for local needs and facilitate peacebuilding.

- 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 peacebuilding**
- 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**

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

## 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.<sup>8</sup>
- 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 ISIL 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.
- 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.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> GOV. UK, 'UK Aid Connect', 6 July 2017, <https://www.gov.uk/international-development-funding/uk-aid-connect#contact>

<sup>9</sup> 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](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/510637/FCO905_UK_UNHRC_re-election_brochure-A5L_web3-2.pdf)

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.<sup>10</sup> Maximising usage of current toolkits, frameworks and religious literacy training will facilitate more effective solutions to FoRB violations.<sup>11</sup>
- 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 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**

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<sup>10</sup> 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/>

<sup>11</sup> 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](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](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](http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/adviser/pdf/framework%20of%20analysis%20for%20atrocity%20crimes_en.pdf)

- 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.<sup>12</sup> 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.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> UN General Assembly, *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 28 July 1951, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 189, p. 137

<sup>13</sup> UNHCR, *Vulnerability Screening Tool*, (2016), <http://www.unhcr.org/uk/protection/detention/57fe30b14/unhcr-idx-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 delegitimises ‘dangerous speech’ condoning violence against those with different beliefs.<sup>14</sup> 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-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

<sup>14</sup> See Dangerous Speech Project, last accessed 5 Oct. 2017 at: <https://dangerousspeech.org/>

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))



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