

# “Faith for Rights” commUNity of practices: Fifth annual meeting 2024

*Concept note (as of 25 October 2024)*

## **Background:**

The fourth annual meeting for the “Faith for Rights” framework users, organized by OHCHR in November 2023, established a [commUNity of practices](#). This network aims at mutual reinforcement among faith-



based actors who contribute to the implementation of the “[Faith for Rights](#)” framework and toolkit in situations where human rights and religion or belief have to be bridged and where “faith” can stand up for human rights. Peer-to-peer learning workshops on the interaction between religion(s), belief(s) and their corresponding human rights roles are organized, on an annual basis, with academics, civil society organizations, diplomats, international human rights mechanisms, students and UN entities. Using the Rabat Plan of Action and “Faith for Rights” approach, the network of peer-to-peer learning facilitators share experiences based on their respective programs and activities addressing the intersection between religions or beliefs and human rights. Each commUNity of practices annual meeting will have a specific thematic focus, determined in advance by the participants, based on priorities which are collectively determined through online preparatory meetings.

**Thematic focus area:** The fifth annual meeting from 4 to 8 November 2024 will focus on the [CEDAW Knowledge Hub](#) and on the “post Gaza war” role of faith-based and civil society actors in countering human rights violations and in contributing to the necessary reconciliation.

**Date/location:** Online and offline workshops in Palais Wilson (4-6 November and 8 November 2024) as well as at the Geneva Academy Rothschild building (on 7 November 2024).

## **Objectives of the peer-to-peer learning workshops:**

1. Promote greater clarity on Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) in its “**FoRB Plus**” sense, i.e. the interaction between religion(s), belief(s) and human rights at large, especially to promote gender equality and to address instrumentalization of religions, beliefs or their followers for electoral purposes or political gain (commitments V and X on “Faith for Rights”).
2. Refine a **peer-to-peer leaning methodology** across various academic institutions using the “Faith for Rights” framework in different contexts to enhance skills of the participants in optimizing the outcomes of relevant UN Treaty Bodies and Special Rapporteurs as embodied in the [#Faith4Rights toolkit](#) as well as facilitate ongoing dialogue and exchange of information with faith-based organizations (see Annex for faith-related excerpts from the [Pact for the Future](#)).
3. Ensure optimal **implementation of the UN human rights treaties** through contributing to wider ratification of these treaties, withdrawal of reservations thereon in the name of religions or beliefs as well as enhancing the capacity of NHRIs and NMRFs in dealing with religious factors and actors through dedicated capacity-building activities.
4. Share good practices and lessons learned among the **network of facilitators and commUNity of practices** for online/offline/hybrid peer-to-peer learning on “Faith for Rights” and invite several young, promising facilitators, including [OHCHR Minority Fellows](#) who will be trained in Geneva.
5. Inject the **emerging learning and action points** into relevant human rights mechanisms to enhance the outcomes of Treaty Bodies, Special Rapporteurs and the Universal Periodic Review in areas where grey zones of tension with religious interpretations often impede the implementation of human rights norms and standards.
6. **Facilitate networking** among diplomats, UN independent experts, religious leaders, faith-based actors, regional mechanisms and civil society members on new areas of action to be identified through a **roundtable brainstorming** (held under Chatham House rule) on how to address instrumentalization of religions, beliefs or their followers for electoral purposes or political gain.

### **Related soft law standards:**

**Rabat Plan of Action** on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence ([A/HRC/22/17/Add.4](#), appendix):

“36. **Political and religious leaders** should refrain from using messages of intolerance or expressions which may incite violence, hostility or discrimination; but they also have a crucial role to play in speaking out firmly and promptly against intolerance, discriminatory stereotyping and instances of hate speech. It should be made clear that violence can never be tolerated as a response to incitement to hatred. [...]

41. Steps taken by the **Human Rights Council**, in particular the adoption without a vote of resolution 16/18 on combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence, and violence against persons based on religion or belief, which constitutes a promising platform for effective, integrated and inclusive action by the international community. This resolution requires implementation and constant follow-up at the national level by States, including through the Rabat Plan of Action which contributes to its fulfilment. [...]

52. Relevant **human rights treaty bodies and special procedures mandate holders** should enhance their synergies and cooperation, including through joint action, as appropriate, to denounce instances of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence.”

**Beirut Declaration** and its 18 Commitments on “Faith for Rights” ([A/HRC/40/58](#), annex II):

“V. We pledge to **ensure non-discrimination and gender equality** in implementing this declaration on ‘Faith for Rights’. We specifically commit to revisit, each within our respective areas of competence, those religious understandings and interpretations that appear to perpetuate gender inequality and harmful stereotypes or even condone gender-based violence. We pledge to ensure justice and equal worth of everyone as well as to affirm the right of all women, girls and boys not to be subjected to any form of discrimination and violence, including harmful practices such as female genital mutilation, child and/or forced marriages and crimes committed in the name of so-called honour.”

➤ “A *comprehensive, holistic and effective approach to capacity-building should aim to engage influential leaders, such as traditional and religious leaders [...]*” ([Joint general recommendation No. 31 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/general comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on harmful practices, para. 70](#)) [...]

X. We pledge **not to give credence to exclusionary interpretations claiming religious grounds** in a manner that would instrumentalize religions, beliefs or their followers to incite hatred and violence, for example for electoral purposes or political gains.”

**#Faith4Rights toolkit**, notably its module 5 on gender equality, module 6 on minority rights and module 10 on instrumentalization (<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Press/faith4rights-toolkit.pdf>)

**Report of Secretary-General** on combating intolerance, negative stereotyping, stigmatization, discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons, based on religion or belief ([A/79/284](#), paras. 64-65):

“In this context, religious leaders and faith-based actors around the world have been making joint efforts to promote interreligious dialogue and multi-faith action. To build societies in which expressions of religious hatred have become socially unacceptable requires inclusive faith literacy. The ‘Faith for Rights’ framework has been engaging with Governments, religious leaders and a wide range of civil society actors in peer-exchanges about concrete efforts on the ground. For example, several religious leaders who are part of the Faith for Rights ‘commUNity of practices’ have advocated for people of all faiths to have unimpeded access to their places of worship, and they have also condemned incitement to violence, discrimination or hostility in the name of religion. Exchanges of lessons learned and promising practices of interfaith harmony and mutual respect should continue to be promoted, including through the ‘Faith for Rights’ framework.”

**Draft agenda of the Fifth Annual Meeting 2024:**

	<b>Monday, 4 November, Palais Wilson Room 1-016</b>	<b>Tuesday, 5 November, Palais Wilson Room 1-016</b>	<b>Wednesday, 6 November, AM: Palais Wilson PM: Ecolint</b>	<b>Thursday, 7 November, AM: Rue Rothschild PM: Rue Rothschild</b>	<b>Friday, 8 November, Palais Wilson Room 1-016</b>
<b>AM</b>	10:00 <b>Welcome</b>  <b>Peer-to-peer exchange</b> of the “Faith for Rights” commUNity of practices and launching the translations of the <a href="#">#Faith4Rights toolkit</a> in Chinese, French and Spanish	10:00 <b>Focus on gender equality</b> with CEDAW Committee, Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth, ACT Alliance, and presentation of Geneva Academy LLM paper on harnessing Hindu and Buddhist sources as dictates of the public conscience under IHL	10:00 <b>Optimizing through Faith4Rights</b> the outcomes of treaty bodies and special procedures (including on freedom of religion or belief, minority issues, cultural rights, peaceful assembly and association, freedom of expression)	10:00 <b>‘Geneva100’ meeting of religious leaders and faith-based actors</b> , including from the <a href="#">Appel Spirituel de Genève</a> (on its 25 <sup>th</sup> anniversary), ICRC (75 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of <a href="#">Geneva Conventions</a> ), <a href="#">Plateforme interreligieuse de Genève</a> , <a href="#">Multi-Faith Advisory Council</a> , UNHCR and “ <a href="#">Faith for Rights</a> ” networks (at Geneva Academy, 20 Rue Rothschild)	10:00 <b>Follow-up on OHCHR/ Equal Rights Trust Practical Guide</b> on Protecting Minority Rights  11:30 <b>Discussion on terminology and scope</b> of “Faith for Rights”
<b>PM</b>	14:00 <b>Update on the inter-university “Faith for Rights” platform</b> (including American University of Paris, Anglia Ruskin University, University of Hertfordshire, Ottawa University, British University Cairo, Universities of Coimbra, Lyon, Oxford, Bridging Spiritual Cultures, International Association for the Defense of Religious Liberty etc)	14:00 <b>Hybrid session</b> with the United States Institute of Peace, University for Peace and Religions for Peace, in the context of the Gandhi-King Global Campus course on “ <a href="#">Religions, Beliefs, and Human Rights: A Faith for Rights Approach</a> ”  17:00 <b>“Faith for Rights” online course at University of Oxford</b> on <a href="#">empowering faith community leaders to protect human rights</a> (Rabbi Alex Goldberg)	14:00 <b>Exchanging of good practices</b> and lessons learned with partners and discussion of the “Faith for Rights” commUNity of practices draft bylaws (Palais Wilson 1-016)  18:00 <b>Event at Ecolint Centre des Arts (Rue Marie-Thérèse-Maurette 7)</b> , please register <a href="#">here</a> with the mayor of Geneva and the Special Rapporteur on minority issues, and a guided tour through minority arts contest and performance by UN Music Club on the 18 commitments on “Faith for Rights” and the <a href="#">1924 Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child</a>	14:00 <b>Roundtable brainstorming on countering instrumentalization of religions, beliefs or their followers</b> to incite hatred and violence, in line with <a href="#">commitment X</a> on “Faith for Rights” and Human Rights Council resolutions <a href="#">16/18</a> , <a href="#">53/1</a> and <a href="#">55/16</a> (discussion at 20 Rue Rothschild under <a href="#">Chatham House Rule</a> with diplomats, UN Treaty Body members, Special Rapporteurs, faith-based actors, social media companies and civil society members)  15:30 <b>Webinar with parliamentarians</b> hybrid session with Inter-Parliamentary Union and IPPFORB, register <a href="#">here</a> for Zoom	14:00 <b>Minority fellows</b> hybrid session in Strasbourg and Geneva  16:00 <b>Strategizing</b> for concrete next steps of the “Faith for Rights” commUNity of practices and adopt bylaws  19:00 <b>Interfaith discussion on ‘Faith for Rights’</b> (Temple de Jussy, <a href="#">315 route de Jussy</a> ) in French with Appel Spirituel de Genève, Conseil de la Paroisse de Jussy, music and reception

				17:00 Composition on “Faith for Rights” (Luis De La Calle Foundation)	
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**Conference venues:**

**For in-person participation at Palais Wilson, please register** by 3 November 2024 at <https://indico.un.org/event/1014629/>

On 4-6 November 2024 at Palais Wilson, 52 rue des Pâquis, CH-1201 Geneva, Switzerland

On 6 November in the evening at Ecolint Centre des Arts, Rue Marie-Thérèse-Maurette 7, 1208 Geneva (please register [here](#))

On 7 November 2024 at Geneva Academy, 20 rue Rothschild (opposite Palais Wilson), 1201 Geneva

On 8 November 2024 at Palais Wilson, 52 rue des Pâquis, CH-1201 Geneva, Switzerland

On 8 November in the evening at Temple de Jussy, 315 route de Jussy, 1254 Jussy, Switzerland

**For online participation** during the meetings at Palais Wilson via MS Teams:

## Microsoft Teams meeting

**Join on your computer, mobile app or room device**

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 354 373 983 008

Passcode: R7KuAC

[Download Teams](#) | [Join on the web](#)

**Join with a video conferencing device**

[unitevc@m.webex.com](mailto:unitevc@m.webex.com)

Video Conference ID: 125 071 175 8

[Alternate VTC instructions](#)

**For online participation at the webinar with parliamentarians** on Thursday, 7 November 2024 at 15:30 CET, co-organized with Inter-Parliamentary Union and IPPFORB, please register [here](#) for the Zoom link

**Contact persons:**

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## Annex:

### Faith-related excerpts from the [Pact for the Future](#) (adopted on 22 September 2024)

1. We, the Heads of State and Government, representing the peoples of the world, have gathered at United Nations Headquarters to protect the needs and interests of present and future generations through the actions in this Pact for the Future. [...]
30. [...] We decide to [...] (c) Promote and support intercultural and interreligious dialogue to strengthen social cohesion and contribute to sustainable development. [...]
34. (b) Provide equal access to justice, protect civic space and uphold human rights for all, including through promoting the culture of peace, inclusion, tolerance and peaceful coexistence, eradicating religious discrimination, countering racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia in all their manifestations and by addressing the challenges to the survival, livelihood and dignity of all people; [...]
39. (c) Combat racism and eliminate racial discrimination, xenophobia and religious intolerance and all other forms of intolerance and discrimination from our societies and promote interreligious and intercultural dialogue; [...]
44. [...] We reaffirm that terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism cannot and should not be associated with any religion, civilization or ethnic group. [...]
61. We decide to: (a) Step up our fight against all forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and all forms of intolerance that impact young people and hinder their ability to fulfil their potential, and counter religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence; [...]
83. We recognize the importance of the United Nations engagement with national parliaments and relevant stakeholders, while preserving the intergovernmental character of the Organization. The challenges we face require cooperation not only across borders but also across the whole of society. Our efforts must involve Governments as well as parliaments, the United Nations system and other international institutions, local authorities, Indigenous Peoples, civil society, business and the private sector, faith-based organizations, the scientific and academic communities, and all people to ensure an effective response to our common challenges. We decide to:
- (a) Ensure that relevant stakeholders can meaningfully participate, in their respective roles and responsibilities, in accordance with relevant rules of procedure, in relevant United Nations processes and that Member States have access to the views and expertise of those partners;
- (b) Leverage existing channels and strengthen communication between United Nations intergovernmental bodies and civil society, allowing for ongoing dialogue and exchange of information;
- (c) Encourage the contribution of the private sector to addressing global challenges and strengthen its accountability towards the implementation of United Nations frameworks;
- (d) Deepen United Nations engagement with national parliaments in United Nations intergovernmental bodies and processes, in accordance with national legislation, including through building on the efforts of the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union to engage parliamentarians to maintain support for the implementation of relevant United Nations agreements and resolutions; [...]