

# FAITH RIGHTS commUNity of practices

The participants of the OHCHR peer-to-peer learning week workshops, in its fourth edition held in Geneva, both in-person and virtually, from 6 to 10 November 2023 decided to establish a network, entitled “Faith for Rights commUNity of practices”. During its fifth edition from 4 to 8 November 2024, they also elaborated its rules of procedure as outlined below.

## **Overarching goal:**

To ensure continuity and mutual reinforcement among faith-based actors who contribute to the implementation of the United Nations “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.

## **Objectives:**

- To strengthen faith-based actors’ ability to promote and protect all human rights for all;
- To enhance joint inter-faith action, beyond mere interreligious dialogue;
- To manage and share the knowledge generated by an expanded group of experts and practitioners on all matters related to the Faith4Rights framework and toolkit;
- To regularly inject such knowledge into the work of relevant regional and international human rights mechanisms, including UN Special Procedures, Treaty Bodies and the Universal Periodic Review, given their engagement with States;
- To learn and collect experiences from practitioners implementing the “Faith for Rights” framework and toolkit (“Faith4Rights super-users”) and make them accessible to other users of the “Faith for Rights” framework;
- To generate and disseminate, both to States and faith-based actors, through relevant mandated reports by both the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council, promising practices of civil society organizations, academia and other actors in the area of faith and human rights, and thus, generate and manage knowledge from practitioners on bridging religion and human rights;
- To share such knowledge in direct engagement with States, including at the Istanbul process annual events as well as States reviews under the treaty body monitoring system and the UPR, in order to enhance the optimal implementation of all international human rights norms and standards related to or affected by religion or beliefs;
- To engage directly with UN treaty bodies and Special Procedures mandate holders to draw on the jurisprudence, recommendations and authority of these bodies in support of activities under the “Faith for Rights” framework.

## **Main activities:**

- Support the implementation of activities under the “Faith for Rights” framework and/or using the #Faith4Rights framework in any context globally, where interpretation of religious norms might cause human rights violations or at least hamper or create tension with universally established human rights norms and standards;
- Organize annual meetings for exchange of experiences through peer-to-peer learning, analysing challenges and benefiting from opportunities in the implementation of activities under the “Faith for Rights” framework in both closed and public settings;

- Analyse trends and setbacks in the protection and promotion of human rights on the basis of or in the name of religion or belief, and compile good examples, to be made available within the “Faith for Rights” commUNITY of practices and beyond with a view to achieving a sustainable cumulative effect of the generated knowledge, lessons and skills;
- Foster regular exchange among the members, with the aim to provide advice to each other in the implementation of activities under the “Faith for Rights” framework in diverse contexts at the international, regional, national and local levels.

### Membership:

The commUNITY of practices has been convened by OHCHR and is managed by civil society organisations themselves, faith-based actors, academia and other practitioners of the “Faith for Rights” framework.

To participate in the commUNITY of practices, faith-based organizations and individual practitioners can submit a request to OHCHR to join and agree to contribute to the community by:

- Respecting and abiding by the “Faith for Rights” framework, notably the five fundamental principles outlined in the Beirut Declaration (UN Doc. [A/HRC/40/58](#), annex I, para. 10) and the 18 commitments (UN Doc. [A/HRC/40/58](#), annex II).
- Accepting to serve as Coordinator of the commUNITY of practices for a term of one year (on a rotational basis);
- Organising or at least participating in a peer-to-peer learning session at least once per year;
- Making a symbolic financial donation or an in-kind contribution to the strategic objectives of the commUNITY of practices;
- Participating in the Istanbul Process meeting or submitting information on the implementation of Human Rights Council resolution 16/18;
- Contributing to annual reports and joint initiatives of the commUNITY of practices.

The commUNITY of practices shall open its membership, upon recommendation by its members or direct requests by interested stakeholders, with a view to represent the largest possible diversity of religions and beliefs and to integrate diverse actors and activists who implement the “Faith for Rights” framework in various contexts. The commUNITY of practices shall exercise due diligence, with the help of OHCHR, to ensure that new members of the community have not been associated with human rights violations. New members will have to pledge to always observe the principles of integrity and respect as well as the purposes and objectives of the UN Charter.

Members should observe the Beirut Declaration, notably by “Building on the present declaration, we also intend to practice what we preach through establishing a multi-level coalition, open for all independent religious actors and faith-based organisations who genuinely demonstrate acceptance of and commitment to the present Faith for Rights declaration by implementing projects on the ground in areas that contribute to achieving its purpose. We will also be charting a roadmap for concrete actions in specific areas, to be reviewed regularly by our global coalition of Faith for Rights.

10. To achieve the above goal, we pledge as believers (whether theistic, non-theistic, atheistic or other) to fully adhere to **five fundamental principles**:

- a) Transcending traditional inter-faith dialogues into **concrete action-oriented Faith for Rights (F4R) projects at the local level**. While dialogue is important, it is not an end in itself. Good intentions are of limited value without corresponding action. Change on the ground is the goal and concerted action is its logical means.
  - *“Faith is grounded in the heart when it is demonstrated by deeds.”* (Hadith)
- b) **Avoiding theological and doctrinal divides** in order to act on areas of shared inter-faith and intra-faith vision as defined in the present Faith for Rights declaration. This declaration is not conceived to be a tool for dialogue among religions but rather a joint platform for common action in defence of human dignity for all. While we respect freedom of expression and entertain no illusion as to the continuation of a level of controversy at different levels of religious discourse, we are resolved to challenge the manipulation of

religions in both politics and conflicts. We intend to be a balancing united voice of solidarity, reason, compassion, moderation, enlightenment and corresponding collective action at the grassroots level.

- c) **Introspectiveness** is a virtue we cherish. We will all speak up and act first and foremost on our own weaknesses and challenges within our respective communities. We will address more global issues collectively and consistently, after internal and inclusive deliberation that preserves our most precious strength, i.e. integrity.
- d) **Speaking with one voice**, particularly against any advocacy of hatred that amounts to inciting violence, discrimination or any other violation of the equal dignity that all human beings enjoy regardless of their religion, belief, gender, political or other opinion, national or social origin, or any other status. Denouncing incitement to hatred, injustices, discrimination on religious grounds or any form of religious intolerance is not enough. We have a duty to redress hate speech by remedial compassion and solidarity that heals hearts and societies alike. Our words of redress should transcend religious or belief boundaries. Such boundaries should thus no longer remain a free land for manipulators, xenophobes, populists and violent extremists.
- e) We are resolved to **act in a fully independent manner**, abiding only by our conscience, while seeking partnerships with religious and secular authorities, relevant governmental bodies and non-State actors wherever Faith for Rights coalitions are freely established in conformity with the present declaration.”<sup>1</sup>

#### **Facilitation:**

The commUNITY of practices shall be facilitated by a **tetrarchy**, chaired by a Coordinator and also composed of a Programs focal point, an Education focal point and a Faith focal point. The tetrarchy should be gender-balanced and is elected for a term of one year (renewable) by the members of the commUNITY of practices participating in the respective annual meeting.

The role of the **commUNITY of practices Coordinator** shall be defined by the community at large, based on self-nominations with the understanding that this responsibility will be equally shared on a rotational basis among all members. The commUNITY of practices Coordinator serves for a term of one year and is responsible to:

- Coordinate with OHCHR representatives, including the UN Faith for Rights staff;
- Help to plan (and seek funding for) the annual peer-to-peer learning session;
- Collate and present an annual report on Faith4Rights learning and applications, including a roadmap for concrete actions in specific areas;
- Facilitate networking and information sharing among the community stakeholders, including through a biannual newsletter;
- Present the activities of the commUNITY of practices at relevant conferences, workshops and meetings, without speaking on behalf of the whole community;
- Prepare and help the next Coordinator transition into the role.

The **commUNITY of practices Programs focal point** also serves for a term of one year and is responsible to:

- Suggest to the commUNITY of practices, in collaboration with the Coordinator, related faith-based projects at the local, national, regional and global levels, in line with the Beirut Declaration and its 18 commitments on “Faith for Rights”;
- Facilitate the implementation of agreed projects in collaboration with the commUNITY of practices Coordinator and OHCHR representatives, including the UN Faith for Rights staff;
- Provide inputs to the Coordinator’s annual report on Faith4Rights learning and applications;
- Provide inputs to the biannual newsletter, including good practices and lessons learned;
- Prepare and help the next Programs focal point transition into the role.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/40/58>, Annex I, paras. 9-10.

The **commUNity of practices Education focal point** also serves for a term of one year and is responsible to:

- Suggest to the commUNity of practices, in collaboration with the Coordinator, sustained partnerships with specialised academic institutions so as to promote interdisciplinary research and education on specific questions related to faith and rights and to benefit from their outcomes that could feed into the programs, tools and teaching materials of the commUNity of practices, in line with the Beirut Declaration and its 18 commitments on “Faith for Rights”;
- Facilitate the implementation of educational initiatives in collaboration with the commUNity of practices Coordinator and OHCHR representatives, including the UN Faith for Rights staff;
- Provide inputs to the Coordinator’s annual report on Faith4Rights learning and applications;
- Provide inputs to the biannual newsletter, including good practices and lessons learned;
- Prepare and help the next Education focal point transition into the role.

The **commUNity of practices Faith focal point** also serves for a term of one year and is responsible to:

- Suggest to the commUNity of practices, in collaboration with the Coordinator, networking activities among religious leaders and faith-based actors to support each other at the implementation level of the Beirut Declaration and its 18 commitments on “Faith for Rights”, including through exchange of practices, mutual capacity enhancement and regular activities of skills updating for religious and spiritual preachers;
- Facilitate the implementation of faith-based networking activities in collaboration with the commUNity of practices Coordinator and OHCHR representatives, including the UN Faith for Rights staff;
- Provide inputs to the Coordinator’s annual report on faith-based networking activities;
- Provide inputs to the biannual newsletter, including good practices and lessons learned;
- Prepare and help the next Faith focal point transition into the role.

At the conclusion of the fifth annual meeting on 8 November 2024, the commUNity of practices **appointed the following members** to serve until the sixth annual meeting in the following functions:

- Coordinator: Ibrahim Salama ([ibrahimshalama1959@gmail.com](mailto:ibrahimshalama1959@gmail.com))
- Programs focal point: Rachel Miner ([rachel@bellwetherngo.org](mailto:rachel@bellwetherngo.org))
- Education focal point: Tanya Elder ([telder@aup.edu](mailto:telder@aup.edu))
- Faith focal point: Rabbi Alexander Goldberg ([alex.goldberg@surrey.ac.uk](mailto:alex.goldberg@surrey.ac.uk))