

## **Prague Declaration on Freedom of Religion or Belief 2025**

### **Chair of The Article 18 Alliance, Ambassador Robert Rehak declared:**

At a time of deepening polarisation, global insecurity, and profound societal transformation, the participants of the Prague Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief reaffirm that the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief (FoRB) is a cornerstone of human dignity and a vital source of resilience and solidarity for individuals and societies alike.

The conference underlined the urgent need to protect and promote FoRB amidst today's global challenges — from technological disruption and the misuse of digital tools to the environmental crisis and widening social inequalities. Participants recognised that safeguarding this universal right contributes not only to individual liberty but also to social cohesion, peace, and sustainable development.

Participants expressed deep concern for individuals and communities who continue to suffer discrimination, imprisonment, and violence for their beliefs or religious identity. Special attention was given to the Russian aggression against Ukraine and Chinese persecution including of Uyghurs and Tibetan Buddhists. Protecting their rights and dignity remain an essential test of the international community's commitment to human rights for all.

As the Dalai Lama, a Nobel Peace Prize winner, celebrates his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, we reiterate that the right to freedom of religion or belief includes the freedom to choose religious leaders free from state interference. This includes the right of the Tibetan Buddhist community to identify a successor.

The conference explored the following:

- how FoRB-based approaches contribute to strengthening democratic culture, empowering religious actors in fragile contexts, and creating space for interfaith cooperation; how emerging technologies, particularly AI, can be leveraged to protect and promote FoRB—namely through monitoring violations, supporting advocacy, and fostering inclusive dialogue.
- how FoRB and interfaith initiatives can foster social cohesion, reduce inequalities, and serve as a foundation for mutual trust, and the role of international development assistance in addressing structural injustice and supporting faith-based and civil society organizations in fragile contexts.
- how women and girls from religious minority communities face compounded discrimination and violence due to the intersection of gender and belief; risks which are increasingly amplified by the misuse of technology, including online platforms and AI, and practical approaches to strengthening community resilience, and improving national responses.

- how different models of engagement and resilience shape religious affairs in Eurasian countries and protect and promote religious and cultural heritage sites as vital expressions of identity and belief—often serving as focal points for both unity and contestation.
- how FoRB can empower religious or belief communities to advocate for solutions and strengthen societal preparedness and solidarity, responding to environmental disasters which deepen global vulnerabilities, sparking displacement, resource scarcity, and health emergencies.
- how amidst ongoing challenges, minority communities across the Middle East and North Africa continue to show remarkable resilience, creativity, and commitment to preserving their faith, identity, and traditions, and how these communities are fostering coexistence, rebuilding social cohesion, and contributing to a better future. Through local initiatives, interfaith engagement, and the determination of individuals—especially women and youth—these communities are not only surviving but actively shaping a vision for greater freedom of religion or belief in the whole MENA region.
- how the erosion of FoRB often serves as an early warning sign of mass atrocities, and how monitoring FoRB violations can be integrated into genocide prevention strategies, highlighting case studies where faith-based actors have played pivotal roles in conflict mitigation.

The discussions further emphasised the crucial role of religious communities in addressing pressing global issues and countering hate and discrimination in all forms.

Participants reaffirmed their commitment to advancing the principles of the **Article 18 Alliance** as it celebrates its fifth anniversary, hearing directly from individuals like Mubarak Bala and Pastor Lorenzo, who were released in 2025 as prisoners of conscience following advocacy by the Alliance and others.

The Alliance looks forward to increasing and strengthening cooperation among governments, civil society, faith-based organizations, and international institutions to ensure that freedom of religion or belief is protected and promoted for all, everywhere.

In unity and shared purpose, the Prague Conference calls on the international community to uphold FoRB as a foundation for peace, justice, and human flourishing.

The Conference was dedicated to the release of Religious Prisoners of Conscience, including the following:

Y Quynh Bdap (Vietnam/Thailand, Montagnard Christian)  
Junaid Hafeez (Pakistan, Muslim)

Zeynab Jalalian (Kurdish Sunni) and Maryam Akbari-Monfared (Shia) (Iran)  
Mahvash Sabet (Iran, Baha'i)  
Gulshan Abbas (Uyghur), Wang Yi (Christian) and Illham Tothi (Uyghur) (China)  
Hussein Mohammed Al Tenawi, Omar Mahmoud Abdel Maguid and Hazem Saied  
Abdel Moatamed (Egypt, Ahmadi).  
Yahaya Sharif-Aminu (Nigeria, Sufi Muslim)