

## **Oslo Principles on Promotion of Freedom of Religion or Belief (FORB)**

The human right to FORB protects persons with theistic, non-theistic and atheistic beliefs, as well as those who do not profess any religion or belief, and it is not limited in its application to traditional or dominant religions. It is not the special interest of any one group, but a common good for all.

In recent years, states and international organizations have given increasing attention to the international protection of FORB. These developments offer welcome opportunities to prevent violations of FORB, but also raise many questions about how and why FORB is promoted. Sometimes, FORB is even pitted against other rights, such as freedom of speech, gender equality, and the rights of minorities. All actors, regardless of their diverse beliefs and agendas, should be encouraged to seek inclusive approaches to promote FORB as a universal right in line with international standards.

In October 2016, around 60 experts and practitioners in the field of FORB took part in the conference *Politicization of Freedom of Religion or Belief – For Better and Worse*, in Oslo, Norway. The conference was hosted by the Oslo Coalition on Freedom of Religion or Belief, in cooperation with the International Center for Law and Religion Studies, Brigham Young University.

Reviewing recent developments in the field, and drawing on nearly two decades of experience since the Oslo Declaration (1998), the conference endorsed the following principles:

- The growing challenges to FORB call for a more concerted effort to enhance protection from violations to FORB, whether from state or non-state actors, whether resulting from state restrictions or social hostility.
- Effective protection must be ensured for adherents of religions or beliefs that are the subject of hostility on the part of predominant or longer-established religious communities or political actors.
- All human rights, including FORB, are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated. The implementation of FORB should seek to maximize the enjoyment of this right alongside all the others.
- The right to FORB protects the person or persons holding beliefs or convictions and manifesting them individually or in community with others; it does not protect religion or tradition as such.
- The right to FORB includes the right to have an interpretation of one's tradition that differs from the dominant interpretation *within* that tradition and to seek to manifest it accordingly.
- A range of approaches and actors is needed to protect and promote FORB, including through redressing violations, monitoring and reporting, legal revision, capacity building, education, dialogue, and interdisciplinary knowledge building.
- There is a need for further study of the most appropriate methods and mechanisms for promoting and protecting FORB today, including critical reflection on the effectiveness of the various institutions and agendas.

