



Ministry
of Foreign Affairs
Republic of Poland



2020 Ministerial to Advance Freedom of Religion or Belief

Warsaw, November 16–17, 2020

NGO Component – General and Thematic Sessions

The interrelationship between freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) and security

Session 3 – Thematic Session 3

17 November 2020

16.15–17.45 (Warsaw time)

Background:

The real or perceived concerns surrounding religion or belief in society, as well as the threat posed by violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism, have brought the relationship between FoRB and security into sharp focus in many parts of the world.

While States have adopted different strategies to ensure that their own security measures are fully compliant with their international obligations and political commitments pertaining to FoRB, certain laws, security policies and practices have placed this universal human right under significant pressure. Such measures, especially those that are overly-broad or applied arbitrarily, are often enacted in the name of “national”, “state” or “public” security, or in the interests of preserving or maintaining “peaceful coexistence”, “social stability” or “social harmony”. Experience shows that such undue limitations can worsen rather than improve security, and have differing impacts on men and women, boys and girls.

Much of the contemporary discourse on FoRB and security calls for a balance between these values or suggests that at least some aspects of this freedom must be sacrificed to achieve security. This discourse contradicts those approaches, such as the one adopted by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which do not frame FoRB and

security as competing rights, but recognize them as complementary, interdependent and mutually reinforcing objectives that can and must be advanced together. Moreover, there is growing empirical evidence which suggests that full compliance with international standards in the area of FoRB helps make societies more resilient against the very issues that threaten security. Undue restrictions on the right to FoRB, therefore, obscure its potential to construct a social framework that ensures both freedom and security.

This breakout session will examine the interrelationship between FoRB and security. It will draw on certain issues of note at the intersection of FoRB and security and discuss the importance of a collaborative, inclusive multi-stakeholder approach, including a gender-balanced participation, to ensuring FoRB for all while attending to genuine security. Particular attention will be paid to the critical role of policymakers, parliamentarians, civil society including religious or belief communities, and the media in this ongoing effort.

Panel discussion:

Moderator: **Mikolaj Wrzecionkowski**, Acting Senior Adviser on FoRB, OSCE/ODIHR

Panelists:

- **Prof. Elizabeth Clark**, Associate Director, International Center for Law and Religion Studies: “Registration and de-registration of religious or belief communities and security”
- **Prof. Silvio Ferrari**, Professor Emeritus, University of Milan: ““Extremist” speech and literature and security”
- **Mariam Gvartadze**, Member of the OSCE/ODIHR Panel of Experts on FoRB: “Screening, monitoring and searches in places of worship and meeting places and security”
- **Dr Kishan Manocha**, Head, Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Department, OSCE/ODIHR: “Non-legal measures aimed at combating discrimination, hatred and intolerance on grounds of religion or belief and advancing freedom of religion or belief for all”