

ODIHR Panel of Experts on **Freedom of Religion or Belief**

**2025 –
2028**

Ahmed Shaheed



Ahmed Shaheed is a professor of International Human Rights Law in the School of Law and Human Rights Centre at the University of Essex and an Academic Affiliate of the Bonavero Institute of Human Rights at the University of Oxford. He directs the Essex Human Rights Centre's Religion and Equality Unit, and the grant-funded Countering Islamophobia Project. He is an adviser on 'hate speech' to the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention. Ahmed served as the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) from 2016 to 2022 having previously served as the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Iran from 2011 to 2016. He has already completed one term as member of ODIHR's Panel of Experts on FoRB from 2022 to 2025.

Aleksandra Djuric Milovanovic



Aleksandra Djuric Milovanovic is principal Research Fellow at the Institute for Balkan Studies of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, where her research focuses on religious minorities, FoRB, and post-socialist identity transformations. She also serves as a Board Member for National Minorities and Human Rights within the Serbian Academy, and manages the Network for Dialogue at the International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID), where she leads interreligious and intercultural initiatives to foster the social inclusion of migrants and refugees across Europe. Her work bridges academia, policy, and practice, with extensive experience in designing and implementing FoRB-informed projects in complex sociopolitical contexts. She has authored four monographs and edited three international volumes, including “The Untold Journey of the Nazarene Emigration from Yugoslavia to North America” (Lexington Books, 2024), “Double Minorities in Serbia: Distinctive Aspects of Religion and Ethnicity of Romanians in Vojvodina” (Institute for Balkan Studies, 2015), and “Orthodox Christian Renewal Movements in Eastern Europe” (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017). She has published widely in Serbian, English, Spanish, Romanian, and Russian.

Alexandr Klyushev



Alexandr Klyushev is a recognized expert on FoRB, interreligious dialogue, human rights, and preventing violent extremism and radicalization leading to terrorism. He has played a significant role in shaping legislation and law enforcement practices in the field of human rights in Kazakhstan. Since 2001, Alexandr has been a member of working groups in both chambers of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan, contributing to draft laws on state-confessional relations and counter-extremism. From 2013 to 2016, he served on the Public Supervisory Commission, monitoring human rights in penitentiary institutions. In 2015–2016, he was part of the Council for Cooperation with NGOs under the Ministry of Justice. Since 2017, Alexandr has been a member of the Expert Council under the Commissioner for Human Rights in Kazakhstan. Alexandr holds a higher degree in religious studies. He served on the OSCE/ODIHR Panel of Experts on FoRB from 2019 to 2022 and resumed this role in 2025.

Anastasia Hartman



Anastasia Hartman works for Open Doors International and is an active advocate for FoRB to the European Union. She advises EU officials, diplomats, and politicians on how to advance FoRB, improve FoRB literacy, and protect the rights of religious minorities within EU's external policy - particularly in relation to sensitive context countries, development programmes, and trade negotiations. She regularly speaks at parliamentary conferences and promotes a non-partisan, non-politicized approach to FoRB as a fundamental human right. As part of the Open Doors advocacy team, she is responsible for coordinating and implementing the organisation's global advocacy strategy across a wide range of national units. She works closely with local staff, training them on the basics of FoRB, grassroots FoRB advocacy, and Christian understandings of justice. In 2024–2025, Anastasia served on the Board of Coordinators of the European Platform Against Religious Intolerance and Discrimination, which brings together faith-based and non-faith-based organisations committed to FoRB values. Anastasia is a trained international lawyer and holds degrees from MGIMO University and Université Libre de Bruxelles.

Dilshod Jurayev



Dilshod Juraev is a lawyer and human rights defender from Tajikistan with extensive experience in supporting civil society and promoting fundamental freedoms. He works with the public organization Ibtido, where he focuses on advancing the right to freedom of association, strengthening youth participation in decision-making, and empowering women activists, particularly in remote and rural areas of the country. Dilshod has collaborated with the International Commission of Jurists, and served as an expert in discussions on the draft Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations in Tajikistan. His work also includes research and advocacy on internet restrictions and shrinking civic space, as well as providing legal assistance through his law firm. He is currently based in Uzbekistan.

Eka Chitanava



Ekaterine Chitanava is the director and co-founder of the Tolerance and Diversity Institute (TDI), a non-governmental organization based in Tbilisi, Georgia, and which is dedicated to promoting human rights, with a particular focus on freedom of religion or belief, equality and nondiscrimination. Alongside her work with TDI, Eka has contributed to the Forum 18 News Service, and has published articles in various academic journals and international platforms. Earlier in her career, she worked for several years as a journalist covering human rights issues for both local and international media outlets. She holds two MA degrees: one in Media Management and another in Sociology and Social Anthropology from the Central European University (CEU).

Elizabeth Cassidy



Elizabeth K. Cassidy is a human rights analyst, strategist, and advocate with a focus on FoRB and related rights. She served for 18 years on the staff of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), a legislative branch agency that monitors and reports on religious freedom conditions abroad and makes recommendations for U.S. policy. Ms. Cassidy held leadership positions overseeing USCIRF's research and publications, directing the development and promotion of its recommendations, and representing USCIRF in the United States and overseas. Before USCIRF, she worked for human rights organizations in Geneva, Switzerland and Windhoek, Namibia; taught at the University of Namibia, Princeton University, and Seton Hall University School of Law; practiced law; and clerked for federal trial and appellate judges. Ms. Cassidy holds a B.A. from Wesleyan University, a J.D. from American University's Washington College of Law, and a LL.M from Stellenbosch University.

Eugenia Relaño Pastor



Eugenia Relaño Pastor is a legal expert in Law and Religion, holding a Doctorate in Law and dual Bachelor's degrees in Political Science and Sociology. She is a Permanent Professor at Complutense University of Madrid and a cooperation partner at the Max Planck Institute (MPI) for Social Anthropology. At the MPI, she previously served as the scientific coordinator of the "Cultural and Religious Diversity in Europe" Project. From 2004 to 2017, she worked as a Legal Adviser in the Department of Migration and Equal Treatment at the Spanish Ombudsman's Office. She has also served as a legal trainer for National Human Rights Institutions in EU Twinning Projects in Kazakhstan, Armenia, North Macedonia, and Türkiye. Prof. Relaño Pastor has provided judicial training for the European Network of Councils for the Judiciary and the Academy of European Law, focusing on religious diversity and EU anti-discrimination law. Her research spans multiculturalism, human rights, religious minorities, governance of religious diversity, migration, gender equality, and the intersection of neuroscience with freedom of thought, conscience, and religion.

Fernand de Varennnes



Fernand de Varennnes was between August 2017 and November 2024 the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues. He is Visiting Professor at the Université catholique de Lyon and the University of Sarajevo and sits on the advisory boards of organisations such as the Club de Madrid, the International Communities Organisation, the European Centre on Minority Issues, the Research Centre on Religious Minority Rights in Contemporary Legal Systems of the Università degli Studi di Milano, the Atlas of Religious or Belief Minority Rights, and the newly established British Parliament's Standing Group on Atrocity Crimes. His contributions in the recognition and protection of freedom of religion or belief issues have included setting up and leading an international expert group tasked with developing a draft global treaty on minority protection containing one of the first attempts to detail the rights of religious minorities.

Genti Kruja



Genti Kruja is lecturer of Sociology of Religion, Intercultural and Interfaith Communication and Interreligious Dialogue at Bedër University College. He is also the Secretary General of the Inter-Religious Council of Albania. He participated and contributed to many international conferences on education, freedom of religion and interfaith dialogue. He authored several research papers as well as the books “Albanians Facing the Challenges of Interfaith Understanding” and “History of Interfaith Dialogue”. In 2021 he became member of the European Union External Action Service “Global Exchange on Religion in Society” platform. In 2022, he participated in an Exchange program at Seattle University, Washington, sponsored by the U.S. Department of State. He is also International Fellow of the the International Dialogue Centre(KAICIID). In 2024 he was elected President of the European National Interreligious Bodies, of Religions for Peace Europe and in 2025 he was elected President of Religions for Peace Europe. This is Genti’s second term as member of ODIHR’s Panel of experts on FoRB.

Jagbir Jhutti-Johal

Jagbir Jhutti-Johal OBE is a Reader in Sikh Studies in the Department of Theology and Religion, University of Birmingham. She has over 20 years' experience in teaching and research, and provides extensive knowledge and experience in Sikh theology and inter-faith dialogue. Her research also focuses on contemporary societal issues in the Sikh community in Britain and beyond. These include representation, racialization, mistaken identity, freedom of religion or belief with reference to articles of faith and persecution in certain countries, as well as women's equality. Jagbir acts as an expert witness for the courts on matters pertaining to Sikh culture, religion and articles of faith. She has been a researcher on several Ministry of Justice funded projects at the University of Oxford looking at the Children Act 1989 proceedings with a particular focus on race and ethnicity in the family justice system. She was a Commissioner on the Commission on Religion and Belief in British Public Life, convened in 2013 by The Woolf Institute, and a member of the Government's Sikh Roundtable on Covid 19. She is currently a steering group member on the UK Freedom of Religion or Belief Forum. Jagbir is a presenter on the Thought for the Day segment on BBC Radio 4's Today programme. She is also a board member and trustee on a number of organisations, such as Faiths for the Climate, Race Equality Foundation, and a lay member for the Royal College of Obstetrics and Gynecology Women's Network. Jagbir is deeply involved in voluntary work within the community, especially around women and children's issues. This is her second term as member of ODIHR's Panel of experts on FoRB.

Nancy Lefèvre



Nancy Lefèvre is Head of the Legal Department at the National Council of French Evangelicals. With over 15 years of experience on FoRB in France, but also looking at other European countries, she has worked on critical issues such as post-2015 terrorism, COVID-19 restrictions, and the 2021 Republican Principles Law. Nancy has also conducted international advocacy on this human right, engaging with government authorities, and assisting religious organizations with legal and administrative challenges. Additionally, Nancy has led the production of publications and campaigns on FoRB and religious law, including *Libre de le dire*, *La Laïcité Française*, and practical guides on COVID-19, real estate, and legal frameworks. She also trains diverse audiences on FoRB and has been active since 2022 in addressing sexual violence and coercion within churches. A former business lawyer in the banking sector, she holds a Master's degree in International Law (France) and an LL.M. (USA).

Natallia Vasilevich



Natallia Vasilevich is a Belarusian-born scholar, human rights expert, and public theologian based in Germany, with a background in law, political science, theology, and philosophy. She has defended her doctoral dissertation in philosophy at the University of Bonn, focusing on the Orthodox Church's mission in the modern world. Her work bridges academic research, human rights advocacy, and ecumenical dialogue. For over two decades, she has been active in civil society, founding and leading initiatives on freedom of religion or belief and political theology in Eastern Europe. Natallia serves as coordinator of Christian Vision for Belarus, a faith-based human rights initiative. She is also a co-founder and coordinator of Christians Against War, an international network of Christian activists opposing violence and defending religious freedom in the context of war. She has taught law and human rights, edited theological and political journals, and contributed to international church bodies such as the Conference of European Churches and the World Council of Churches.

Nigel Fancourt



Nigel Fancourt is an Associate Professor of Education and Values at the Department of Education, University of Oxford, where he co-convenes the Philosophy, Religion and Education Group. He was previously a secondary school religious education teacher, and prior to that worked for law firms in London and Paris. His research encompasses belief and values-based questions across education, notably on human rights and law, and on educational justice more widely. Nigel has written extensively on the intersection of the rights to freedom of religion or belief, education, and private life, and especially on the pedagogical assumptions in and implications of judicial decision-making. He has carried out empirical research in schools in the United Kingdom and internationally on science and religion, inter-religious dialogue, ethics, and assessment. He is a member of the Open Council of Europe Academic Networks, and is on the editorial board of religious studies, education, and theology journals.

Robert Blitt



Robert C. Blitt is the Woolf, McClane, Bright, Allen & Carpenter Distinguished Professor of Law at the University of Tennessee Winston College of Law. Robert's scholarly research explores contemporary challenges to human rights norms and mechanisms, including the movement of anti-constitutional ideas and how rights and obligations apply to and are impacted by nonstate actors. His scholarship is regularly cited by scholars, judicial and government actors, think tanks, media, and civil society organizations. Robert has lectured and presented his research to a variety of global audiences and has published op-eds and been interviewed and quoted in national and international media outlets on a range of topics, including blasphemy, church-state relations, the Arab Spring, U.S. human rights policy, and the relationship between human rights and religion. Professor Blitt holds an LLM in International Law, an MA in International Relations, and a JD from the University of Toronto, and a BA magna cum laude from McGill University.

Tamara Vukicevic

Tamara Vukicevic is a board member of Protagora, an association dedicated to protecting the rights of nonreligious individuals, as well as to promoting a secular worldview. She is also the founder of International Secularist, now a part of Initiative Mittel- und Osteuropa e.V., where she continues to advocate for secularism and freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief across borders. In addition to her advocacy work, Tamara holds a Doctor of Medicine degree from the University of Zagreb, Faculty of Medicine (class of 2022), where she wrote her thesis on Orthorexia. Currently, she is a Research Fellow at the Environment and Mental Health research group at Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin, with a focus on climate change anxiety. Additionally, Tamara works as a socio-pedagogical carer for adults on the autism spectrum at ZuB Wohnhaus gGmbH in Berlin, combining her medical background with a strong commitment to inclusive mental health care. This is Tamara's second term as member of ODIHR's Panel of experts on FoRB.