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REGIONS

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IALRW

(International Association for
Liberal Religious Women)

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RFYN

(Young adult network)

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CHAPTERS

— Bangladesh —

— Canada —

— Germany —

— Ghana —

— India —

— Japan —

— Kenya —

— Nepal —

— Netherlands —

— Pakistan —

— Sri Lanka —

— UK —

— USA —

International Association for Religious Freedom

(The IARF)

Founded 1900,
the world's first interfaith
organisation



“Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.”

Article 18 of the Universal
Declaration of Human Rights
(UDHR), 1981

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Our History

Founded in 1900, the IARF was one of the first international inter-religious organisations. Primarily founded by Unitarians and “liberal Christian thinkers and workers” over 100 years ago, the organisation has since grown to include major religious groups of many traditions, including Buddhist, Shinto, Hindu, Sikh, Muslim, and Jewish participants.

We have over 75 affiliated member groups in approximately 15 countries who share commitment to religious harmony and freedom of worship. They are all of the conviction that a diversity of religions and beliefs exist which have a positive and constructive contribution to make to human society.

Current Program Emphases

Human Rights Education (HRE) training in South Asia and Africa, continuing our successful three-year Dutch-funded programs extending to communities an awareness of the UDHR’s Article 18 (the right to freedom of belief).

Young Adults networking and training in religious freedom activism, in collaboration with regional not-for-profits. Our network — named RFYN — seeks and has secured funding from major bodies.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF) is to work for freedom of religion and belief because it is a precious human right that potentially enables the best within our religious lives, or our search for truth or enlightenment, to flourish.

It requires work on *three aspects*, any of which may constitute the core objective for the IARF membership in a country or region:

- Freedom from oppressive interference or discrimination by the state, government or society’s institutions on the grounds of religion or belief;
- Mutual understanding, respect and the promotion of harmony, or at least “tolerance”, between communities or individuals of different religions or beliefs;
- An essential accountability by religious communities to ensure that their own practices uphold the fundamental dignity and human rights of their members and others.

Thus, IARF works with and for:

- Groups from different religious traditions or beliefs (normally those which share its values);
- Communities suffering from religious persecution or discrimination.

World Congress

Every 3-4 years in a different part of the world (recently, India, Taiwan and the UK), IARF’s membership meet in interfaith dialogue, discussions about issues facing religious communities, cultural exchanges, and worship.

U.N. Links

The members of the IARF family fully support the principles laid out in the U.N.’s *Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief* which advocates “freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief.” Within the framework of these rights, the Declaration also encourages the concept of responsibility in the field of religion or belief -- a cornerstone of IARF’s work.

IARF is one of fewer than 200 organisations in General Consultative Status with the Economic & Social Council of the United Nations. This status entitles IARF representatives at the U.N. in Geneva to regularly make interventions on behalf of religious minorities. IARF representatives in New York also work closely with other non-governmental organisations in support of religious freedom

IARF at the UN in New York	IARF at the UN in Geneva
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