

# Sensitive, but not impossible, work

## Christian missions and persecution

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### Abstract

A significant focus of Christian missions currently is to share the good news of Christ with non-believers in restricted countries, which often puts both missionaries and new converts at risk of persecution. This article examines the international legal framework for religious freedom and how it is applied or circumvented, especially in restricted countries. It then discusses enforcement mechanisms for religious freedom in the UN system, along with who is currently engaged in advocacy for Christians at the UN. The article also considers what training is available for missionaries to difficult countries and how sending agencies can appropriately prepare missionaries for the realities of persecution.

### Keywords

FoRB, international human rights, missions, conversion, blasphemy, anti-proselytism.

### 1. Introduction

This article arises from a 2024 conference on Christian missions and freedom of religion or belief (FoRB). I was invited to speak on international protections for FoRB as well as my own experience as an advocate to the UN, primarily on FoRB issues. There is a sophisticated international legal system designed to protect human rights around the world. Yet time and time again, those of us who engage this system are disappointed that governments can consistently violate the rights of Christians with impunity. So those engaging in missions in these countries need to be well prepared, and be able to teach others to be prepared, for sophisticated police surveillance, threats to themselves, their families and their businesses, and possible criminal charges with all that entails.

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The intention of Christian missions is to share the gospel with people who are not Christians.<sup>2</sup> The Christian impetus for mission is found in Jesus' last reported words before he ascended to heaven: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20a). However, many countries have laws banning proselytism or conversion. Such provisions significantly restrict missionaries' freedom to share the gospel. Despite the obvious risks, Christians continue to share the gospel in these nations. This behavior puts them, and those who become Christians, at risk of persecution, ranging from social marginalization to the death penalty.

International law has recognized freedom of religion or belief at least since the development of international human rights following the Second World War. There is no consensus, however, among the member states of the United Nations as to what constitutes FoRB, despite clear language in international human rights treaties (von Shaik 2023). Unfortunately, many states have adopted their own interpretation of religious freedom that does not grant freedom to share one's faith or to change one's religion. Therefore, missionaries cannot rely on international human rights standards and must be aware of local laws and social conditions and prepare both themselves and their converts for the cost of following Christ.

This article elucidates the international laws protecting religious freedom, focusing on protection of proselytization and conversion. It then illustrates how these guarantees are violated in several countries. Next, it discusses mechanisms to enforce international guarantees and the current state of advocacy for FoRB internationally, particularly by Christian organizations. It concludes by identifying some of the many resources developed for FoRB training that can be used to prepare missionaries to restricted countries. I define this group of people so as to encompass anyone who moves to such a country with the intention to share the gospel, whether that person is a traditional missionary, a temporary foreign worker, a professional or a humanitarian worker. If properly trained and prepared, these missionaries can not only bring nationals to conversion but also prepare them to face persecution themselves and to be effective FoRB advocates.

## 2. International human rights law

FoRB has a much longer history than the United Nations. Although this history is beyond the scope of the present article, Tore Lindholm (2015) provides a good

2 Behind this simplistic statement lies a vigorous debate as to what constitutes "sharing the gospel." This debate is beyond the scope of this article. Suffice it to say that "sharing the gospel" includes more than proclaiming the word. In the context of "mission" that I reference, it includes all the work that Christians do among those who are not Christian that is done for the purpose of encouraging these people to follow Jesus. See Stott and Wright 2015: ch. 1.

summary of the development of religious freedom in a chapter titled “Freedom of Belief and Christian Mission.” Several UN-sponsored instruments have articulated and clarified FoRB since 1945 at the international level: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). The UDHR and the two Covenants are often together called the “International Bill of Rights.” Finally, the UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief sets out FoRB in more detail. The right to convert, meaning to change one’s religion, is very clear in international human rights law yet is not recognized in numerous countries.

Heiner Bielefeldt, former UN Special Rapporteur for FoRB, identifies four aspects of the right to convert that are protected: “(a) the right to conversion (in the sense of changing one’s own religion or belief); (b) the right not to be forced to convert; (c) the right to try to convert others by means of non-coercive persuasion; and (d) the rights of the child and of his or her parents in this regard” (Bielefeldt 2017:109). He notes that these four aspects or sub-categories have different levels of protection. This article focuses particularly on aspects (a) and (c), the rights to conversion and proselytism.

### **2.1. *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights***

The UDHR is accepted as the international standard for human rights. It was formulated in the aftermath of the Second World War and accompanied the United Nations Charter as foundational documents for the new world order following the ravages of that war. “Since its adoption in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has been a pivotal document, profoundly impacting local and global legal, political, economic, cultural, religious, and social environments” (Bautista and Burcea 2023:v).

The UDHR is not officially a treaty. UN human rights treaties exist as legal documents, but the UDHR is a declaration and at best a document that grounds customary international law. Nevertheless, it is the document most frequently quoted with reference to the human rights it establishes. The drafters were quite an illustrious group, including Eleanor Roosevelt (USA), Charles Malik (Lebanon), Hernan Santa Cruz (Chile), William Hodgson (Australia), René Cassin (France), Alexandre Bogomolov (USSR), Charles Dukes (United Kingdom), Peng-chun Chang (China), and John Humphrey (Canada), geographically representative of various regions and their understandings of human rights.<sup>3</sup>

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3 I emphasize the geographic diversity of the UDHR drafters because some countries object to international human rights law as a Western construct (Mutua 2002; Pollis and Schwab 2006; Marsh and Payne 2007).

Even though actual practice has fallen far short of the UDHR's ideals,<sup>4</sup> the document remains a high-water mark of human aspiration to be better. Where the Charter focused on peace, and was thus a response to war itself, the UDHR was a response to the horrors of the Holocaust. There was a sense that humanity needed a bulwark against the genocide of a people group based on race and religion. Nevertheless, the world has failed to stop genocides since then, such as in Rwanda and in Cambodia. The UDHR is just aspirational words on a page unless the nations of the world are willing to take action through the institutions of the United Nations. Article 18 of the UDHR focuses on religious freedom:

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.

This is a rich text. In relation to missions, it is vital that the right includes the freedom to change one's religion. Some additional notable aspects of this statement are that (1) it includes both individual and communal religious practice; (2) it includes public observance of religion; and (3) it is not limited to worship but includes teaching, practice and observance.

Not surprisingly, there is a limitation clause in the UDHR, as no rights are absolute. Article 29(2) provides:

In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.

Not all countries have democratic societies. In addition, many governments interpret the the limitation broadly but human rights narrowly.

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4 The UDHR is an aspirational document. Its Preamble begins, "Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world." The first substantive article reads, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood." In contrast to these aspirations, as of May 2024, the Red Cross International identified 120 armed conflicts around the world. (ICRC 2024). The Pew Research Center's annual report on religious freedom for 2022 identified 192 countries out of 198 where religious groups experienced harassment by governments or social actors (Pew Research Center 2024; ch. 2). Human beings everywhere in the world do not enjoy the same opportunity to live in peace with their rights respected.

The UN General Assembly adopted the UDHR on 10 December 1948. The UDHR does not contain any enforcement mechanism, but it has been the foundation for more than 70 human rights treaties at the global and regional level, and many of these treaties have enforcement mechanisms.

## 2.2. *The UN Covenants on Human Rights*

Following the UDHR, the United Nations proceeded to negotiate a comprehensive human rights treaty, a challenging task because by the time they were negotiated, the world had plunged into the Cold War. Countries such as China and the Soviet Union did not want to grant broad civil and political rights; countries in the West could not support entrenched economic rights. That is why we have two international conventions on human rights, the ICCPR and ICESCR.

The ICCPR, as its name implies, focuses on traditional Western human rights, including freedom of religion, freedom of expression and freedom of association. Article 18 includes the text from Article 18 of the UDHR. It then expands the right to include a non-coercion clause, a limitation clause and a clause specifically related to religious education. Asma Jahangir, former UN Special Rapporteur on FoRB, stated in an annual report:

Article 18, paragraph 2, of the Covenant bars coercion that would impair the right to have or adopt a religion or belief, including the use of threat of physical force or penal sanctions to compel believers or non-believers to adhere to their religious beliefs and congregations, to recant their religion or belief or to convert. Policies or practices having the same intention or effect, such as those restricting access to education, medical care, employment or the rights guaranteed by article 25 and other provisions of ICCPR, are similarly inconsistent with this article. (Jahangir 2004: para. 47)

In a later report, Jahangir stated clearly that the right to proselytize is protected under the ICCPR:

Missionary activity is accepted as a legitimate expression of religion or belief and therefore enjoys the protection afforded by article 18 of ICCPR and other relevant international instruments. Missionary activity cannot be considered a violation of the freedom of religion and belief of others if all involved parties are adults able to reason on their own and if there is no relation of dependency or hierarchy between the missionaries and the objects of the missionary activities. (Jahangir 2005: para. 67)

The limitation clause in Article 18(3) of the ICCPR allows States to impose “such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others” but only to limit manifestations of one’s religion or beliefs. Jahangir stated unequivocally, “The right to change religion is absolute and is not subject to any limitation whatsoever” (Jahangir 2005: para. 58). Moreover, freedom of religion is “non-derogable.” In the event of a national emergency, Article 4 allows states to “derogate” from the obligation to uphold certain rights, but Article 18 of the ICCPR is specifically excluded.

The only specific right to freedom of religion or belief in the ICESCR appears in Article 13(3), which establishes rights to education and parental rights to choose the education of their children. Article 2 guarantees the rights enunciated in the Covenant without discrimination on the basis of religion, among other grounds.

### ***2.3. The UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief***

In addition to the treaties, there is also a separate UN document relating to religious freedom. Some countries sought a Convention (treaty) on religious freedom, but conflict over the right to change religion forced them to settle for the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief (Declaration) (Walter 2012:591). This Declaration, passed by the General Assembly in 1981, truly elucidates all aspects of religious freedom, including the right to be free from intolerance and discrimination and coercion. Article 6 guarantees the following rights:

- a) To worship or assemble in connection with a religion or belief, and to establish and maintain places for these purposes;
- b) To establish and maintain appropriate charitable or humanitarian institutions;
- c) To make, acquire and use to an adequate extent the necessary articles and materials related to the rites or customs of a religion or belief;
- d) To write, issue and disseminate relevant publications in these areas,
- e) To teach a religion or belief in places suitable for these purposes;
- f) To solicit and receive voluntary financial and other contributions from individuals and institutions;
- g) To train, appoint, elect or designate by succession appropriate leaders called for by the requirements and standards of any religion or belief;
- h) To observe days of rest and to celebrate holidays and ceremonies in accordance with the precepts of one’s religion or belief.

Unfortunately, since this document is a Declaration rather than a Convention, it has no enforcement mechanism. The Convention on the Elimination of

All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, for example, has a Commission on the Status of Women that holds annual meetings to assess progress in protecting women's rights. Although the Declaration is referenced by various human rights bodies within the UN system, no specific body addresses progress toward meeting the rights articulated in the Declaration.

### 3. National laws that violate international norms

Many countries have laws that give preference to one religion. Such laws do not necessarily constitute discrimination against religious minorities, but that is often the practical result. For example, the Church of England is the national church in England, but religious minorities are respected. In contrast, Pakistan's Constitution recognizes Islam as the official religion and religious minorities do face discrimination there. We must recognize that simply having a national religion does not violate international human rights norms.

The most egregious violations of human rights norms occur in countries that have laws against apostasy (Marshall and Shea 2012). In 2019, 22 countries had laws criminalizing apostasy (Villa 2022). In some of these countries, the death penalty is allowed for apostasy from Islam. In other countries, apostasy can result in severe consequences such as not receiving an inheritance or having one's marriage annulled.

Blasphemy laws also violate international human rights norms, with regard to both freedom of expression and FoRB (Marshall and Shea 2012). Blasphemy "is defined as speech or actions considered to be contemptuous of God or of people or objects considered to be sacred" (Villa 2022). In 2019, 79 countries and territories had laws or policies banning blasphemy (Villa 2022). In some of these countries, blasphemy laws are not enforced, but in others, violation of these laws can result in fines, prison sentences, lashings and even the death penalty. In some Islamic countries, blasphemy is very broadly interpreted to encompass insulting the Prophet Muhammad, and any perceived criticism of Islam or the Qur'an can be considered blasphemous.

Masud et al. identify a related problem in states with apostasy and blasphemy laws: "The problem extends beyond law and state practice to attacks by private actors. Accusations of blasphemy or apostasy put people at risk of extrajudicial killings, whether in jail or on the outside" (Masud et al. 2021:1).

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) is an important example of a country hostile toward religion. The DPRK has established Juche ideology as the central principle underlying this socialist state (Schmitz 2024:30). The Ministry of Unification in South Korea interviewed 508 defectors from the DPRK to document human rights violations between 2017 and 2023 (Ministry of Unification 2023). Missionaries and converts to Christianity have been executed, sent to political

prison camps, or subjected to reformation through labor (Ministry of Unification 2023:244). There is some evidence that Christianity has been revived in recent years in the DPRK (Schmitz 2024:36-39). Christians, however, remain at risk.

Four Asian countries have enacted anti-conversion laws: India, Nepal, Myanmar, and Bhutan (Fischer 2018:1). These laws ban inducement to convert or fraud in relation to conversion. Similar legislation has been proposed in Sri Lanka (Hertzberg 2020:93). Meghan Fischer argues that these laws are enforced only to protect the majority religion and effectively ban conversion from the majority religion.

Finally, a surprising number of states have restrictions on proselytizing. Jonathan Fox (2023:270) indicates that 60 percent of states have this type of law. These restrictions range from local regulations on door-to-door distribution of literature to national laws restricting foreign proselytizers.

All the States referenced in this section are members of the United Nations. While they may not have acceded to the human rights treaties, they are still subject to international human rights norms established in the UDHR. It is therefore relevant to consider what enforcement mechanisms are available to bring government legislation and practice in line with international human rights standards.

#### **4. Enforcement mechanisms in the UN system**

“To promote and protect human rights” is one of the pillars of the UN system (UN Charter 1948). There are several other mechanisms relating to protection of FoRB, most of them based in Geneva. International law, including international human rights law, is “soft law,” meaning that States cannot be forced to implement these standards. So, while there are “enforcement mechanisms,” states are not required to change their domestic laws. In fact, some States make every effort to participate in various human rights enforcement mechanisms to put forward a very different narrative to the experiences of people living in that country. While States take these mechanisms seriously, it does not bring about the changes one would hope for or expect.

##### **4.1. *The UN Human Rights Council***

The Human Rights Council was established by the UN General Assembly in 2006 to replace the dysfunctional Commission on Human Rights. It is still an open question whether the Council is an improvement, but it is what we now have.<sup>5</sup> The Human Rights Council meets for three sessions annually, in March, June and September. FoRB is considered at the March session each year.

<sup>5</sup> One of the main criticisms of the Commission on Human Rights was that states would be elected as members even though they were themselves weak in respecting international human rights standards. Although the new Council was intended to avoid this problem, it continues to be an issue.



The Human Rights Council is composed of 47 member in 2024 states elected for three-year terms. Members represent all regions of the world. Current members include some countries, such as Eritrea and Iran, that are well-known for violating human rights, particularly religious freedom. Some States see membership on the Human Rights Council as a way to avoid criticism of their human rights abuses. They therefore seek membership on the Council

Representatives of civil society are permitted to make statements directly to the Council in the chamber itself. NGOs can deliver 90 second statements.

The Council can also hold a special session to address human rights violations and emergencies if one-third of the members request it. For example, the Council held a special session on Sudan in May 2023 when civil war broke out there. Again, NGOs may make short oral statements at these special sessions.

One excellent opportunity to raise issues of FoRB with the Human Rights Council is the Universal Periodic Review. Each of the 193 member nations of the United Nations is reviewed over a four-year cycle. NGOs can submit reports in advance of the half-day hearing. The country then has an opportunity to respond to the recommendations. After the hearing, the Council issues a report making recommendations to the country to improve human rights protection.

#### **4.2. *Treaty bodies***

There are 10 UN treaty bodies, which are committees of independent experts that monitor implementation of the core human rights treaties (United Nations n.d.). The treaty bodies meet in Geneva. If a State is a party to a human rights treaty, it has an obligation to implement that treaty's provisions. The Human Rights Committee, which monitors implementation of the ICCPR, is the most important one for FoRB. The Committee adopted General Comment No. 22 on Article 18 of the ICCPR, which is often referenced as articulating the appropriate interpretation of freedom of religion in international human rights standards (UN Human Rights Committee 1993). The Committee holds hearings on all State parties on a rotational basis. Furthermore, if a State has signed the Optional Protocol to the ICCPR, individuals can make complaints to the Committee after all legal recourse within the country has been exhausted. Committee decisions are considered only as opinions, with no legal effect. This complaint process is therefore a tool in the toolbox but not one likely to resolve a problem.

#### **4.3. *The Special Rapporteur for FoRB***

The UN has a variety of special rapporteurs, some thematic (like the Special Rapporteur for FoRB) and some country-specific, such as the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Eritrea. The current Special Rapporteur for

FoRB is Nazila Ghanea, an Iranian who lives in England. She is very active in the promotion of human rights. The Secretariat is based in Geneva.

There are several ways to engage with the Special Rapporteur. First, there is a complaint mechanism through her office. In this manner, one can raise particular issues if the complainant is comfortable with making them public (since the office posts complaints on its website). Second, the Special Rapporteur visits countries and makes recommendations. So one can encourage her to visit a country of concern. However, the country must welcome the Special Rapporteur, who will not make a visit unless welcomed. Third, the Special Rapporteur makes thematic reports and invites input.

#### **4.4. *The UN General Assembly***

The UN General Assembly, based in New York, is the entity to which all UN functions ultimately report. The Special Rapporteur, for example, reports both to the Human Rights Council and to the UN General Assembly. There is a week during the General Assembly meeting in September/October where religious freedom is addressed.

The UN General Assembly has several committees. The Third Committee, which addresses humanitarian, social and cultural issues, sits in New York in October/November and annually considers religious freedom.

### **5. Religious freedom advocacy**

Many organizations engage in advocacy related to religious freedom for Christians. These can be avenues of advocacy and assistance for missionaries and for those facing persecution.

Open Doors, Voice of the Martyrs, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, the Jubilee Campaign, International Christian Concern, and similar organizations raise awareness in churches and advocate to governments in the West and at the United Nations. Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) and Advocates International provide legal assistance to those who are persecuted. Some of these organizations also provide advocacy training to Christians facing persecution. All of these entities are Western-based.

The World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) has offices in New York and Geneva to engage in advocacy. More than half of WEA advocacy relates to religious freedom issues. The WEA always undertakes its advocacy in conjunction with national alliances and the local church leaders in an affected country. The most effective advocacy happens at the local, national and international levels simultaneously. Although some WEA advocacy concerns individual cases, much of it relates to laws, including those relating to apostasy, blasphemy, conversion, and proselytism.

It is important to ensure that FoRB advocacy is not solely a Western concern. The IRF Roundtable was formed in Washington, DC, to encourage religious organizations to advocate jointly to the US government regarding FoRB. The IRF Roundtable is in the process of establishing regional and national roundtables to globalize this advocacy (IRF Secretariat n.d.). Although this is a positive development, because the impetus for these roundtables was initially American, the regional and national groups may be seen as West-influenced.

The International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief (IPPFoRB) began in 2014 as a network of parliamentarians from around the world “with the purpose of sharing information, coordinating activity and initiating joint responses on issues of religious freedom” (Anderson and Mosey 2018:9). It now has more than 300 parliamentarians from over 90 countries as members (IPPFoRB n.d.). As Nazila Ghanea, the current Special Rapporteur on FoRB, has stated, “The role of parliamentarians in monitoring, reporting and following up on freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief cannot be overestimated” (IPPFoRB n.d.). Although the impetus for founding IPPFoRB was from the UK, it is a very global organization and can advocate at the highest levels.

## 6. Training in persecution and FoRB

It is foundational to understand the local or national context for religious freedom. *Sorrow and Blood: Christian Mission in Contexts of Suffering, Persecution and Martyrdom* (Taylor et al. 2012), published by the World Evangelical Alliance, is becoming outdated but remains a good starting place to understand the complexities.

The Pew Research Center conducts an annual survey of global religious freedom in 198 countries. Its most recent report, dealing with the year 2022, identifies 59 countries with high or very high government restrictions on religion. Forty-five countries have high or very high social hostility toward religious minorities (Pew Research Center 2024). Pew reports cover persecution of all religious groups, not just Christians.

Many sources produce annual reports on the status of religious freedom in countries around the world,<sup>6</sup> including Open Doors International’s *World Watch List*, the US Commission on International Religious Freedom’s *Annual Report*, the US Department of State’s *International Religious Freedom Report*, and the aforementioned Pew Research Center annual reports on government restrictions and social hostilities involving religion. The International Institute for Religious Free-

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6 The Noteworthy section in every issue of this journal includes these reports as well as reports on individual countries.

dom has a Violent Incidents Database (IIRF n.d.a.) to provide accurate and timely information on persecution and a Global Religious Freedom Data Spectrum “to provide a comparative framework for viewing a wide range of data from organizations’ country rankings on the issues of freedom of religion or belief” (IIRF n.d.b.). These reports can give an overall picture of global and regional trends. Many also give specific information about what is happening in countries. In this way, plenty of information is available about what one can generally expect in a country.

Many organizations have been developing training tools and programs on FoRB. Open Doors, International Christian Concern and Article 18 are Christian organizations that work exclusively on persecution and offer training. Some missions organizations that work in difficult areas also offer training in preparing for and persevering through persecution. Open Doors includes training in advocacy so that Christians who face persecution can have a prophetic voice to their governments.

There is also specific training available on international human rights law. The Nordic Ecumenical Network on Freedom of Religion or Belief, along with a network of other organizations, developed an online Freedom of Religion or Belief Learning Platform focused on Article 18 of the UDHR and the ICCPR (NORFORB n.d.). Faith for Rights has also developed a Toolkit on FoRB, available in multiple languages (OHCHR n.d.). These resources are aimed at a more advanced audience than missionaries and new converts, but they may be of use in some contexts.

FoRB training for missionaries should be part of broader training that includes a theology of suffering and a theology of risk. As Anna Hampton states in her article on a theology of risk in this issue:

Living under constant uncertainty and knowing one can lose everything but not having lost it yet is one of the most challenging situations to endure day in and day out, month after month, year after year, requiring developing skills of endurance, resilience, and shrewdness in the midst of calling and faithfulness to Christ under severe pressure. (Hampton 2025:10)

In her article, Hampton references training and resources for missionaries to prepare for the risk of persecution.

## 7. Conclusions

While international human rights standards guarantee religious freedom, and in particular the right to proselytize and to change religion, these guarantees are not respected even though states are members of the United Nations. In many

parts of the world, Christians and the church are seen as threats to the local or national culture, to governmental authority, or to the dominant religion. As Christian missionaries seek to make disciples, they must be aware of how they will be treated by the surrounding culture and ensure that new converts are prepared for the possibility of unfriendly treatment.

As Christians seek to make disciples, extend the kingdom and build the church, they must address persecution in the same way as they must address leadership, theological training and governance issues. It is important to be aware of international human rights standards that require governments to allow Christians to practice their faith not just alone but with others, in public and in private. Training for missionaries should include learning about international and domestic laws that protect religious minorities as well as how to respond effectively to ensuing persecution. This is sensitive work, but not impossible.

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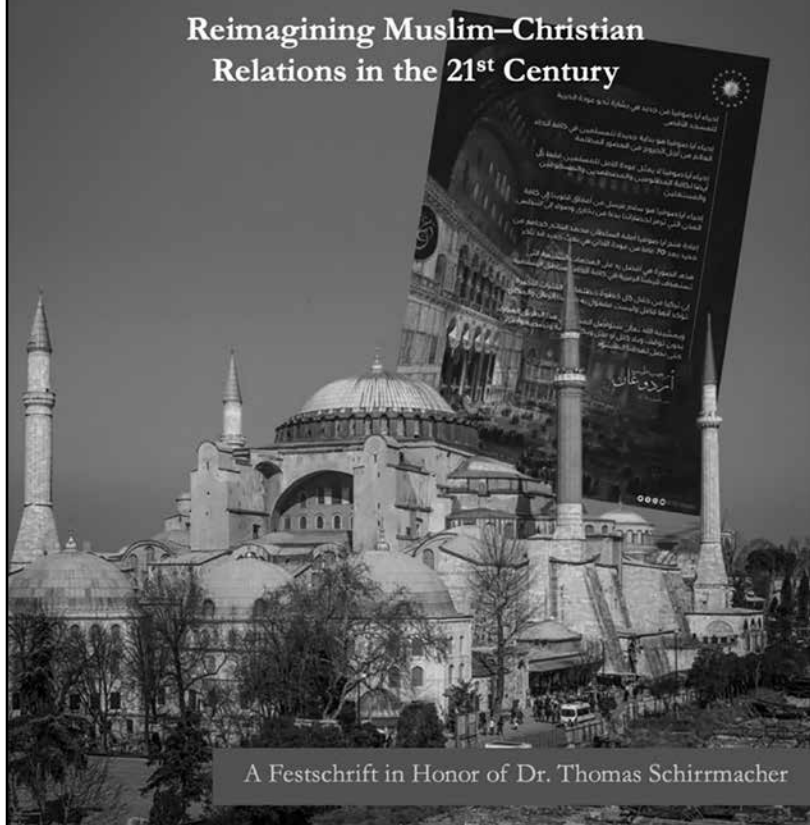
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