

DECLARATION OF TOLEDO

AIDLR STATEMENT ON RISING CHALLENGES TO FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE, BELIEF AND RELIGION

Whereas:

The world is facing existential challenges that require profound changes to ensure the promotion and protection of all human rights including the freedom of religion and belief (FoRB), we witness with dismay the weakening of international law and multilateral commitments, the mutually aggravating rise of extreme religious nationalism, aggressive secularism, and heightened politicization of religion. New technologies, particularly AI, profiling tools and online surveillance, deepens discrimination and restriction of freedoms. At the same time, armed conflicts, social unrest, mass migration, and displacement due to climate change are fanning tensions, derailing peoples' and communities' relationships, and often leading to FoRB violations.

The International Association for the Defense of Religious Liberty (AIDRL), founded in 1946 by Jean Nussbaum, has always been committed to the defense of the dignity of the human person and religious liberty as a foundation of world peace through freedom and justice to individuals and communities. Relying on its Declaration of Principles and prompted by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in particular Articles 18 and 19, AIDLR reaffirms its mission and responsibility to act in defense of freedom of thought, conscience, religion, belief, opinion and expression.

Considering the alarming rise in intolerance, discrimination, persecution, and the manipulation of religion as an instrument for purposes of oppression in public and political spheres, endangering peace, coexistence, and the universal implementation of human rights, the AIDLR calls international organizations, state actors, and civil society agents upon intensified commitment and concerted action, through the following:

TWELVE POINTS OF ACTION

1. Recognition of the principle of human dignity as the foundation of all human rights, including freedom of conscience, belief and religion.
2. Affirm FoRB principles as central to the international system of human rights and to the creation of free, just and peaceful societies.
3. Guard freedom of conscience, belief, religion and expression as inviolable and indivisible rights that are indispensable to preserving effectively human rights.
4. Enhance commitment to international law, calling on states and institutions to uphold foundational documents, particularly Articles 18 and 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
5. Promote a multilateralist approach, endorsing the function and authority of international institutions to defend peace, security, and human rights, and stand against unilateral actions weakening the protection of freedom.

6. Prevent, condemn, and react against all discrimination, persecution, intolerance, and violence on grounds of religion or belief, wherever it occurs.
7. Call for inter-religious dialogue movements to privilege and leverage freedom of conscience, belief and religion as the guarantee of respect for every individual's freedom of choice to adopt, change, abandon or retain one's religion or belief as the basis of authentic dialogue and cooperation.
8. Reaffirm and strengthen separation of State and Religion, enacting it by law, affirming it by word, and assuring it by deed, as an intrinsic safeguard for individual freedom and for democratic institutions.
9. Enhance consciousness and inspire action against instrumentalization of religions, beliefs or their followers that incites to hatred and violence, for example for regime justification, political gains or electoral purposes.
10. Counter the dangers of religious exclusivism, ethnicism, and nationalism on citizenship rights as these phenomena endanger individual freedom, undermine pluralism, nourish exclusion, and risk minorities' rights.
11. Secure that the development and deployment of Artificial Intelligence respect FoRB values, avoiding technologies or systems that discriminate, spy on, manipulate freedom of thought and belief, disseminate hate speech or violate individual and community rights.
12. Promote education, peer-to-peer learning, critical thinking and a culture of beneficence as ways to support freedom, peace, and security, building atmospheres of mutual respect and social solidarity.

Following our founder, Jean Nussbaum, we reaffirm and hold:

“We don't stand for interests. We stand for principles.”