

THE TANDEM PROJECT

<http://www.tandemproject.com>.

UNITED NATIONS, HUMAN RIGHTS, FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

*The Tandem Project is a UN NGO in Special Consultative Status with the
Economic and Social Council of the United Nations*

Separation of Religion or Belief & State

Universal Periodic Review reports in six languages

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Universal Periodic Review - Qatar

*Only contributions submitted in one of the United Nations official languages are admissible and
posted on this webpage*

Date of consideration: Monday 8 February 2010 - 10.00 a.m. - 1.00 p.m.

National report ¹ : [A](#) | [C](#) | [E](#) | [F](#) | [R](#) | [S](#)

Corrigendum 1 : [A](#) only

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Summary of stakeholders' information ³ : [A](#) | [C](#) | [E](#) | [F](#) | [R](#) | [S](#)

Questions submitted in advance: [E](#) only

Addendum 1 : [E](#) only

Outcome of the review :

Report of the Working group : [A](#) | [C](#) | [E](#) | [F](#) | [R](#) | [S](#)

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Report of the 14th session of the Human Rights Council : [E](#)

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Inter-active Dialogue: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/QAWebArchives.aspx>

REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP – RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING DIRECTLY TO FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G10/120/77/PDF/G1012077.pdf?OpenElement>

There were 76 recommendations that enjoyed consideration by Qatar. The first 3 recommendations were to ratify and sign the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR). One recommendation did not enjoy the support of Qatar, to abolish stoning and flogging from its legislation (Chile) as recommended by the Committee Against Torture (CAT).

REPORTS OF THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomReligion/Pages/FreedomReligionIndex.aspx>

The Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief has not paid a country visit to Qatar and there are no special issues or reports by the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief highlighting Qatar.

BACKGROUND HUMAN RIGHTS & FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

General Comment 22 on Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

[http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/9a30112c27d1167cc12563ed004d8f15?Opendocument](http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/9a30112c27d1167cc12563ed004d8f15?Opendocument)

The 1981 UN Declaration on the Elimination of all Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief http://www.tandemproject.com/program/81_dec.htm.

CONSTITUTION QATAR

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qatar>

<http://www.qatarembassy.net/constitution.asp>

“Qatar is an independent Arab state. Islam is the State’s religion and the Islamic Shariah is the main source of its legislations. It has a democratic political system. It’s official language is Arabic. People of Qatar are part of the Arab nation (ummah).”

For open public debate of ideas, as well as interfaith and intercultural dialogue, The Tandem Project compares the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) document with the United Nations 1981 UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Base on Religion or Belief:

[Human Rights in Islam & UN Freedom of Religion or Belief](#)

<http://www.dicid.org/english/index.php>

“Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue was established as a result of a recommendation of the Fifth Doha Interfaith Conference on May 2007 in Doha. The center was opened officially in May 2008. The main role of the centre will primarily be to spread the culture of dialogue, the peaceful coexistence of humanity and the acceptance of others.

“We strive for constructive dialogue between followers of different faiths towards better understanding and harnessing of distinct religious principles and teachings to the benefit of all humanity, on the basis of mutual respect and acknowledgement of differences and through cooperation with related individuals and organizations.”

QATAR FOUNDATION

<http://www.qf.org.qa/education>

“Education is fundamental to Qatar’s development as a modern knowledge-based economy. Qatar Foundation is bringing world-class education, work experience and career opportunities to Qatar so that young people can develop the attitudes and skills required to build such an economy. Qatar Foundation provides education at every level, from elementary school through to university. With a total of nearly 4,000 students, between them representing around 90 different nationalities, the extensive campus boasts some of the world’s best educational institutions, all housed in state-of-the art facilities. This melting pot of academic excellence, concentrated on one site, encourages the professional and personal development of all of its students, taking them right through from pre-school education to university and beyond.”

UNITED NATIONS ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS

<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2005/sgsm10004.doc.htm>

<http://www.unaoc.org/>

FOURTH ANNUAL FORUM - DOHA, QATAR

Qatar is respected by the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) and the United Nations for its forward looking international accomplishments; establishment of a center for inter-faith, inter-cultural dialogue and opportunities for universal education through the Qatar Foundation. As a member of the High Level Group supporting the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, it recently hosted the 4th Annual Doha Forum from 11-13 December 2011.

Starting Sunday, December 11, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations will convene over three days its fourth Annual Forum in Doha, Qatar, at a pivotal time in the region.

At the UNAOC Forum, over 2,500 political and corporate leaders, civil society activists, youth groups, faith communities, research centers, foundations, journalists, ministers, and heads of state will come

together in Doha to agree on joint actions to improve relations across cultures, combat prejudice and build lasting peace.

Hosted by the ruling Emir of the State of Qatar, Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Forum will count among its attendees the High Level Group member from Qatar H. H. Sheikha Mozah, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, and High Representative for the UN Alliance of Civilizations President Jorge Sampaio.

Political dignitaries at the forum will include several Heads of State, including the President of Austria Heinz Fischer and the President of Germany Christian Wulff. A number of ministers of foreign affairs – including those of co-sponsors Spain and Turkey – and of Australia, Indonesia, Luxembourg, among others have also announced their participation at the Forum. Several personalities such as Secretary General of the Arab League Nabil Elaraby, Secretary-General/Director-General of the OIC, IOM, UNESCO, UNWTO and the Union for the Mediterranean, as well as high representatives from the African Union, the European Parliament, HRH Prince Hassan Bin Talal and HRH Princess Rym Ali of Jordan, and eminent scholars such as J. Esposito or Jeffrey Sachs, will also attend the Forum.

The UNAOC's Forum in Doha will be a milestone in the UNAOC's existence. In Qatar, the UNAOC, the host government, and numerous partners will make headway for global intercultural dialogue to emerge as a key driver for development, security and peace. Under the theme '*Intercultural Dialogue to Boost Development*', high-level debates on how advancing towards the goals of the UNAOC can contribute to foster sustainable development and, in particular, achievement of the MDGs, will be conducted.

QATAR AND A CULTURE OF TOLERANCE AND PEACE

Qatar is a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council which on 24 March 2011 adopted by consensus a resolution for a Culture of Tolerance and Peace, sponsored by Pakistan and approved in consultation with Saudi Arabia, Norway, United States of America and Hungary on behalf of the European Union (EU):

Introduced by Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) adopted by consensus without a vote. - Resolution A/HRC/16/18/L.38, Geneva, March 24 2011

Pakistan (on behalf of the OIC) Mr. Zamir Akram [\[English\]](#) 10 minutes **Saudi Arabia** Mr. Ahmed Suleiman Ibrahim Alaquil [\[English\]](#) [\[Arabic\]](#) 1 minute **Norway** Ms. Beate Stjør [\[English\]](#) 2 minutes **United States of America** Mr. Eileen Chamberlain Donahoe [\[English\]](#) 5 minutes **Hungary (on behalf of the European Union)** Mr. András Dékány [\[English\]](#) 3 minutes

[UN Human Rights Council Panel Statements, Resolution A-HRC-16-18, 2010 General Assembly Third Committee Actions](#)

The Resolution was subsequently sponsored by the United Arab Emirates in the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly on 15 November 2011 and subsequently by the General Assembly.

Introduced by United Arab Emirates on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) adopted by consensus without a vote – Resolution A/C.3/66/L.47, New York, 15 November 2011

[UN Third Committee Press Release - Resolution L.47 Adopted by Consensus](#)

http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/C.3/66/L.47/Rev.1

Recognizes that the open public debate of ideas, as well as interfaith and intercultural dialogue at the local, national and international levels can be among the best protections against religious intolerance, and can play a positive role in strengthening democracy and combating religious hatred, and convinced that a continuing dialogue on these issues can help overcome existing misperceptions.

Calls for strengthened international efforts to foster a global dialogue for the promotion of a culture of tolerance and peace at all levels, based on respect for human rights and diversity of religions and beliefs, and decides to convene a panel discussion on this issue at its seventeenth session within existing resources.

The Resolution identified as A/RES/66/147 by the General Assembly welcomes the establishment of the “King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural dialogue in Vienna, initiated by King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia on the basis of purposes and principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and acknowledging the important role that this Centre is expected to play as a platform for the enhancement of interreligious and intercultural dialogue.”

FOCUS GROUP ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

The Tandem Project proposes an International Focus Group initially in its home community, Minneapolis, MN, United States of America, and eventually in partnership with forward moving efforts such as Qatar, United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and King Abdullah International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue in Vienna.

The motivation for the Focus Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief is the 1984 Geneva Seminar sponsored by the United Nations Secretariat on ways to implement the 1981 UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination based on Religion or Belief, and the follow-up 1986 Minneapolis International Conference on the 1981 UN Declaration.

1986 International Conference: *Tolerance for Diversity of Religion or Belief*

<http://www.tandemproject.com/tolerance.pdf>

[Focus Groups - Human Rights & Freedom of Religion or Belief](#)

SEPARATION OF RELIGION OR BELIEF AND STATE

Separation of Religion or Belief and State is a term used to express core principles of international human rights law on freedom of religion or belief. It mandates UN Member States to ensure their constitutional

and legal systems provide effective guarantees of freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief to all without distinction at international, national and local levels.

OBJECTIVES

The right of persons to manifest their own values, cultural identity and core principles based on religion or belief, together with human rights law, principles and values on freedom of religion or belief.

Build awareness, understanding and support at international, national and local levels for a UN Convention on Freedom of Religion or Belief as a legally-binding international human rights treaty.

UNIVERSAL PRINCIPLE

International human rights law on freedom of religion or belief protects *theistic, non-theistic and atheistic beliefs, as well as the right not to profess any religion or belief*, - General Comment 22 on Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights does not favor one religion or belief over another. Human Rights Law protects all individuals from discrimination based on religion or belief. It values the equal rights of majority and minority religions or beliefs, indigenous, traditional and new religious movements. It is a universal moral principle.

HISTORY

In 1968 the United Nations deferred passage of a legally-binding convention on religious intolerance saying it was too complicated and sensitive. <http://www.tandemproject.com/program/history.htm>

Instead, in 1981 they adopted a non-binding declaration on the elimination of all forms of intolerance and of discrimination based on religion or belief. While very worthwhile, the declaration does not carry the force and commitment of a legally-binding international human rights convention on freedom of religion or belief. http://www.tandemproject.com/program/81_dec.htm.

The Oslo Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief in 1998 was catalyst for change of title from Special Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance to Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief

[1998 UN Conference Report](#)

The Tandem Project believes until a core legally-binding human rights Convention on Freedom of Religion or Belief is adopted international human rights law will be incomplete.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

U.S. State Department 2010 International Religious Freedom Report, Qatar

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148841.htm>
[International Religious Freedom Report 2010](#)

November 17, 2010

The constitution and laws provide for freedom of association, public assembly, and private worship, within limits based on public order and morality concerns. The law forbids discrimination based on religion. The law prohibits proselytizing by non-Muslims and restricts public worship. The state religion is Islam.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom by the government during the reporting period. Both Sunni and Shi'a Muslims practice Islam freely. Christian, Hindu, and Buddhist practitioners generally worshipped in private locations without government or societal harassment but there were restrictions on public worship.

There were no reports of societal abuses based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice, and the senior leadership of the country continued its support for advancing religious freedom.

The U.S. government discusses religious freedom with the government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights.

Section I. Religious Demography

The country has an area of 4,254 square miles and a population of more than 1.7 million, of whom approximately 225,000 are citizens and nationals. Of the citizen population, Sunni Muslims constitute the vast majority, while Shi'a Muslims account for less than 5 percent.

Most noncitizens were from South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Near Eastern countries. Most were in the country on temporary employment contracts; relatively few were accompanied by family members. Most noncitizens are Sunni or Shi'a Muslims, Christians, Hindus, or Buddhists. Nearly all foreign workers and their families lived near the major employment centers of Doha, al-Khor, Mesayid, and Dukhan.

While the government does not release figures regarding religious affiliation, some membership estimates for noncitizens available from Christian community groups are as follows: Roman Catholics (80,000 to 100,000), Anglicans (20,000 to 25,000), and Egyptian Copts (3,000). There is no estimate for the small Greek and other Eastern Orthodox population. The Hindu community is almost exclusively from India and estimated at more than 100,000, while Buddhists are from South, Southeast, and East Asia and are estimated at 300,000-350,000. There are an estimated 100 Baha'is of Iranian origin, some of whom are nationals of the country.

Section II. Status of government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The constitution and laws provide for freedom of association, public assembly, and worship, within limits based on public order and morality concerns. The law prohibits proselytizing by non-Muslims and placed restrictions on public worship. The state religion is Islam.

Converting to another religion from Islam was considered apostasy and technically a capital offense; however, since the country gained independence in 1971, there has been no recorded punishment for such an act.

The government and ruling family were strongly linked to Islam. Non-Muslims, however, served in government posts. The Ministry of Islamic Affairs controlled the construction of mosques, clerical affairs, and Islamic education for adults and new converts. The emir participated in public prayers during both Eid holiday periods and personally financed the Hajj for citizen and noncitizen pilgrims who could not otherwise afford to travel to Mecca.

According to the criminal code, individuals caught proselytizing on behalf of an organization, society, or foundation of any religion other than Islam may be sentenced to a prison term of up to 10 years. Proselytizing on one's own accord for any religion other than Islam can result in a sentence of up to five years. Individuals who possessed written or recorded materials or items that supported or promoted missionary activity could be imprisoned for up to two years. However, the government has not convicted anyone for proselytizing since the law's 1973 inception.

Both Muslims and non-Muslims are tried under a unified court system, incorporating both secular law and Islamic law (Shari'a), with the exception of a separate limited dispute resolution system for financial service companies managed under the Qatar Financial Center. Separate Islamic courts were legally abolished in 2003, although Islamic law is still applied in certain cases. Most notable are cases of inheritance and the rules surrounding court testimony. There were also certain criminal cases, such as adultery and drunkenness, in which Muslims were tried and punished under Islamic law; however, all proceedings were conducted in the same unified court system. In matters involving religious issues, Shi'a and Sunni judges may apply their interpretations for their respective groups.

Convicted Muslims may earn a sentence reduction of a few months by memorizing the Qur'an. Litigants in civil cases may request that Islamic law courts assume jurisdiction in dispute resolution and other civil matters. In 2005 a judicial panel for Shi'a Muslims was established in the courts. The panel decides cases regarding marriage, divorce, inheritance, and other domestic matters. In other religious matters, the country's family law applies across branches of Islam.

The government observes the following religious holidays as national holidays: Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha.

The government regulates the publication, importation, and distribution of all religious books and materials. However, in practice, individuals and religious institutions were not prevented from importing holy books and other religious items for personal or congregational use.

Religious groups must register with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) for legal recognition. The government maintained an official register of approved major Christian denominations and has granted legal status to the Catholic, Anglican, Greek, other Eastern Orthodox, Coptic, and Indian Christian churches. To be recognized, any denomination must have at least 1,500 members in the country. The MFA also requires smaller congregations to affiliate and worship under the patronage of one of the six recognized churches, all of which are centrally located in Mesaymir, outside Doha. While several evangelical Christian congregations were not legally recognized because they individually lacked the required membership, some organized worship and were provided physical security for their congregations by the Ministry of Interior (MOI) when required. Other religions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, and Baha'ism, were not legally recognized, although adherents were permitted to worship privately in their homes or with others.

The government announced the formation of a permanent intergovernmental committee, led by the MFA, to address issues concerning non-Muslim religious groups, including legal incorporation and sponsorship of religious leaders. The MFA placed the issue of starting the intergovernmental committee under the office of the Assistant Minister for Follow-up Affairs in April 2009, but the committee had not met by the end of the reporting period. Smaller non-Muslim religious groups continue to face difficulties in receiving assistance and guidance in the registration process. This has made it difficult and quite cumbersome for smaller faiths that sought recognition or to perform financial activity in the name of their church.

Islamic instruction is compulsory for Muslims attending state-sponsored schools. While there were no restrictions on non-Muslims providing private religious instruction for children, most foreign children attended secular private schools. Muslim children were allowed to go to secular and coeducational private schools.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Adherents of most major religions in the country worshipped without government interference, although there were restrictions.

The registration process has continued to be cumbersome. During the reporting period, no religious groups successfully completed the process, although there were many attempts. The main obstacle to registration for smaller faiths is lack of government support. The MFA's office of the Assistant Minister for Follow-up Affairs maintains the religion portfolio, but religious leaders complained that it was difficult to make appointments and found the overall registration process inconsistent and confusing.

According to both senior MOI and MFA officials, there continued to be no restrictions on individual and small group worship in places of residence and other designated areas within the scope of laws on public safety, congestion, neighborhood impact, and other matters. This permission extended to all religious groups.

The government placed limits on the length of Friday sermons at mosques. The government also previewed the sermons for inflammatory religious or ethnic language that might incite listeners to

violence. The government may take judicial action against individuals and facilities when these standards are not met.

Christian group worship was permitted among the six registered Christian denominations at a government-provided area in Mesaymir. In May 2009 MFA officials stated that unregistered churches and congregations were required to perform group worship under the patronage of one of the six legally recognized and registered Christian denominations and as a subgroup of that particular church. For example, Protestant congregations would be required to register as a denomination of the Anglican Church. Government regulations for denomination and congregation registration have been in the process of being codified since late 2008. Reflecting the government's approach to the registration of foreign businesses, MFA officials stated that smaller congregations not meeting the threshold of 1,500 registered congregants would require an endorsement from the council of churches consisting of the representatives of the six registered denominations in Mesaymir before being officially registered.

The government reviewed and infrequently censored foreign newspapers and magazines for objectionable religious political content.

The government restricted the peaceful expression of views via the Internet and at times censored the Internet for religious content through a proxy server, which monitored and blocked Web sites, e-mail, and chat rooms through the state-owned Internet service provider.

The government prohibited Christian congregations from advertising religious services or using religious symbols visible to the public, such as outdoor crosses; the government stated, however, that this was done to protect the congregations from attack by Muslim extremists.

Hindus, Buddhists, Baha'is, and other religious groups do not have authorized facilities in which to practice their religions. The government generally considered members of these religious groups as transient members of the community not requiring permanent religious facilities or clergy; however, worship by these groups in private homes and workplaces was allowed.

In June 2010, an Irish woman was sentenced to seven years in prison following her conviction for insulting the Qur'an in a September 2009 incident in the women's mosque at the Doha International Airport. Government authorities claimed that the woman entered the mosque wearing indecent clothing, took a copy of the Qur'an, and threw it on the ground. The woman denied the charge and claimed that the Qur'an fell from her hands by accident. The court further ruled that the woman should leave the country following her punishment.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees in the country.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

In June 2010 the emir approved the establishment of the Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialog (DICID). The center was established with an initial contribution of \$8.2 million (32 million Qatari riyals), and will address the issues and problems of concern to humanity and seek to promote a culture of peaceful coexistence. In March 2010 prior to its official approval, DICID held an interfaith roundtable attended by a number of minority religious groups in the country. Further, DICID organized a lecture on the relationship between Islamic civilization and Europe in June 2010.

Construction on the Indian Interdenominational Christian Church at the "Church City" complex in Mesaymir, outside Doha, was completed in 2009, and the complex was inaugurated in March. The building was expected to house places of worship for 28 Indian Christian denominations. Construction continued on the separate Anglican, Eastern Orthodox, Coptic, and Syrian Christian churches at the Mesaymir complex in accordance with a 2005 agreement between the government and Christian representatives. Individual churches within the Indian Interdenominational Christian Church, which began services during the reporting period, included the Mar Thoma Syrian church in June, the Saint Thomas Syro-Malabar church, and the Pentecostal church in May. In 2008 a Roman Catholic Church opened for services, becoming the first church built in Doha.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

There were no reports of societal abuses based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice, and prominent societal leaders, including the emir, took positive steps to promote religious freedom. Religious discrimination was largely absent. While discrimination occurred against foreigners in employment, education, housing, and health services, nationality, rather than religion, was usually the determining factor. However, there were frequent reports of anti-Semitism by the media.

Frequently specific privately owned newspapers carried editorials and cartoons, which stereotyped Israeli leaders, sometimes comparing Israelis to Nazis and occasionally stereotyped Jews. These occurred primarily in the Arabic daily newspapers, *Al-Watan*, *Al-Sharq*, and *Al-Raya*. The incidents drew no government response.

During a sermon broadcast on Qatari television in October 2009, Sheikh Yusef al-Qaradawi denounced the interfaith dialogue conferences at DICID. Qaradawi commented that other religions did not respect Islam and that interfaith conferences were pointless if other faiths do not accept Islam as divinely inspired.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. government discusses religious freedom with the government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. The embassy facilitated contacts between religious leaders, and the government and coordinated initiatives with other foreign embassies to increase their effect. The embassy facilitated the participation of several minority religious leaders in the DICID roundtable held in March 2010.

U.S. embassy officials continued to meet with representatives of religious communities to discuss religious freedom issues, including protection of the interests of minority congregations. The embassy brought these concerns to the attention of appropriate officials.

REFLECTIONS

The Tandem Project

The First Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights reads: 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.

Surely one of the best hopes for humankind is to embrace a culture in which religions and other beliefs accept one another, in which wars and violence are not tolerated in the name of an exclusive right to truth, in which children are raised to solve conflicts with mediation, compassion and understanding.

There is an increase in dialogue today between religions and other beliefs to embrace diversity, but few persons, less than one percent of any population, ever participate. This is a challenge. The value of such dialogues is proportionate to the level of participation. For civil society increased participation would create opportunities for education on inclusive and genuine approaches to human rights and freedom of religion or belief.

In 1968 the United Nations deferred passage of a legally-binding convention on religious intolerance saying it was too complicated and sensitive. Instead, they adopted a non-binding declaration on the elimination of all forms of intolerance and of discrimination based on religion or belief. While very worthwhile, the declaration does not carry the force and commitment of a legally-binding international human rights convention on freedom of religion or belief.

Religions and other beliefs historically have been used to justify wars and settle disputes. This is more dangerous today as the possible use of nuclear and biological weapons of mass destruction increases. Governments need to consider whether religions and other beliefs trump human rights or human rights trump religions and other beliefs or neither trumps the other. Can international human rights law help to stop the advance and use of such weapons in the face of this historic truth?

- **QUESTION:** Weapons of mass destruction as history teaches are often legitimized for national security and justified by cultural, ethnic, religious or political ideology. The U.N. Review Conference on the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and studies on biological and cyber weapons demonstrate advances in science and technology is being used to increase their potential for mass destruction. The question is whether an International Convention on Human Rights and Freedom of Religion or Belief, elevated and supported equally by the U.N. Human Rights Council and U.N. Security Council, would help offset the risk of weapons of mass destruction. Recognition of the need for synergy to balance rights and security is a foundation for solving this issue.

“I am become death, the destroyer of worlds”

- Robert Oppenheimer, quote from the Bhagavad Gita after exploding the first atomic bomb, Trinity 1945.

The Tandem Project believes until a core legally-binding human rights Convention on Freedom of Religion or Belief is adopted international human rights law will be incomplete. It may be time to begin to consider reinstating the 1968 Working Group to bring all matters relating to freedom of religion or belief under one banner, a core international human rights legally-binding treaty.

The Tandem Project a non-governmental organization (NGO) founded in 1986 to build understanding, tolerance, and respect for diversity of religion or belief, and to prevent discrimination in matters relating to freedom of religion or belief. The Tandem Project has sponsored multiple conferences, curricula, reference material and programs on Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights- Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion – and the 1981 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief.