

THE TANDEM PROJECT
<http://www.tandemproject.com>.

**UNITED NATIONS, HUMAN RIGHTS,
FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF**

Separation of Religion or Belief & State

To:

Re: Request Response to this Survey.

The *Survey on Human Rights & Freedom of Religion or Belief* measures the value of the 1981 UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, to organizations at international, national and local levels.

Outcomes of the *Survey* will be used to exchange information on human rights and freedom of religion or belief as a follow-up to UN Member States *Universal Periodic Reviews*.

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a unique process launched by the UN Human Rights Council in 2008 to review the human rights obligations and responsibilities of all UN Member States by 2011. <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/BasicFacts.aspx>

Please click **Reply** to respond to this e-mail. Answer yes or no to the forty questions by deleting the appropriate Y or N and click **Send**. Answers will take five minutes. Introduction attached to the *Survey on Human Rights and Freedom of Religion or Belief*. Compiled responses will be sent to the United Nations.

Thank you for taking a few minutes to reply.

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The Tandem Project
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**SURVEY ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND
FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF**

Human rights are individual rights. The definition of organization for this Survey is based on Article 2 of the 1981 UN Declaration; *No one shall be subject to discrimination by any State, institution, group of persons or person on the grounds of religion or other beliefs.*

The *Survey on Human Rights and Freedom of Religion or Belief* divides organizations into eight sub-categories: **1.** governments; **2.** institutions of religion or belief; **3.** places of worship; **4.** primary and secondary public, private and religious schools; **5.** academic institutions, higher education; **6.** interfaith networks, peace and justice; **7.** human rights NGOs; **8.** media, business, foundations and charities.

QUESTIONS

1. Cat. & Organization:

I: Indicators & Questions

International human rights law protects *theistic, non-theistic and atheistic beliefs, as well as the right not to profess and religion or belief*, as defined by General Comment 22 on Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 18 ICCPR):

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

Choose the category that describes the mission and majority of members of the organization:

Theist: faith in a traditional description of God as a supernatural deity or deities; or who believes in a form of Deism or unstructured supernatural spirituality.

2. The organization may be described as theistic with theistic beliefs. Y/N
3. Mission is primarily for the promotion and protection of theistic beliefs. Y/N
4. Protects all beliefs equally against discrimination as defined by international law. Y/N

Non-theist: believes in a Universal Mind, striving for spiritual self actualizations, Reincarnation, Pantheist (everything as God), spirituality without a supernatural deity, or Buddhism, described by some as a Godless religion without a supernatural deity.

5. The organization may be described as non-theist with non-theist beliefs. Y/N
6. Mission is primarily for the promotion and protection of non-theist beliefs. Y/N
7. Protects all beliefs equally against discrimination as defined above by international law. Y/N

Atheist: believes in materialism, naturalism, does not believe in any form of supernatural reality, otherworldly or traditional descriptions of God.

8. The organization may be described as atheist with atheist beliefs. Y/N
9. Mission is primarily for promotion and protection of atheist beliefs. Y/N
10. Protects all beliefs equally against discrimination as defined by international law. Y/N

No Religion or Belief: neutral, or no belief, secular, agnostic, suspends belief in theistic, non-theistic or atheistic beliefs, remains open to conviction.

11. The organization may be described as neutral, agnostic, with no professed beliefs. Y/N
12. Mission is primarily for the promotion and protection of neutral, agnostic or no beliefs. Y/N
13. Protects all beliefs equally against discrimination as defined by international law. Y/N

II: Indicators & Questions

These questions are on *awareness, understanding and acceptance* of International Human Rights Standards on Freedom of Religion or Belief. The answers will describe the majority in the organization and not individual members.

Awareness: of international human rights treaty law on freedom of religion or belief as expressed in Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and 1981 UN Declaration on the Elimination of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief.

14. Aware of the 1948 UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and why it was written. Y/N
15. Realizes there is an International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR). Y/N
16. Has heard of the International Human Rights Law on Freedom of Religion or Belief. Y/N

Understanding: Article 18 CCPR and the 1981 UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Form of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief.

17. Has read the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR). Y/N

18. Understands the articles of the 1981 UN Declaration and why it was adopted. Y/N
19. Recognizes Human Rights Covenants are interrelated, interdependent and indivisible. Y/N

Acceptance: implements Article 18 ICCPR and 1981 UN Declaration on Freedom of Religion or Belief at international, national and local levels through integration, dialogue and education.

20. Integrates international standards on freedom of religion or belief at national-local levels. Y/N
21. Uses international standards on freedom of religion or belief as a resource for dialogue. Y/N
22. Applies international standards on freedom of religion or belief in all educational grades. Y/N

III: Indicators & Questions

These questions are on a comprehensive approach to integration, dialogue and education. Article 4 of the 1981 UN Declaration; *All States shall take effective measures to prevent and eliminate discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief in the recognition, exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms in all fields of civil, economic, political, social and cultural life.*

Cooperation: cooperates with other organizations in all fields of civil, economic, political, social and cultural life. Includes effective measures in areas such: as economic development; poverty programs; food; housing; social services; education; political participation; cultural programs; etc.

23. Cooperates only with organizations representing the same religion or belief. Y/N
24. Participates with organizations representing other religions or beliefs. Y/N
25. Cooperation focus includes prevention of discrimination based on religion or belief. Y/N

Competition: openness to a discussion of competition between organizations as a human rights standard on freedom of religion or belief is an important issue to a comprehensive approach to integration, dialogue and education. Article 1 of 1981 UN Declaration; *No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have a religion or belief of his choice.*

26. Organization discusses proselytism as a right to promote a religion or belief. Y/N
27. Openly discusses the right to choice with organizations of other religions or beliefs. Y/N
28. Refers to international guidelines on the right to competition, conversion and choice. Y/N

Conflict: conflict within and between religions or beliefs are openly discussed within this human rights-based context: Article 18 CCPR; *Freedom to manifest one's religion or belief may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.* Article 20 CCPR; *any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law.*

29. Organization uses a human rights-based approach to resolutions of conflicts. Y/N
30. Root source of conflicts are discussed with other organizations. Y/N
31. 1981 UN Declaration is used in approaches to the resolution of conflicts. Y/N

IV: Indicators & Questions

These questions are on *respectful discourse, discussion of taboos and clarity of diverse beliefs.* Organizations and persons with diverse beliefs, traditions and cultures may approach freedom of religion or belief from different worldviews, talking past instead of with and to each other.

Respect: not necessarily for the beliefs of others but for right of others to hold religious and non-religious beliefs different than our own as an inviolable principle of democracy. The Tandem Project lesson on *Rules for Respectful Dialogue*: <http://www.tandemproject.com/toc/toc.htm>

32. Has discussed the reasons and the need for respectful dialogue on religion or belief. Y/N

33. Discusses need for respectful dialogue among and between religions or beliefs. Y/N

34. Has written guidelines for respectful dialogue with others on religion or belief Y/N

Taboos: prohibited areas for discussion of a religion or belief agreed upon by a tradition, culture or law: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taboo>. Article 19 CCPR; *everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression. It may be subject to certain restrictions as provided by law and necessary for respect for the rights or reputations of others, or for the protection of national security, public order, public health or morals.*

35. Organization has taboos that discourage or prevent open discussion of religion or belief. Y/N

36. Defines defamation of religion within the context of freedom of opinion and expression. Y/N

37. Uses human rights-based approach to discuss taboos and defamation of religion or belief. Y/N

Clarity: ability to listen and to clearly express the core aspects of a religion or belief.

38. Organization has training to clearly discern core positions of a religion or belief. Y/N

39. Has written guidelines available for dialogue on core ideology with other organizations. Y/N

40. Refers to human rights standards on freedom of religion or belief as resource for clarity. Y/N

The Tandem Project is a non-governmental organization (NGO) founded in 1986 to build understanding, tolerance and respect for diversity, and to prevent discrimination in matters relating to freedom of religion or belief. The Tandem Project has sponsored multiple conferences, curricula, reference materials 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 1981 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief.

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

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.

United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki Moon, at the first Alliance of Civilizations Madrid Forum; “Never in our lifetime has there been a more desperate need for constructive and committed dialogue, among individuals, among communities, among cultures, among and between nations.”

In 1968 the UN deferred work on an International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Religious Intolerance because of the sensitivity and complexity of reconciling a human rights treaty with dissonant worldviews and voices on religion or belief. Instead, in 1981 the United Nations adopted a non-binding Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief in support of Article 18: http://www.tandemproject.com/program/81_dec.htm.

Separation of Religion or Belief and State reflects the far-reaching scope of UN General Comment 22 on Article 18, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1993, UN Human Rights Committee. [http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/9a30112c27d1167cc12563ed004d8f15?Opendocument](http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/9a30112c27d1167cc12563ed004d8f15?Opendocument)

Inclusive and genuine dialogue on human rights and freedom of religion or belief are between people of theistic, non-theistic and atheistic beliefs, as well as the right not to profess any religion or belief. It calls

for open dialogue on: awareness, understanding, acceptance; cooperation, competition, conflict; respectful discourse, discussion of taboos and clarity by persons of diverse beliefs.

Human rights protect freedom of religion or belief; religion or belief does not always protect human rights. In this respect human rights trump religion to protect individuals against all forms of discrimination on grounds of religion or belief by the State, institutions, groups of persons and persons. After forty years suffering, violence and conflict based on belief has increased in many parts of the world. UN options may be to gradually reduce such intolerance and discrimination or call for a new paradigm deferred since 1968.

Is it time for the UN to draft a legally binding International Convention on Freedom of Religion or Belief: [United Nations History – Freedom of Religion or Belief](#).