



31st Annual

## BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY MODEL UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE

Sponsored by the David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies  
Saturday, November 14, 2020

### SECRETARIAT

Jenna Cook  
*General Assembly Plenary*

Amanda Gach  
*United Nations Children's Fund*

Anela Hansen  
*World Health Organization*

Jake Fairchild  
*World Health Organization*

Liam Dalton  
*United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*

Anna Bryner  
*Human Rights Council I*

Brad Grisenti  
*Human Rights Council II*

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Marie Kulbeth  
*Executive Director*

Cory Leonard  
*David M. Kennedy Center Assistant Director*

Bill Perry  
*MUN Instructor*

Esteemed Delegates,

I am pleased to welcome you to the 31<sup>st</sup> annual Brigham Young University Model United Nations Conference (BYUMUN), which is a special-edition Diplomacy Camp due to COVID. My name is Anna Bryner, and I will be your director for the Human Rights Council (HRC) this year. I look forward to working with you! I am a senior at BYU majoring in communications (with a digital journalism emphasis) and minoring in political science. I spent the summer learning about the role religion has historically played in shaping public policy. I also helped to promote and host international conferences related to religious freedom. After graduation, I plan to gain some experience in public policy and eventually attend law school.

The Human Rights Council (HRC) seeks to advance and defend the human rights framework set forth in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. The HRC was created to ensure these rights are available to all people.

This year, the Human Rights Council will deliberate on the following topic: *A Framework to Allow for the Freedom of Expression and the Freedom of Religion on a Global Scale*.

This background guide will serve as an outline and a starting point for you to research our topic. This guide should not replace your individual research efforts, but rather serve as a springboard for discovering your own innovative solutions. As you prepare, I encourage you to research this topic in the context of your particular country. The more confident and knowledgeable you are in discussing your country's view on the topic, the more effective you can be.

Delegates, I wish you the best of luck as you study and prepare! Please contact me with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

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Director,  
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## Committee History

*“Human rights will be a powerful force for the transformation of reality when they are not simply understood as externally defined norms of behavior but are lived as the spontaneous manifestation of internalized values.”*

*-Daisaku Ikeda, SGI President*

### Formation of the Council

The international body of the United Nations was officially formed in 1945 as a response to the atrocities of World War II.<sup>1</sup> In 1948, the United Nations issued the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR), a seminal document that codifies the human rights of individuals across the globe.<sup>2</sup> The UDHR was adopted by the UN General Assembly and articulates the human rights framework that undergirds the activities of today’s United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC).

The UNHRC was created from what was originally the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR). The UNCHR was formed in 1946, and it established the international legal framework for dealing with fundamental human rights and freedom issues, as outlined in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. The UNCHR also acted as a forum for countries, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and individuals to voice their concerns. However, the UNCHR faced complaints that the organization included states that possessed poor human rights records, such as Eritrea and Yemen.<sup>3</sup> As a result, the United Nations General Assembly in 2006 founded the new Human Rights Council (HRC) by adopting resolution (A/RES/60/251).<sup>4</sup> The Council was established to investigate international human rights abuses such as violations against free speech, freedom of religion, women’s rights, or minority rights.<sup>5</sup> In several regards, the HRC embodies the core mission of the United Nations Charter as it seeks to promote and maintain global peace.<sup>6</sup> In pursuit of this goal, the Council’s primary objectives are to educate the world about the reality of human rights and act in advocacy to promote a world where the rights of all individuals are upheld.<sup>7</sup>

### UNHRC Structure

The UNHRC, which is based in Geneva, Switzerland, has 47 Member States elected by the UN General Assembly for staggered three-year terms on a regional group basis.<sup>8</sup> These regional

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Website: History of the Document, accessed on October 1, 2020. <http://www.un.org/en/sections/universal-declaration/history-document/index.html>

<sup>2</sup> “UN Commission on Human Rights,” OHCHR, accessed on October 1, 2020. <http://www.OHCHR.org>

<sup>3</sup> “Yemen Report,” Human Rights Watch, accessed October 1, 2020. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2018/country-chapters/yemen>

<sup>4</sup> United Nations, A/RES/60/251

<sup>5</sup> “About Council” OHCHR, accessed October 1, 2020. <ps://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/AboutCouncil.aspx>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> An overview of the United Nations Human Rights system; Hogan Lovells International LLP; Advocates for International Development ; 2012 <http://naturaljustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Intro-UNHR-System-EN.pdf>

groups include 13 Member States from Africa, 13 from Asia, 6 from Eastern Europe, 8 from Latin America and the Caribbean, and 7 from Western European and other locations.<sup>9</sup> No Member State can occupy a seat on the UNHRC for more than two consecutive terms. With a two-thirds majority vote, the General Assembly can suspend the rights and privileges of any Council Member State that has repeatedly committed gross and systematic violations of human rights during membership.<sup>10</sup> The UNHRC coordinates with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), which oversees human rights activities throughout the UN System.<sup>11</sup> The UNHRC holds sessions three times a year: March, June, and September. If one-third of the UNHRC votes in favor, the Council may hold a special session to address violations and emergencies.<sup>12</sup>

### **Functions of the Human Rights Council**

In 2007 the HRC adopted the Institution-Building package, which details procedures, mechanisms, and structures that form the basis of its work. The package included establishing the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process. The UPR provides a forum for Member States to gather and make recommendations on how to improve the human rights situations in each state under review. Every 4.5 years the UN reviews the human rights record of each Member State, which means the UN must review forty-two states each year. The UPR working group meetings provide each member the opportunity to comment on the successes and failures of each state's human rights record. After each state offers its recommendations to improve the human rights situation within the state under review, the state then either accepts or rejects the proposed recommendations.<sup>13</sup> Both the accepted and rejected recommendations are posted on the United Nations website, thereby helping to record and provide accountability for the human rights progress in each Member State.

The UNHRC is also in charge of orchestrating fact-finding missions and investigations regarding where and what types of human rights abuses are occurring internationally. There are currently eight operational fact-finding missions in place, including the Group of Eminent Experts on the situation of human rights in Yemen and Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan.<sup>14</sup>

Another aspect of the UNHRC is the Advisory Committee, which releases reports and studies on various issues such as corruption, local government operations, as well as post-disaster and post-conflict situations.<sup>15</sup> The Committee is composed of eighteen professional experts from various fields of study, and it meets twice a year. The Committee is also responsible for formulating draft declarations based on these findings to urge action by the global community.

Lastly, the Complaint Procedure is the conduit through which individuals, NGOs, and other

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> United Nations Website: History of the Document, UN, accessed October 1, 2020.

<http://www.un.org/en/sections/universal-declaration/history-document/index.html>

<sup>13</sup> United Nations Website, Universal Periodic Review Process, accessed October 1, 2020. <http://www.un.org>

<sup>14</sup> United Nations Human Rights Council website: Independent Investigations, accessed September 28, 2020. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/COIs.aspx>

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

groups voice their concerns and their complaints to the HRC. The Complaint Procedure was established in June 2007. Complaints must be written in one of the six UN official languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish. The Working Group on Communications and the Working Group on Situations are the two primary groups that analyze and assess the reliability of the complaints brought to the HRC.<sup>16</sup> The UN then determines whether further action will be taken.

## **Conclusion**

The Human Rights Council is the primary body dedicated to ensuring the global realization of the rights enshrined in the UDHR. The UNHRC is responsible for identifying human rights violations and recommending solutions to address them. The Council has the prerogative to discuss all thematic human rights issues and situations that may require its attention.

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<sup>16</sup> United Nations Human Rights Council Booklet, accessed on October 1, 2020.  
file:///C:/Users/SAJ/Desktop/HRC\_booklet\_En.pdf 15

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*This page on the OHCHR webpages gives information on the framework and the structure of the UN commission on human rights.*

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**[https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/A.RES.60.251\\_En.pdf](https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/A.RES.60.251_En.pdf).**

*The Resolution adopted by the General assembly that established the Human Rights Council.*

**United Nations Human Rights Council Booklet, file:///C:/Users/SAJ/Desktop/HRC\_booklet\_En.pdf\_17.**

*This is a booklet on the HRC webpage that gives quick facts about the HRC.*

**United Nations Website: History of the Document, <http://www.un.org/en/sections/universal-declaration/history-document/index.html>.**

*This article on the UN webpage is the history of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which is a foundational piece central to human rights issues at the UN.*

**United Nations Website, Universal Periodic Review Process, accessed October 1, 2020.**

**<http://www.un.org>.**

*This article is on the Universal Periodic Review Process that is part of the HRC. The UN webpage has information on the many structures within the United Nations system.*

**“Yemen Report,” Human Rights Watch, accessed October 1, 2020. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2018/country-chapters/yemen>.**

*The Human Rights Watch is a international nongovernmental organization that reports on acts of human rights violations globally. This article is on the specific violations in the Yemen conflict.*

## I. Constructing a Framework to Allow for the Freedom of Speech and the Freedom of Religion or Belief on a Global Scale

*“I perceived clearly that I was participating in a truly significant historic event in which a consensus had been reached as to the supreme value of the human person, a value that did not originate in the decision of a worldly power, but rather in the fact of existing”*

*-Hernán Santa Cruz, member of the drafting subcommittee of  
the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

### Introduction

Following the atrocities committed against humanity in the Second World War, the UN General Assembly adopted *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) in 1948.<sup>17</sup> The development and adoption of the UDHR was a joint effort on behalf of over 50 member states. The UDHR was designed to complement the UN charter by articulating the human rights of all people.<sup>18</sup> Two of the articles in the UDHR establish the interconnected rights of freedom of religion or belief and freedom of speech.<sup>19</sup> Article 18 asserts the right of all people to “freedom of thought, conscience, and religion,” including the right to change religion, and also the right of each person to “manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.”<sup>20</sup> Article 19 articulates the right of each person to “freedom of opinion and expression,” including the right to “receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”<sup>21</sup> Since the adoption of the UDHR, the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) and the General Assembly (GA) have further defined these rights in several resolutions.

Securing in tandem the rights of freedom of religion or belief and freedom of speech remains a challenge for the UN. In particular, the proliferation of digital platforms and the consequences of COVID-19 pose difficulties for maintaining these rights individually and in harmony with each other. While the development and popularity of digital platforms has increased mediums of expression, it has also opened up new ways to harass and discriminate based on religious beliefs and individual opinion.

In August of 2020, UN Secretary-General António Guterres noted that during the COVID-19 pandemic there has been a surge of hate speech and that religious believers across the world continue to be targeted in hostile speech and action.<sup>22</sup> Antisemitism is on the rise across the globe, and perpetrators have turned to digital networks to propagate hate speech, that include, among

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<sup>17</sup> UN History of the Document, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, <http://www.un.org/en/sections/universal-declaration/history-document/index.html>

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 10 December 1948

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> “Religious Hate Crimes, Racist Discourse Rising amid COVID-19, Secretary-General Warns in Observance Message, Urging Greater Inclusion, Respect for Diversity,” United Nations, 20 August 2020, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/sgsm20214.doc.htm>.

other untruths, conspiracy theories about Jews causing COVID-19.<sup>23</sup>

Facebook, like other social media platforms, has consistently played host not only to hate speech but also to communications necessary to plan violent acts. Myanmar military personnel, for example, used the platform as a tool in conducting a genocide against the state's Rohingya Muslim minority group.<sup>24</sup> Muslims living in the Indian state of Assam have also faced violence initiated through Facebook.<sup>25</sup> These and similar conflicts around the world demonstrate the inherent difficulties in striving to maintain both freedom of religion or belief and freedom of speech, especially in a digital era.

### **Existing Framework for Freedom of Religion**

GA resolution 36/55 calls for “elimination of all forms of intolerance and of discrimination based on religion or belief.”<sup>26</sup> The resolution defines discrimination as “any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence whether it involves the use of print, audiovisual and electronic media or any other means.”<sup>27</sup> The resolution calls upon member states “to ensure that their constitutional and legislative systems provide adequate and effective guarantees of freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief to all without distinction” and that member states should “design and implement policies whereby education systems promote principles of tolerance and respect for others and cultural diversity and the freedom of religion.”<sup>28</sup>

In 2000 the UNHRC established the position of Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, which was endorsed by GA resolution 55/97.<sup>29</sup> According to HRC resolution 6/37, the Special Rapporteur's mandates include promoting religious freedom protections, identifying existing and emerging obstacles to religious freedom, examining governmental actions that discriminate against religion, and staying attuned to gender-specific issues.<sup>30</sup> The Special Rapporteur, currently Mr. Ahmed Shaheed, also publishes thematic reports on religious freedom issues. One of his most recent publications, “Report on combating antisemitism to eliminate discrimination and intolerance based on religion or belief,” calls for a “human rights-based approach” to combating antisemitism and all forms of religious intolerance. According to the

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<sup>23</sup> “Antisemitism Worldwide 2019 and the Beginning of 2020,” ed. by Esther Webman, Tel Aviv University, [https://en-humanities.tau.ac.il/sites/humanities\\_en.tau.ac.il/files/media\\_server/humanities/kantor/Kantor%20Report%202020\\_130820.pdf](https://en-humanities.tau.ac.il/sites/humanities_en.tau.ac.il/files/media_server/humanities/kantor/Kantor%20Report%202020_130820.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> Paul Mozur, “A Genocide Incited on Facebook, With Posts From Myanmar's Military,” *New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/15/technology/myanmar-facebook-genocide.html>

<sup>25</sup> Roli Srivastava, “Facebook a ‘megaphone for hate’ against Indian minorities,” *Reuters*, 30 October 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-facebook-india-content/facebook-a-megaphone-for-hate-against-indian-minorities-idUSKBN1X929F>.

<sup>26</sup> UN Human Rights Council, *Resolutions and Decisions on the Mandate*, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomReligion/Pages/Resolutions.aspx>

<sup>27</sup> UNHRC, *Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief*, [http://ap.ohchr.org/Documents/E/HRC/resolutions/A\\_HRC\\_RES\\_6\\_37.pdf](http://ap.ohchr.org/Documents/E/HRC/resolutions/A_HRC_RES_6_37.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> OHCHR, *Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief*, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomReligion/Pages/FreedomReligionIndex.aspx>

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

report, a human-rights based approach involves taking measures to promote democratic societies that foster critical thinking and thereby become resilient to extremist ideology.<sup>31</sup> In addition to promoting a human rights-based approach, Mr. Shaheed has recently emphasized, amidst an uptick of religious intolerance during the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for civil society and states to curb hate speech and promote inclusive dialogue.<sup>32</sup>

### **Existing Framework for Freedom of Expression**

The Human Rights Council and the General Assembly have referred to freedom of expression as one of the essential foundations of a democratic society and an essential element for development (Human Rights Council resolution 21/12).<sup>33</sup> The freedom of expression guarantees the right to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers and through any media, including in the form of art.<sup>34</sup> The UN has extended this to include the internet as well as journalism through Council resolutions 20/8, 26/13 and 32/13. While freedom of expression is an essential human right, UDHR Article 19 makes clear that it is not an unlimited right. Rather, it is subject to restrictions necessary to respect the rights or reputations of others and protect national security, public order, public health or morals.<sup>35</sup>

In 1993 the UNHRC established the position of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression.<sup>36</sup> The duties of the Special Rapporteur include gathering information on violations of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; corresponding with governments for information regarding rights violations; providing recommendations to better promote the freedom of expression; and contributing insights and recommendations to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.<sup>37</sup>

In light of COVID-19 concerns, current Special Rapporteur Ms. Irene Khan recently published a report on “disease pandemics and the freedom of opinion and expression.”<sup>38</sup> The report claims the pandemic can be seen as “a crisis of free expression” for individuals who are restricted in their sources of information to only politicized or agenda-driven statements by their government leaders— without accurate information, individuals cannot make informed choices.<sup>39</sup> According

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<sup>31</sup> “Elimination of all forms of religious intolerance,” United Nations General Assembly, 20 September 2019, <https://undocs.org/A/74/358>.

<sup>32</sup> “UN expert warns against religious hatred and intolerance during COVID-19 outbreak,” United Nations, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25814&LangID=E>.

<sup>33</sup> General Assembly (A/GA/71/373) *Promotion and Protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression*, 2016

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> “Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of freedom of opinion and expression,” United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, accessed 2 October 2020, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/freedomopinion/pages/opinionindex.aspx>.

<sup>37</sup> “About the mandate,” United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, accessed 2 October 2020, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomOpinion/Pages/mandate.aspx>.

<sup>38</sup> “Disease pandemics and the freedom of opinion and expression,” UN, accessed 2 October 2020, <https://www.undocs.org/A/HRC/44/49>.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

to the report, preserving the free flow of information is essential, though misinformation and hateful information must be called out.<sup>40</sup>

### **Reconciling Tensions Between Freedom of Religion or Belief and Freedom of Expression**

While the freedom of religion or belief and the freedom of expression sometimes come in tension, they are largely mutually reinforcing rights.<sup>41</sup> UDHR Articles 18 and 19 are based on the unconditional protection of the *forum internum*—a person’s internal thoughts and beliefs. According to the Special Rapporteur for freedom of religion or belief in 2016, Articles 18 and 19 do not stand in inherent opposition to each other but rather are largely interrelated.<sup>42</sup> For example, freedom of expression allows individuals to exercise their freedom of religion or belief by enabling individuals to express their beliefs. Both freedoms are underlaid by the UDHR’s foundational notion that the “inherent dignity” and “equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family” demand these freedoms for all people.<sup>43</sup>

Tensions between these fundamental freedoms tend to arise when the unlimited application of both rights is impossible; that is, when the total realization of one right might impede the total realization of another.<sup>44</sup> In trying to address these tensions, some governments narrowly focus on individual, private dimensions of these rights while paying inadequate attention to community-related, institutional, and systemic aspects.<sup>45</sup> Some governments promote a particular religion or belief, often as part of their national heritage, and in doing so censor or chill freedom of opinion and expression as well as freedom of religion or belief.<sup>46</sup>

In 2016, then-Special Rapporteur Heiner Bielefeldt suggested that many controversies arise due to problematic restrictions on either freedom, such as unclear anti-hate laws, blasphemy laws, and criminalization of ill-defined superiority claims.<sup>47</sup> Mr. Bielefeldt’s report called upon all member states to share their best practices when seeking to implement Articles 18 and 19 in accordance with HRC resolution 16/18 on “combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence, and violence against persons based on religion or belief.”<sup>48</sup> In 2017, the UNHRC focused on the challenges in reconciling Articles 18 and 19 by adopting two resolutions. The first focused on presenting an agenda for operationalizing these rights across the United Nations system; the second focused on the gap

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Human Rights Council Resolution (A/HRC/31/18) *Two closely interrelated rights: freedom of religion or belief and freedom of opinion and expression*. 2017

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> General Assembly, *Elimination of All Forms of Religious Intolerance*, [https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Religion/A-71-269\\_en.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Religion/A-71-269_en.pdf)

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> UNHRC Special Rapporteur Report, Heiner Bielefeldt, *Freedoms of religion and of expression: “Twin rights” in fighting incitement to hatred*, GENEVA, 9 March 2016.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

between national practices and international commitments in combating intolerant acts.<sup>49 50</sup>

### **Challenges to Freedom of Religion and Freedom of Expression in the COVID-19 Era**

The public health interests of the COVID-19 pandemic have caused drastic and even unprecedented restrictions on freedom of religion or belief. One of the most severe forms of restriction has been the varying governmental restrictions on public gatherings.<sup>51</sup> Not only have religious observers been unable to participate in traditional worship services, they have also been denied rituals, practices, and ordinances viewed as essential to their spiritual well-being and even salvation. While some religious groups have turned to digital platforms for alternative forms of worship, many religions maintain that their sacred rites cannot be administered virtually.<sup>52</sup> For some religions, such as the Amish in the United States, turning to technology would violate their religious beliefs.<sup>53</sup> While facing severe restrictions, many religious groups have been blamed for causing or spreading the virus.<sup>54</sup>

Freedom of expression has also been affected by the pandemic. Because of the urgent need for accurate public health information to be communicated in a timely manner, tech companies have censored more data than usual; however, they have not always accounted directly to the public for this censorship or provided redress for improperly censored media.<sup>55</sup> Human rights organization Article 19 has warned of several potential problems member states should be alerted to, including the possibility of public officials trying to limit or censor criticism of their handling of the pandemic and the potential silencing of whistleblowers who seek to point out gaps or falsehoods in governmental communications.<sup>56</sup>

In some cases, government practices already in violation of freedom of expression have amplified consequences; for example, intentional internet shutdowns and restrictions in Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, and Pakistan have prevented individuals from obtaining

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<sup>49</sup> HRC (A/HRC/34/50), *Identification of persistent challenges and emerging trends and presenting an agenda for operationalizing the right to freedom of religion or belief within and across the United Nations system and beyond*, 2017.

<sup>50</sup> HRC (A/72/365), *The increase in religious intolerance worldwide and the gap between international commitments to combat intolerant acts and national practices*, 2017.

<sup>51</sup> James G. Hodge, Jr., Hanna Reinke, and Claudia Reeves, "Balancing Religious Freedoms and Public Health Protections During the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Berkley Forum* at Georgetown University Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs, 3 June 2020, <https://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/responses/balancing-religious-freedoms-and-public-health-protections-during-the-covid-19-pandemic>.

<sup>52</sup> "Who Can Receive Holy Communion?" Catholic Answers, accessed 2 October 2020, <https://www.catholic.com/tract/who-can-receive-communion>.

<sup>53</sup> Jen Samuel, "Virtual religious services not an option for Amish community," *Daily Local News*, 6 May 2020, [https://www.dailylocal.com/news/local/virtual-religious-services-not-an-option-for-amish-community/article\\_ebf5169e-8ef3-11ea-a03d-07189a49d19b.html](https://www.dailylocal.com/news/local/virtual-religious-services-not-an-option-for-amish-community/article_ebf5169e-8ef3-11ea-a03d-07189a49d19b.html).

<sup>54</sup> "COVID-19 and Religious Minorities Pandemic Statement," U.S. State Department, 20 August 2020, <https://www.state.gov/covid-19-and-religious-minorities-pandemic-statement/>.

<sup>55</sup> "Europe: EU Communication on tackling coronavirus disinformation," ARTICLE19, 11 June 2020, <https://www.article19.org/resources/europe-eu-communication-on-tackling-coronavirus-disinformation/>.

<sup>56</sup> "Advances in freedom of information under threat during coronavirus pandemic," ARTICLE19, 11 May 2020, <https://www.article19.org/resources/advances-in-freedom-of-information-under-threat-during-coronavirus-pandemic/>.

important information about COVID-19.<sup>57</sup> In general, citizens of countries with limited freedom of information face severe challenges in preserving their health and safety without reliable and varying sources of information.

### **Questions to Consider**

1. Recognizing the legitimate public health interest in curbing the spread of COVID-19, what principles should guide restrictions on freedom of religion or belief in the time of a pandemic?
2. What policies could help to prevent the potential consequences to freedom of expression posed by COVID-19?
3. When freedom of religion or belief and freedom of expression come in tension with each other, should one always be given preference? If so, what principles might determine this position?
4. What mechanisms are essential for a framework where freedom of religion or belief and freedom of expression are secured in tandem?
5. What role should political bodies play in regulating digital platforms? What role should digital platforms play in regulating against hate speech and misinformation?
6. What solutions could address problematic restrictions such as unclear anti-hate laws, criminalization of ill-defined superiority claims, and blasphemy laws?

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<sup>57</sup> “#KeepItOn: Open letter to WHO Deputy Director-General to urge the governments to end shutdowns amid COVID-19,” ARTICLE19, 26 May 2020, <https://www.article19.org/resources/keepiton-open-letter-to-who-deputy-director-general-to-urge-the-governments-to-end-shutdowns-amid-covid-19/>.

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