

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 and State

CALL FOR RESPECTFUL, INCLUSIVE & GENUINE HUMAN RIGHTS DIALOGUE

**CORE PRINCIPLES: ASSIMILATION & MULTICULTURALISM
SEPARATION OF RELIGION OR BELIEF AND STATE**

ISSUE: Everyone has a traditional or non-traditional paradigm, dogma, creed, truth claim, mythology, allegory, animism, atheism, agnosticism, paganism, spiritual or ethical core principle. Most people for one reason or another assume their core principles are morally superior to others. Anders Behring Breivik, the ethnic Norwegian perpetrator of the most horrific acts of terrorism in Norway since WW II, is an extreme expression of moral superiority. In an opinion page article in the New York Times, 31 July 2011, by Thomas Hegghammer, Senior Research Fellow of the Norwegian Defense Research Establishment, Breivik is quoted as saying he is “extremely proud of his Odinic/Norse heritage and while he is Christian admits ‘I’m not a very religious person.’ “While Breivik’s violent acts are exceptional, his anti-Islamic views are not. His goal is to reverse what he views as the Islamization of Western Europe.” Breivik does an injustice to his Norwegian heritage. He has a misguided xenophobic view of nationalism that does not accept religious or political beliefs other than his own inside and outside of Norway.

I.

LESSONS

Intolerance, negative stereotyping, discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons is an increasing a concern as this UN Human Rights Council panel discussion illustrates calling for open public debate of ideas, interfaith and intercultural dialogue at local, national and international levels, to strengthen democracy and combat existing misperceptions and hatreds based on religion or belief.

[UN Human Rights Council Panel Discussion - Culture of Tolerance and Peace - 14 June 2011](#)

Lesson: Limitations to Manifest a Religion or Belief:

http://www.tandemproject.com/part2/article1/art1_3.htm

Lesson: Discrimination by the State, Institutions, Groups, Person:

http://www.tandemproject.com/part2/article2/art2_1.htm

Lesson: Concept & Method: Freedom of Religion or Belief

http://www.tandemproject.com/part1/concepts_methods/concepts_methods.htm

Reply: Inter-active C&C Database for text box reply to Eight Article Internet Course Lessons:

<http://www.tandemproject.com/databases/forms/card.htm>

[Assimilation's Failure, Terrorism's Rise](#)

II.

BACKGROUND

[Background – Human Rights & Freedom of Religion or Belief](#)

“Article 18 protects theistic, non-theistic and atheistic beliefs, as well as the right not to profess any religion or belief. The terms "belief" and "religion" are to be broadly construed. Article 18 is not limited in its application to traditional religions or to religions and beliefs with institutional characteristics or practices analogous to those of traditional religions. The Committee therefore views with concern any tendency to discriminate against any religion or belief for any reason, including the fact that they are newly established, or represent religious minorities that may be the subject of hostility on the part of a predominant religious community.” “The Committee observes that the concept of morals derives from many social, philosophical and religious traditions; consequently, limitations on the freedom to manifest a religion or belief for the purpose of protecting morals must be based on principles not deriving exclusively from a single tradition.” – *General Comment 22 on Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. UN Human Rights Committee, 1993.*

“Until recently, many influential analysts argued that religion, a vestige of an earlier stage of human development, would wither away as people became more sophisticated and rational. Obviously, things have not turned out that way. Indeed, the 21st century will be dominated by religion in ways that were inconceivable just a few years ago. Religious conflict will be less a matter of struggles between belief and unbelief than of clashes between believers who make room for doubt and those who do not. The warning signs are clear: unless we establish a genuine dialogue within and among all kinds of belief, ranging from religious fundamentalism to secular dogmatism, the conflicts of the future will probably be even more deadly.” – *The Devoted Student, Mark C. Taylor, Williams College, New York Times Op Ed, 21 December 2006.*

http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/21/opinion/21taylor.html?_r=1&pagewanted=print&oref=slogin

III.

SEPARATION OF RELIGION OR BELIEF AND STATE

[Can a person who is Muslim choose a religion other than Islam?](#)

Human Rights Lesson – Coercion and Freedom to Choose on Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the 1981 UN Declaration on the Elimination of all Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief.

The question *Can a person who is Muslim choose a religion other than Islam?* is from an article in *The Economist* asked of Ali Gomaa, Grand Mufti of Egypt: <http://www.aligomaa.net/>. Shari'ah Law is a respected religious paradigm linked here to Human Rights Law, a secular paradigm on Freedom of Religion or Belief: [Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam](#)

Objective

Separation of Religion or Belief and State

The right of all persons to their own values, cultural identity and core principles based on religion or belief, separate from the state *in tandem with* international human rights law on freedom of religion or belief for the common good.

Lesson: http://www.tandemproject.com/part2/article1/art1_2.htm

Reply: http://www.tandemproject.com/databases/forms/card_int.htm#1_2

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.

Can a person who is Muslim choose a religion other than Islam? In *The Economist* article many Muslims found it an affront to Islamic traditions and cultural norms to even ask the question. For others, Muslims and non-Muslims, not to have the right to change one's religion or belief is seen as coercion and a challenge to the universality of human rights.

IV.

International Human Rights Law on Freedom of Religion or Belief

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 provides equal protection against discrimination for all members of all religions and beliefs or no belief.

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

UN History 1948-2010 - Freedom of Religion or Belief:

<http://www.tandemproject.com/program/history.htm>

V.

2007 - UN Human Rights Council Resolution Adopted Without Consensus

Resolution A/HRC/6/L.15/Rev.1 sponsored by Portugal in 2007 on behalf of the European Union (EU) was **not adopted by consensus** in the sixth session of the UN Human Rights Council. Abstentions were based on objections from Pakistan speaking on behalf of the 57 country Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) that **norms in Muslim countries prohibit leaving Islam as a religion** and were not being honored in the draft resolution.

http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/E/HRC/resolutions/A_HRC_RES_6_37.pdf

2011- UN Human Rights Council Resolution Adopted By Consensus

Resolution A/HRC/16/18 - Combating Intolerance, Negative Stereotyping, Discrimination and Incitement to Violence & Violence Against Persons Based on Religion or Belief

Introduced by Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) adopted by consensus without a vote by the UN Human Rights Council on 24 March 2011.

[UN Human Rights Council Panel Discussion - Culture of Tolerance and Peace - 14 June 2011](#)

VII.

Somalia: Draft Shari'ah Law

The *Human Rights Lesson – Coercion and Freedom to Choose* uses the Draft Constitution of the Federal Republic of Somalia. The Draft Constitution of the Federal Republic of Somalia has 179 articles under Shari'ah Law. Article 22, Freedom of Religion and Belief, states **no Muslim can renounce Islam**. Each constitution under Shari'ah Law has different wording but the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) countries seem to agree, **constitutions, national laws and religious norms** prohibit leaving Islam.

[FINAL CDC 30 July ENG](#); [FINAL ISSUES QUESTIONS 30 JULY ENG](#); [Final Main Consultation 30 July - ENG](#)

Somalia: LEAD a Prototype Strategy

- *Law, Education, Analysis, Development (LEAD)*, a human rights strategy to synthesize four components of the 1986 international conference on *Tolerance for Diversity of Religion or Belief*.

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

1. Law--ways in which efforts can be supported to examine international legal structures; national constitutions, national and local legislation, to make sure there is a legal framework for the Declaration in each nation-state of the U.N; **2. Education**--ways in which broadly-based programs of education can be developed at all levels in schools, government, universities, voluntary organizations, and the media; **3. Analysis**--ways in which special studies, research, and curricula can be developed

in theological seminaries, universities, and colleges to combat and to eliminate intolerance based on religion or belief; **4. Development**--ways in which organizations of diverse ideologies may be able to work together on humanitarian service projects in the "name and spirit" of tolerance, with mutual understanding and respect for each other.

Just a few weeks ago, I attended a meeting of political scientists who had gathered to discuss why international relations theory had never considered the role of religion in society. Given the state of the world today, this is a significant oversight. There can be no adequate understanding of the most important issues we face when disciplines are cloistered from one another and operate on their own premises. It would be far more effective to bring together people working on questions of religion, politics, history, economics, anthropology, sociology, literature, art, religion and philosophy to engage in comparative analysis of common problems. – New York Times Op-Ed: April 27, 2009, Mark C. Taylor, Chairman of the Religion Department, Columbia University, New York.

VII.

Norway: Universal Periodic Review & Freedom of Religion or Belief

[Norway – Universal Periodic Review & Freedom of Religion or Belief](#)

VIII.

Conference, Course, Paper and Questionnaire

The Tandem Project 1986 international conference on *Tolerance for Diversity of Religion or Belief*. <http://www.tandemproject.com/tolerance.pdf>. still relevant in 2011.

The Tandem Project Internet Course on the 1981 UN Declaration on Freedom of Religion or Belief: <http://www.tandemproject.com/toc/toc.htm>

The Tandem Project Paper ; [United Nations History – Religion, Science & Inquiry](#)

Indicators to measure **inclusive and genuine** awareness and understanding of International Human Rights Law on Freedom of Religion or Belief. [QUESTIONNAIRE](#)

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 all 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.

In 1968 the United Nations deferred work on a legally-binding treaty on religious intolerance as too complex and sensitive and passed a non-binding declaration in its place. 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.

[Core Principles – Assimilation & Multiculturalism – Separation of Religion or Belief and State](#)