

**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*

**UN Universal Periodic Review in six languages**

**Universal Periodic Review - India**



<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/insession1.aspx>

General Comment 22 on Article 18 of the International Covenant on Political and Civil Rights  
[http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/9a30112c27d1167cc12563ed004d8f15?Opendocument](http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/9a30112c27d1167cc12563ed004d8f15?Opendocument)

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UPR-info is an NGO with recommendations, a database and other information, **India**  
<http://www.upr-info.org/-India,30-.html>

UPR-info Second Cycle Recommendations on Freedom of Religion and Belief, **India**  
<http://www.upr-info.org/database/>

Mauritius: Share best practices in the promotion and protection of human rights taking into account the multi-religious, multi-cultural and multi-ethnic nature of Indian Society.

Tunisia: Continue efforts to allow for a harmonious life in a multi-religious, multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-lingual society.

For UN Member States to have only two recommendations in the UPR-info database is to miss the mark on highlighting the formidable nature of religion or belief in India and demonstrates the need for more in-depth diplomatic understanding of the complex and sensitive challenge of the UN mandate to protect the rights of all religions and beliefs. See U.S. State Department 2010 Religious Freedom Report for 2010 (below).

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### **THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA**

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitution\\_of\\_India](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitution_of_India)

<http://indiacode.nic.in/coiweb/welcome.html>

Government website: Constitution of India up to Ninety-Seventh Amendment Act of 2011

#### *Right to Freedom of Religion*

25. Freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion.
  26. Freedom to manage religious affairs.
  27. Freedom as to payment of taxes for promotion of any particular religion.
  28. Freedom as to attendance at religious instruction or religious worship in certain educational institutions.
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### **FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF**

1948: UN General Assembly as : <http://www.tandemproject.com/program/history.htm>

1986: First International NGO Conference: <http://www.tandemproject.com/tolerance.pdf>

2000: UN General Assembly adopts term for the mandate: [1998 UN Conference Report](#)

2012: UN General Assembly RES/66/167 on Freedom of Religion or Belief: [Your View](#)

The UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief

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

U.S. Department of State 2010 International Religious Freedom Report, **India**

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2010/148792.htm>

## **Excerpt:**

**November 17, 2010**

The constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, some state-level laws and policies restricted this freedom.

The national government generally respected, provided incentives for, and intervened to protect religious freedom; however, some state and local governments imposed limits on this freedom. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom by the government during the reporting period.

The country is the birthplace of several religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism, and home for more than a thousand years of Jewish, Zoroastrian, Muslim, and Christian communities. The vast majority of citizens of all religious groups lived in peaceful coexistence and were conscious of religious freedom and minority rights; however, there were some instances of religious violence between religious groups and organized communal attacks against religious minorities during the reporting period. The Ministry of Home Affairs published in its Annual Report 2009-10 that 826 communal incidents occurred in 2009, in which 125 persons died, compared to 943 incidents in 2008 in which 167 persons died. State governments also reported communal incidents. The country's democratic system, open society, independent legal institutions, vibrant civil society, and free press actively provided mechanisms to address violations of religious freedom when they occurred.

The U.S. government discusses religious freedom with the government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. During meetings with senior government officials, including the country's senior leadership as well as state and local officials, and religious community leaders, senior U.S. officials discussed reports of harassment of minorities groups and missionaries, the 2002 communal riots in Gujarat, and the 2008 violence against Christians in Orissa and Karnataka.

### **Section I. Religious Demography**

According to the 2001 census, the country has an area of 1.3 million square miles and a population of 1.15 billion. Hindus constitute 80.5 percent of the population, Muslims 13.4 percent, Christians 2.3 percent, and Sikhs 1.9 percent. Groups that constitute less than 1.1 percent of the population include Buddhists, Jains, Parsis (Zoroastrians), Jews, and Baha'is. Slightly more than 85 percent of Muslims are Sunni; the rest are Shi'a. Tribal groups (indigenous groups historically outside the caste system), which are generally included among Hindus in government statistics often practice traditional indigenous religious beliefs (animism).

There are large Muslim populations in the states of Uttar Pradesh (UP), Bihar, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Kerala; Muslims are the majority in Jammu and Kashmir. Although Muslims are a minority, the country has the world's second-largest Muslim population. Christian populations are found across the country but in greater concentrations in the northeast, as well as in the southern states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Goa. Three small northeastern states (Nagaland, Mizoram, and Meghalaya) have large Christian majorities. Sikhs are a majority in the state of Punjab.

Approximately 200 million persons, or 17 percent of the population, belong to the Scheduled Castes (SC), also known as Dalits and Scheduled Tribes (ST). Some converted from Hinduism to other religions, ostensibly to escape discrimination since many SC and ST members continued to face impediments to social advancement. Discrimination based on caste was officially illegal but remained prevalent, especially in rural areas. Some who converted from a desire to escape discrimination and violence encountered hostility and backlash from

upper castes.

Under the 1992 National Commission for Minorities Act, five religious communities--Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Parsis, and Buddhists--were considered minority communities.

## **Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom**

### **Legal/Policy Framework**

The secular constitution provides for freedom of religion as a fundamental right, and other laws and policies contributed to the generally free practice of religion. Some state and local governments, which hold responsibility under the constitution for law and order, limited this freedom by maintaining or enforcing existing "anticonversion" legislation and by not efficiently or effectively prosecuting those who attacked religious minorities. Despite strong official legal protections for minorities, weak law enforcement, a lack of trained police, and an overburdened court system played a role in exacerbating communal tensions.

The national government, led by the United Progressive Alliance (UPA), continued to implement an inclusive and secular platform that included respect for the right to religious freedom. Despite the national government's rejection of Hindutva (Hindu nationalism), a few state and local governments continued to be influenced by Hindutva.

The law generally provided remedy for violations of religious freedom, however, due to a lack of sufficient trained police and corruption, the law was not always enforced rigorously or effectively in some cases pertaining to religiously oriented violence. Legal protections existed to cover discrimination or persecution by private actors.

The country's political system is federal and gives state governments primary jurisdiction over law enforcement and the maintenance of order, which limited the national government's capacity to deal directly with state level abuses, including abuses of religious freedom. The national law enforcement agency, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), cannot investigate a crime committed in a state without the state government's permission; however, in some instances, the national government's law enforcement authorities have intervened to maintain order when state governments were reluctant or unwilling to do so.

The Ministry for Minority Affairs, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), and the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) are governmental bodies created to investigate allegations of religious and other forms of discrimination and make recommendations for redress to the relevant local or national government authorities. Although NHRC recommendations do not have the force of law, central and local authorities generally followed them. The NCM and NHRC intervened in several instances of communal tension; the enactment of "anticonversion" legislation in several states; and incidents of harassment and violence against minorities. Such intervention included high profile cases, such as the 2002 anti-Muslim violence in Gujarat and the 2008 attacks against Christians in Orissa. The national government earmarked \$552 million (approximately 26 billion Rupees) for 2010-11--an increase of 50 percent from the prior year--for the Ministry of Minority Affairs.

On December 9, 2009, the Ministry of Minority Affairs informed the parliament that the NCM had received 2,250 complaints in 2008-09. The Muslim community submitted the most complaints.

Despite government efforts to foster communal harmony, some extremists continued to view ineffective

investigation and prosecution of attacks on religious minorities as a signal that they could commit such violence with impunity, although numerous cases were in the courts at the end of the reporting period.

The government introduced the Communal Violence (Prevention, Control and Rehabilitation of Victims) Bill in the Rajya Sabha, the upper house of parliament, in 2005. A parliamentary standing committee rejected the bill and called for a new law that provided for speedy prosecution; strict punishment for perpetrators of sectarian violence; and quick justice, relief, rehabilitation, and compensation for victims and survivors.

The country established a National Commission for Minority Education Institutions that was empowered to resolve disputes and investigate complaints regarding violations of minority rights, including the right to establish and administer educational institutions.

Federal and state laws that related to religion included the 1976 Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), several state level "anticonversion" laws, the Andhra Pradesh antipropagation law, the 1967 Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, the 1988 Religious Institutions (Prevention of Misuse) Act, the 1946 Foreigners Act, and the 1869 Indian Divorce Act.

The FCRA regulates foreign contributions to nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), including faith-based NGOs. Some organizations complained that the FCRA prevented them from properly financing humanitarian and educational activities.

There are active "anticonversion" laws in six of the 28 states: Gujarat, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Arunachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Himachal Pradesh. In August 2009 the regulations needed for enforcement of the Arunachal Pradesh's laws were adopted. Gujarat has a Freedom of Religion Act (2003) and Rules (2008) which proscribed religious conversions by means of allurement, force, or fraud. At the end of the reporting period, no court date had been set for the challenge by civic groups of the constitutional validity of the 2003 act and 2008 rules. There were reports of arrests but no convictions under these laws during the reporting period.

Local authorities on occasion relied upon certain sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), which in general emphasize preserving social harmony rather than individual freedoms, to arrest persons engaged in religious activities. For example, IPC section 153A prohibits "promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, and doing acts prejudicial to maintenance of harmony." IPC section 295A prohibits "deliberate and malicious acts, intended to outrage religious feelings or any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs."

Himachal Pradesh's state assembly passed the Freedom of Religion Act in 2006, and the governor signed it into law in 2007. The law states, "No person shall convert or attempt to convert, either directly or otherwise, any person from one religion to another by the use of force or by inducement or by any other fraudulent means nor shall any person abet any such conversion." There were no reports of prosecutions under this law during the reporting period. The law stipulated punishment of up to two years' imprisonment and/or a fine of \$625 (25,000 Rupees) and increased penalties if SC/ST members or minors are involved. The law also requires a Notice of Intention to be filed 30 days' before any act of conversion, except for acts of reconversion.

Under legal provisions in the states of Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh (MP), it was prohibited "to convert or attempt to convert, either directly or otherwise, any person from one religious faith to another by the use force or by allurement." Since 2007 state governments have proposed changes to the law that would require notification prior to any act of conversion. The national government had not approved the amendments at the end of the reporting period.

The 1967 Orissa Freedom of Religion Act states, "No person shall convert or attempt to convert, either directly or otherwise, any person from one religious faith to another by the use of force or by inducement or by any fraudulent means nor shall any person abet any such conversion." Penalties for breaking the law included imprisonment, a fine, or both, and are harsher if the offense involved minors, women, or an SC/ST member. The law also required that district magistrates maintain a list of religious organizations and individuals propagating religious beliefs, that individuals provide notification prior to conversion, and that clergy declare the intent to officiate in a conversion ceremony. There were no reports of district magistrates denying permission for religious conversions or of convictions under the act during the reporting period.

The 1967 Unlawful Activities Prevention Act empowered the government to ban religious organizations that provoked intercommunity friction, have been involved in terrorism or sedition, or violated the 1976 FCRA.

There were no requirements for religious groups to be licensed; however, the government prohibited foreign missionaries of any religious group from entering the country without prior clearance and usually expelled those who performed missionary work without the correct visa. There was no national law barring a citizen or foreigner from professing or propagating religious beliefs.

The country's law has several sections which prohibited hate speech and provided penalties for illustrations, speech, or writings that insult the religion or religious beliefs of any regional group, caste, or community.

In 2007 Andhra Pradesh enacted the Propagation of Other Religions in the Places of Worship or Prayer (Prohibition) Law. Thus far the state has identified only Hindu religious sites for this protection. Punishment for violations of the act can include imprisonment up to three years and fines up to \$125 (5,312 Rupees). To date there have been no prosecutions under the act. A fact finding team from the NCM found that the prohibition was not in line with the constitution's protections of freedom of religion, adding that the IPC had provisions sufficient to deal with offenses committed in places of worship.

The states of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal have laws regulating the construction of public religious buildings and the use of public places for religious purposes.

The 1989 Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) (Prevention of Atrocities) Act listed offenses, including those pertaining to religious duties and practices, against disadvantaged persons and provided for steep penalties for offenders.

Article 17 of the constitution outlawed untouchability; however, many members of lower castes remained in a disadvantageous position, particularly in rural areas. The government continued to implement an elaborate affirmative action system that reserved government jobs and places in higher education institutions for SC/ST members belonging to the Hindu, Sikh, and Buddhist religious groups, but not for Christians or Muslims.

There were no updates on a court case filed by Christian groups demanding that SC converts to Christianity and Islam enjoy the same access to reservations as other SCs. The case was appealed to the Supreme Court, which had not ruled by the end of the reporting period.

Under article 25 of the constitution Sikhism, Jainism, and Buddhism are considered sects of Hinduism; however, these groups viewed themselves as unique and sought to introduce their own separate personal laws. Sikhs sought a separately codified body of law that recognizes their uniqueness and precludes ambiguity. The 1992 NCM Act identified Buddhism as a separate religion. The Supreme Court rejected the inclusion of Jainism under the act, stating that the practice of adding new religious groups as minorities should be discouraged. In June 2008 the Delhi government decided to accord minority status to the Jain community.

Jains have also been accorded this status in the states of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal. According to press reports, state governments have the power to grant minority status to religious groups designated as minorities under the 1992 act, but not all states have officially done so. The states of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka recognized Sikhs as minorities.

There were different personal laws for the various religious communities in matters of marriage, divorce, adoption, and inheritance. The government granted a significant amount of autonomy to personal status law boards in crafting these laws. There was Hindu law, Christian law, Parsi law, and Islamic law; all were legally recognized and judicially enforceable. None were exempt from national and state level legislative powers or social reform obligations as laid down in the constitution.

In 2007 under the 2006 Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Amendment Act, the government provided clearance for members of all religious groups to legally adopt children.

The government observes the following religious holidays as national holidays: Good Friday and Christmas (Christian); the two Eids (Islamic); Lord Buddha's Birthday (Buddhist); Guru Nanak's Birthday (Sikh); Dussehra, Diwali, and Holi (Hindu); and the Birthday of Lord Mahavir (Jain).

The government permitted private religious schools, but did not permit religious instruction in government schools. The government may prescribe merit-based admission for religious colleges that receive public funding. Other religious schools may use their own criteria, including religious affiliation.

On September 5, 2009, a group of religious organizations in Madhya Pradesh filed a petition in the high court against a 2007 state law that mandated the recitation of Hindu prayers before the mid-day meal in schools, because they believed compulsory recitation infringed the religious freedom of minorities in the state.

On September 1, 2009, the Madhya Pradesh high court directed the state government not to force students to participate in Hindu prayers as part of their extracurricular activities.

There were approximately 30,000 madrassahs (Islamic schools) providing full or part-time education. Most did not accept government aid, alleging that it would subject them to government influence. Educational institutions given "minority status" by the government were not eligible for government aid. The National Sample Survey Organization report released on May 19 concluded the proportion of Muslims enrolled in the formal education system was the lowest of all communities, including the STs.

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## A CULTURE OF TOLERANCE AND PEACE BASED ON RELIGION OR BELIEF

1961: UN General Assembly adopted a resolution asking the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the UN Human Rights Commission to prepare legally-binding international human rights convention on religious intolerance. It was later deferred by religious and diplomatic leaders because of its complexity and political sensitivity: <http://www.tandemproject.com/program/history.htm>

2011: UN General Assembly adopted A/RES/66/167 **by consensus** after several years of contentious issues between the European Union (EU), Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), and other UN Member

States. A/RES/66/167 is the best hope in **fifty years** to reconcile issues and divergent views on human rights and freedom of religion or belief, assimilation and multiculturalism.

[United Nations Resolution – a Culture of Tolerance & Peace Based on Religion or Belief](#)

**Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping, stigmatization, discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons, based on religion or belief**

*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.*

*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 Stirø [\[English\]](#) 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](#)

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

The Resolution identified as A/RES/66/167 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.” - King Abdulaziz Dialogue Center – Vienna <http://www.kacnd.org/eng/>

*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.*

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## ISSUES & CHALLENGES

Anders Behring Breivik is the ethnic Norwegian perpetrator of the most horrific acts of terrorism in Norway since WW II. 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 Odinitic/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.”

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

#### [Discussion at Augsburg with Kjell-Magne Bondevik](#)

<http://www.religlaw.org/headline.php?pageId=20>

*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.* – Mark C. Taylor, New York Times Op Ed, 21 December 2006

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## PROPOSED

### SEPARATION OF RELIGION OR BELIEF AND STATE

#### SOROBAS

[www.sorobas.com](http://www.sorobas.com)

*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.*

*Separation of Religion or Belief and State – SOROBAS is a term used by The Tandem Project to express the core principles of international human rights law on freedom of religion or belief. The term has a long history with diverse interpretations. [Separation of Church and State](#).*

Modern technology, communications and travel bring us closer together providing new learning opportunities to build respect and tolerance for diversity of religion or belief and for each other. The balance between assimilation and multiculturalism is a great challenge for our age. *Separation of Religion or Belief and State – SOROBAS* brings separation of church and state, separation of synagogue and state, separation of mosque and state, separation of temple and state, and separation of other sacred places and associations and state, together under an umbrella term of respect for each other and international human rights law on freedom of religion or belief.

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. The value of such dialogues is proportionate

to the level of participation. *Separation of Religion or Belief and State - SOROBAS* will create opportunities for inclusive and genuine human rights education on freedom of religion or belief.

The Tandem Project has participated in dialogue and discussions on how to implement International Human Rights Instruments at a local level since 1984. The co-founder was the World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA) delegate to the *Seminar on the Encouragement of Understanding, Tolerance and Respect in Matters Relating to Freedom of Religion or Belief (1984)* ST/HR/SER.A/16, Geneva: United Nations.

### [SOROBAS – Site Map](#)

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Life imagines its own significance and strains to justify its beliefs.

People want to know that their life has somehow counted, if not for themselves, than at least in a larger scheme of things, that they have left a trace that has meaning. That they have fulfilled God's purpose, or done their duty to ancestors or family, or achieved something which has enriched humanity. What people really fear is not extinction, but extinction *with insignificance*. It is as though the life force itself needed illusion in order to further itself. Logically, then, the ideal creativity for humans would strain toward the grandest illusion. - Ernest Becker (1924-1974)

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## 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 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.*

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**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.