

# Statement on the EU's Commitment to Freedom of Religion or Belief

*Copenhagen, October 2025*

***"The EU's neglect of Freedom of Religion or Belief must come to an end"***

On the occasion of the Danish EU Presidency we, the signatories, urge participating actors to do what is within their reach to ensure that Europe, the EU, its institutions, and member states protect and promote the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion in foreign policy and development cooperation.

Freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) is a fundamental human right, enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. Yet, millions of people around the world continue to face discrimination, harassment, imprisonment, violence, and even death because of their religion or belief. This includes countries that benefit from EU development aid and trade agreements.

We call on all EU member states, the EU Institutions to end the EU's neglect of FoRB and to lead a renewed commitment to this essential human right.

## **Concrete Actions Participants Should Champion:**

- **Implementation of the EU's 2013 FoRB Guidelines**  
These guidelines are a vital tool but remain underused. We, the signatories, push for their full implementation and the publication of an annual, publicly accessible report on the EU's activities to protect and promote FoRB.
- **Appoint a New EU Special Envoy for the promotion of freedom of religion or belief outside the EU.**  
The position has been vacant since November 2024. This is not viable. The role must be filled immediately, with a stronger mandate, adequate resources, and a support team.
- **Double the EU's Support for FoRB in Development Cooperation**  
The EU's development arm (INTPA) must match ambition with funding. We, the signatories, advocate for a doubling of support to FoRB programs and partners in developing countries.
- **Mandatory FoRB Training for EU and Member State Diplomats**  
All EU delegations and diplomatic missions must be equipped to understand and respond to FoRB challenges. Mandatory training should be implemented for all personnel engaged in FoRB-related work. The NORFORB FoRB-learning platform offers scalable courses ready for rollout, developed in collaboration with INTPA.

- **Embed FoRB into Trade Agreements and Human Rights Dialogues**  
Economic cooperation must never come at the expense of fundamental rights. FoRB must be a fixed element in all EU trade negotiations and human rights assessments.
- **Promote Popular Engagement and Civil Society Participation**  
Denmark's own FoRB Window emphasizes grassroots engagement and public awareness. The EU should adopt similar mechanisms to ensure that FoRB becomes not only a diplomatic priority but a shared societal value.

### Call to Action

We, the undersigned, urge the EU to ensure that freedom of religion or belief becomes a visible, actionable, and measurable priority in EU foreign and development policy.

### Endorsements

#### Betlehems venner

Vita Andreassen and Rose Marie Tillisch, board members

#### Center for Church Based Development

Katja Gunnertoft Bojsen, Secretary General

#### Council on International Relations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark

Birger Nygaard, Secretary General

#### Danish European Mission

Samuel Nymann Eriksen, Secretary General

#### Danish Mission Council

Henrik Sonne Petersen, Secretary General

#### Danmission

Julie Koch, Secretary General

#### DIGNI

Hjalmer Bø, Secretary General

#### Frikirken Norway

Erling Aasen, Leader of the Mission Department

#### LM International

Josephine Sundqvist, Global CEO

#### Mission Africa

Daniel Toft Jakobsen, Secretary General

#### Norwegian Mission Society

Helge S. Gaard, Secretary General

#### Open Doors Denmark

Jens Kristian Lund Jensen, Secretary General

#### Saba Wallace

Independent human rights and international development consultant

#### SMC Faith in Development

Charlotta Norrby, Secretary General

#### Stefanus Alliance

Ed Brown, Secretary General

#### The Danish Bible Society

Johannes Baun, Secretary General

#### The National Council of Churches of Denmark

Emil Bjørn Hilton Saggau, Secretary General,

#### The South Asia Forum for Freedom of Religion or Belief (SAFFoRB)

Samuel Jayakumar, Director

#### The Thinktank for Persecuted Christians

Peter Fischer-Møller, Chair

#### Uniting Church in Sweden

Gunilla Ikponmwosa, Coordinator Middel East  
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