

CONFERENCE REPORT  
2021 RELIGIOUS LIBERTY SUMMIT  
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<https://law.nd.edu/religious-liberty/events/summit/?fbclid=IwAR32oIlgS--ZqI3ExSosOAST6FAe-lfDZaPNUZ6ZJB-KX6XnAlfKVHbZ91TA>

WRITTEN BY SOKTHEAVY PHOUK

## **Abstract**

The Notre Dame Religious Liberty Summit is an annual gathering of the foremost thought leaders on religious liberty. The summit stimulates and engages conversations between scholars, advocates, and religious leaders about the future of religious liberty worldwide. On June 28-29, 2021, the inaugural Religious Liberty Summit was held at the University of Notre Dame in Notre Dame, Indiana. Subsequent summits will be held in Rome in 2022 and Jerusalem in 2023. The interfaith community prayer services, made up of different congregations and sects, gave the opening remarks at the conference. Throughout the three-day discussion, there were different summits on various religious liberty topics, including polarization of religious liberty, a keynote from different panelists, international threats to religious liberty, and the book discussion on *The Politics of Vulnerability*. Each year during the summit, an individual is honored with the Notre Dame Prize for Religious Liberty for their achievement in preserving religious liberty.

## **Panel: "Polarization of Religious Liberty"**

### **Panelist's Background**

Asma Uddin is a religious liberty attorney, scholar, and an inclusive project fellow at the Aspen Institute, leading a project on Muslim Christian Polarization in the U.S. She is a former legal counselor at the Beckett Fund for religious liberty. She has held fellowships at many different institutions, including Brigham Young University Law School. She is an expert advisor on religious freedom for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and a term member of the Council on Foreign Relations. She is the author of *When Islam is not a Religion Inside America's Fight for Religious Freedom* and *The Politics of the Vulnerability and How to Hal Muslim Christian Relations in a Post-Christian America*.

Justin Gibboney, an attorney and political strategist from Atlanta, Georgia, is the co-founder and president of the AND campaign. He is also a part of the coalition of the Urban Christians who are determined to address the socio-political arena with compassion and conviction of the gospel. He has experience managing successful campaigns for transportation and water infrastructure and is a former Vanderbilt football player and a law student.

Reverend Marian Edmonds-Allen is the executive director of parity, a New York City-based national non-profit working at the intersection of faith and the LGBTQ+ concerned. She is also the director of a project that promotes curious and collaborative bringing across LGBTQ+. She

has worked with youth and families in various denominations and settings. For more than 20 years, Reverend Allen has been focusing on strength-based interventions and support to affirm beliefs and faith practices for LGBTQ people. She is the executive director of outreach resource centers and the national program director of the family acceptance project, and the executive director of the Utah Pride Center.

John Inazu is the Sally Danforth distinguished professor of law and religion and Courtesy's professor of political science. His area focuses on the first amendment, freedom of speech, assembly, religion, legal questions, and political theory. His books include, *Liberty's Refuge*, *The Forgotten of Assembly*, and *The Pluralism Surviving and Thriving Through Deep Difference*.

## **Q&A Session**

**Question: “Are there any lessons you think are to be learned from the Supreme Court’s recent unanimous decision in *Fulton* when it comes to overcoming polarization of religious liberty? How do we overcome the conflicts, while the media seem so intractable, and how do we find common-sense solutions?”**

Inazu: Inazu states that many comments on social media stated there were no solutions in becoming or achieving a unanimous solution on the issue. However, a solution can be found if there is common ground. The Supreme Court is looking for ways to find the common key solution while also structuring and compromising. Overall, there are lessons that one can learn dealing with these challenges.

**Question: How do you think there is collaboration even though there are divisions in theological views and polarization among different groups?**

Reverend Edmonds-Allen: Reverend Edmonds-Allen states that someone with different views and opinions on religious liberty may be challenging, but the key to the problem is listening and being open to others’ opinions. She added that religious freedom is a crucial component that helps bring people together in interfaith communities to work across different fields.

**Question: What are the key issues between the black churches and the Muslim communities?**

Gibboney: The black churches have not been very involved in the discussion of religious liberty because he believes issues the churches have been facing, including voter rights, criminal justice, education, and poverty, are the main focuses of the black churches. He was grateful for the invitation and the current involvement of the black congregations. The overall challenge is the regurgitation that comes with the engagement of another race within the discussion, making it hard for black believers to participate.

Uddin: She also agreed with Gibboney regarding this problem by stating that a conservative white Christian lined up against Muslims is a trait of liberal mega identity. The image emphasized the women’s march during Trump’s inauguration against his campaigns and

discrimination against Muslims. Thus, making the Muslim communities conflated with the Democratic parties. On the flip side, she added that the Muslims still think that the conservative Christians are. The opposition of the tribal association. The importance of least involvement from the Muslim communities was that most white conservatives assume that the Muslims just wanted to silence them, policing, and being too politically correct over the white majorities. She also added that Muslims have been wrongfully addressed as a race/ethnicity and not a religion.

**Question: Are there common grounds, ways, solutions for the opportunity of promoting broader aspects of religious freedom?**

Inazu: He pointed out that the answer to that started with focusing on building relationships with others and not focusing on the stereotypes. However, we should embody human beings at the local levels. It was about helping and repairing growth to restore the social key issues, and it was also crucial to not being affected by social media.

Gibboney: He stated that education was vital to obtain the ideas of religious freedom. He also continued that for people to care about the problems, they should understand the core value of religious freedom. Additionally, he concluded that advocacy was also critical for people to rely on because it is the voice for all that shows fairness for all acts rather than just acknowledging it but advocating at a level that changes the policy.

Uddin: She agreed with the term of education because it is such a vital material for people to obtain in the area of religious liberty, including principles at stakes, laws, policies. And the theoretical aspect from experts so that they understand the key challenges and available solutions on the table to bring collaboration for them and other religious groups. She added that mindfulness is also another key term to the problem because they can be more collaborative and willing to engage.

Reverend Edmonds-Allen: She stated that there are not just attacks but also common solutions to the problems, so education is essential in that setting. It is also essential to befriend someone utterly different from us. In finding a friend, we can discuss the issues and try to understand the core values together.

**Question: Last comments on the common ground to find more unity and collaboration.**

Reverend Edmonds-Allen: She responded that despite many religious beliefs, people work together to promote human rights worldwide, and concerns on LGBTQ+ should be addressed through their concerns because they have received threats and challenges.

Uddin: She told the participants that religious liberty had not been addressed as a very serious topic to discuss before, yet currently, it has been one of the most concerning issues.

Gibboney: He said that people need to be educated about religious freedom challenges. He added that they need to look at the critical problems of pluralism and ensure that we are inclusive in our actions. The increase of inclusiveness would increase the number of people who work in the specific areas that have the credibility to address these issues.

## **Panel: “Religious Liberty and the Press”**

### **Panelists**

Ms. Elizabeth Dias - New York Times

Ms. Emma Green, The Atlantic

Mr. Eric Meripodie, National Public Radio

Ms. Gretchen Crowe, Our Sunday Visitor (Catholic newspaper)

Mr. Hal Boyd, Deseret News

### **Question: How can individuals in the room be helpful to you and your role in the media?**

Crowe: She thought that religious groups have an excellent opportunity to present their cases well in the media world. She feels that the media is not intentionally biased towards particular groups. However, they lack understanding of specific perspectives and information on these religious topics and urge religious groups to talk to the press to help ensure the truth.

Green: Green thinks that it is essential to engage with journalists when they reach out to entities related to religious issues. If not, the press will gather information in other places, which may not be reliable. Green says that the media is always involved in conflicts, religious wars, and controversies, and it is their job to educate the public, which is why it is so important to discuss with them.

Dias: She claimed that building relationships with reporters took interviewers' patience. She tries to ensure a fair representation of perspectives in her stories. She thinks it is vital to include every one of various races and is diligent in working with others to do so.

### **Question: What are the things that the churches have been doing and get right or wrong in terms of their practices?**

Crowe: He stated that there have been cases of sexual abuse with children in the community.

Green: She raised the problem that LDS members have asked not to use the term Mormon in the articles but instead use, “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saint.”

Green points out that sometimes, what is required cannot be adjusted due to the enormous writing ethic and implications from the writers that they cannot write according to the will of the interviewee.

Meripodie: He answered that the mission of writing reports is to educate the public. He connects to Green in stating that reporters often use the term Mormon because the general public does not know them by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

Dias: She was grateful for the opportunity to be included in this session, especially to share her work. She expressed that she puts all her efforts into getting information right. She talks about how people generally do not agree on what God is or who he is because most people do not have the fundamental belief in what truth is. She added that the problem of polarization is a critical challenge in society.

## **Panel: Keynote by Cardinal Timothy Dolan and Interfaith Dialogue Panel**

### **Keynote Speakers**

Cardinal Timothy Dolan, a cardinal archbishop of the archdiocese of New York, is the second-largest Catholic diocese in the nation and has served since his installation in 2009. He was ordained as a priest in 1979. He held a license in sacred theology from the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas and a doctorate in American Church History from the Catholic University of America. He served as a rector of Rome's pontifical North American college from 1994 to 2001. He guided the seminary formation of many American priests, including faculty at Notre Dame. In 2002 he was installed as archbishop of Milwaukee, where he served for seven years before coming to New York. He served as a chairman of Catholic Relief Services and president of the United States Conference of Catholic bishops. He currently serves as an essential committee on religious liberty. He is the author of *True Freedom on Protecting Human Dignity and Religious Liberty*, and most recently, *I am with you*, the lessons of hope and courage in times of crisis.

### **Keynote**

Cardinal Timothy Dolan said that religious freedom is not just an idea but essential to a flourishing human life. He added that there is oppression towards such thoughts and continues to be as the American society devalues religion. Cardinal Dolan highlights James Madison, who established core religious values in the constitution. He brought up four points to support his claims which are,

1. People in America advocate religious freedom not because they are believers but because they are American. It is in the American constitution and has always been a core value.
2. The defense of religious liberty is hardly some ultra-conservative issue but is historically considered part of the usually progressive movement.
3. The reason people cherish freedom of religion is not to protect the government from religion but to maintain the free exercise of religion from the government.

4. There is a fear that the American culture may have moved from encouraging the freedom of consciousness to now an outright “antagonist” view on voices that are motivated by faith

He added that religious liberty is one of the most fundamental human rights from the first four guaranteed rights listed in the first amendment. Cardinal Dolan believes that the union of the Crown and the Cross, meaning a king with religion, is the best form of government. Thus, he favored the sublime mission as misters of the gospel in exercising legitimate power from the church to rule people.

## **Interfaith Dialogue Panel**

### **Panelist:**

Elder Quentin I Cook is a member of the quorum of the twelve apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Before becoming an apostle of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Elder Cook was a managing partner, president, and CEO of the California health care system. He is from Logan, Utah, and received a bachelor’s degree in political science with honors from Utah State University. And a doctor of Jurisprudence from Stanford University.

Dr. Jackie River is currently a professor of sociology at Harvard University. She is the director and senior fellow for the social sciences and policy of the institute for black policy studies and a senior fellow at the King's College of New York City. She works with leaders in ecumenical black churches to promote a philosophical, political, and theological framework. This framework includes explicitly "pro-poor," "pro-life," and a "pro-family" movement. She has worked on justice issues in the black Christian community for more than 30 years. She also serves on the board of advisors for the Religious Freedom Institute, the data science department at Leeds Beckett University, and the Religious Liberty Initiative at Notre Dame University.

Rabbi Dr. Solovacek leads the Shearith Israel Congregation in Manhattan. It is the oldest Jewish Congregation in the United States. He is also the director of the Straw Center for Torah and Western Thought at Yeshiva University. And he holds a Ph.D. from Princeton in Religion.

### **Remark**

Elder Cook: He discussed the two vital blessings that are often overlooked in secular learning.

Elder Cook discusses how sec

when people forgot about secular learning and the respect from individuals in the society that decrease circular learning. First, he emphasized that religious accountability benefits secular individuals. And second, the secular multitude that religions inspire people of faith to perform on

behalf of others. Elder Cook connects his first point with the French ideology of Alex de Tocqueville. Tocqueville stated the greatest advantage of religion is to inspire principle, there is no religion that is placed above and beyond the object of man's desires, which did not naturally raise his soul to regions far above those of the senses nor was there any which did not impose on man some sort of duties to his kind and thus draws him at times from the contemplation of himself. He argued that religion is a key structure that helps people in a democratic state to follow the law because they honor their God to do so.

**Dr. Jackie Rivers:** Dr. Rivers stated that the religious freedom movements both benefit and burden black churches. The burden that religious freedom has caused black churches is supported by John Locke and his writing on how the constitution is to nullify and prevail the ancient English common law which held that people cannot enslave a fellow believer. She also added that this was another way that whites have dominated the ability to convert the black community into Christianity for freedom.

. John Locke in the fundamental constitutions of Carolina deliberately wrote the constitution to nullify and prevail the ancient English common law which held that people cannot enslave a fellow believer. She added that this is another way that the white dominants have the ability to convert the black community into Christianity for freedom.

On the other hand, religious freedom has also been used to benefit African Americans as well. Religion plays a significant role in inspiring people to do their best in setting the Africans from slavery. Additionally, there are not only white but also black advocates who work in promoting the freedom of slaves and women's rights, and the African community.

Rabbi: He pointed out that throughout history, people have been set apart by their races and regions but by their faith and the principles they adhere to, engaging them as neighbors even though they are strangers. He added that people always rely on the evidence from their ancestors and traditions rather than the evidence from their senses. People adhered to the principles and were loyal to the faiths they are living in. He emphasized the essence of being strangers and neighbors in the community and within this world that it would bring people closer because of their faiths and authenticity in practices religion and consciences, which allow us to learn from each other and to also build fundamental friendship within the society.

## **Q&A**

**Q: Do you think that the decline in religiosity impacts both cultural and legal protections for religious liberty and how does this affect the vitality of your faith communities?**

Dolan: He addressed that the major problem of religious freedom and the impact of the decline in religiosity is from the absence of essence in no longer growing for American people. If religion is marginal or optional but not an engaging defends in promoting such issues, thus it leads to the decline in religiosity.

Rivers: She stated that the decline of interest in religion tends to dampen the enthusiasm for religions and also the influences of trend culture on the supreme court. She also raised a question in terms of further influences in the supreme court and the people in the society in the next 10 years or so, if the trends of religion will be continuing to decline. She also added that if people believe in Jesus, they will be facing persecution. However, if we were members of our faith community, we should stand for our beliefs and need to do in a way that is loving and compassionate and to speak well of those convictions.

Elder Cook: He believed that the world also faces the inclinations of religion and secularity. He emphasized that religion itself shall be about kindness and civility at its core and we also have many things to be accomplishing.

Rabbi: He pointed out that the west is now again adopting a certain circle the pagan orientation to nature, the nature, the human seeks at times to against faiths.

**Q: In what way can religious liberty can effectively cooperate to strengthen religious liberty and advocate for each other?**

Elder Cook: He stated that it was important to gather together in promoting and advocating religious liberty like current seminars being held so that people can come together and discuss the problems to seek common ground in the world we are living in. He continued that when people thrived to accomplish civility and that they thrived to have accountability rather than looking at political diversity and cultures wars that exist by respecting each other.

Rivers: He claimed that the more chance we people have in gathering each other to talk about common problems each interfaith community is facing the more opportunities of collaborating and putting more resources into awakening the awareness of religious problems and the way to put more trust into each other.

Rabbi: He began by claiming that there was no unique problem that only affects the Jewish community of faiths, but instead if one impacts the community, it tended to impact the whole interfaith communities. Therefore, being able to collaborate and gather together to discuss the issues of religious liberty help people to better understand and strengthen relations between the faith community.

## **Panel 1: International Threats to Religious Liberty**

### **Panelists**

Opening Remark

Moderator: Professor Roger Alford, Notre Dame Law School



Religious freedom is important because the Canonical Human Right Treaties have religious Liberty as the core component of those treaties including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which is included also with the freedom of religion and freedom of conscience. The freedom of religion has also been respected by 97% of the overall constitution in the world among other basic protections. However, in 2018 there have been government restrictions on religious freedom and liberty, within that area 27% are in the Asia Pacific, 18 countries in the Middle East, and North Africa which is considerably high with respect to social hostility.

Moderator: Professor Roger Alford, Notre Dame Law School

**Panelist:**

Ambassador Morse Tan, a residential appointed senate confirmed ambassador at large for a global criminal in the Trump administration and the first Asian American at large in the history of the United States. This position is the top position in the United States federal government addressing mass atrocity crimes around the world. He has authored North Korea international law and dual crisis and is one of the leading experts in the world on the issues of religious oppression and other human rights abuses in North Korea. He wrote the article from the Cornell international Journal from North Korea.

Marcellus Zzmanski, an editor and editor of the biannual report on religious freedom in the world published by Aid to the Church in Need (ACN), is also the head of the EU office and International Advocacy of ACN. She has been a journalist in communication experts in Europe as well as in the United States for the past 20 years. She was a public affairs consultant specializing in fundamental rights around the world and holds degrees in communications and economics and a Ph.D. in National Politic from Georgia State University.

Anna Maria Celesbrunet is a lawyer and JCD from Gregorian University in Rome. She is a full-time professor of Pontifical University Catholica De Chile, where she teaches Canon Law as well as Law and religion and is the director of Law and Religion. She is a faculty member, a consultant to the Chillen National Institute of Human right and the current president of the International Consortium for Law and Religion Studies.

Bishop Elias Zaidon is the third bishop to lead the Ebokey of Our Lady Lebanon in Los Angeles. He was a member of the congregation of Maronite Lebanese missionaries and was ordained a priest in 1986. He was appointed as pastor of St George San Antonio Texas in1990. He helped establish parishes in Dalla and Houston in1994, he was appointed director of Our Lady of Mount Lebanon in California and remained there until he became a bishop in2013. As part of the U.S conferences, Bishop served as a committee of the international of justice and peace and subcommittee of Catholic Home Mission.

Remarks:

Tan: The office of global criminal justice is an office that seeks to pursue justice in regards to justice in mass atrocity crimes happening all over the world. His job is to work in solving justice for all no matter where they are from because he believes that people are made in the image of God and they are precious to obtain their full potential in practicing and exercising their rights. The correspondence of mass atrocity to religious liberty has stood as an important key issue in places like North Korea and China that are taking place. The mass atrocity has one example that plays a significant problem is a genocide, in which religious groups are explicitly categorized as genocide targets. He added that North Korea is the worst violator in the world in persecuting the practice of religious freedom and human right.

Marcellus: She argued that religious liberty is attacked by those who are strong and weak state's capacity within their sovereignty, thus Africa state has as strong as North Korea and China human right's violence. She also added that for the countries in the west are now also violating not only within their states but also the international treaties they have signed for the protection of religious liberty. She emphasized that there is a link missing between the legal professionals to build the cases and bring human rights violators and excessive rights violators in the region to the international courts.

Anna: She stressed a few key issues that harm religious liberty in terms of public sphere practice, indirect threat to fundamental right, policy politicization threat, which have been threatening the value and practices of religious freedom. However, one way that we can accomplish this is through pluralism within religious liberty including equality, non-discriminations, and right educations. Additionally, there are also significant discriminations against the LGBT groups which reject legitimate rights and forbade this practice within the communities.

Bishop Elias: He began by stating that Lebanon is a consensual democracy, where there are divided groups within the cabinets and the state but all groups are working to promote the well-being of the people in terms of religious belief, consciences, and practices. He hoped that the government of Lebanon sought to protect human rights especially, the freedom of religion rights besides their personal interests. He also emphasized that Lebanon itself has restrictions in some forms of oppression whether it is direct or indirect persecution from the people and other religious group majorities, thus making it difficult for the individual to live up and express their concerns within the society they are living in.

## **Q&A**

**Q: Can you address the issues of government pressures on individuals and businesses around the world that raised their criticism against China? How do you handle that approach? (Directly to Ambassador Tan)**

Tan: He stated that the Chinese government has been trying so hard to curtail the criticism of their human rights abuses whether it is from social media or other sources through conviction. Also, North Korea did try to deny that they have concentration camps within their territory also known as a labor camp. However, North Korea was too poor to send out their messages to the world like China that they have not done certain issues they have been accused of. Many bodies

in relation to that have been blacklisted and sanctioned China and North Korea for the right violation, but at the same time, China counter-sanctioned backward to 10 of the EU members correlated to those issues.

**Q: What is the most effective vehicle for trying to promote religious liberties based on your reviews, whether it is primarily these human rights treaties or is its domestic law or the cultural norm?**

Marcella: She stated that there was a possibility of collaborating in solving the issues in which people come together towards the government because they are the one who oppresses. Through unity, group creations, legal professionals, collaborating and building relations with those who are working in the same area, would play an immense role in promoting and protecting religious liberties.

**Q: Can you speak between secularization and religious liberty in South America?**

Anna: She said that South America has increasingly values and practices of religious beliefs and believers. She stated that most believers are now remaining happy within the state, even though there are church burning but it does not mean that it is against the catholic church or religious liberty but it is against the institutions that recall all power so people can still be believers that are still in Christ.

**Q: Why is the Lebanon story not replicated in other parts of the Middle East, why does the other part besides the Middle-East does not have the same success?**

Bishop Elias: He began by stating that the Maronite's religious groups play an important role in this dilemma. The amount of Christian Maronites and the Muslim majority did not balance each other because there are more Muslims than the Christian groups which sparked a tolerance number between the two. On other hand, Lebanon is living in situations, where corruption exists within the government, the rise of inflation, the absence of government structures to form a more functional state, and economical issues. He concluded that these were ways of direct discrimination or persecution against religious groups.

## **Panel 2: International Threats to religious Liberty**

### **Panelist**

Fr. Dcn, Andrew Bennett, is the Iranian Catholic Church in the eparchy of Toronto and eastern Canada. He served as Canada's first ambassador for religious freedom and head of the office of religious freedom from 2013 and 2016, at the same time he served as Canada's head of the delegation to the international holocaust remembrance alliance which is the 31<sup>st</sup> country body that leads international effort education and research. He also holds a Ph.D. in politics from the University of Edinburgh, as well as; degrees in history from other universities.

Nathaniel Hurd is the director of the North America Action team and senior fellow at the public policy for religious freedom institute. Prior, he worked as a senior policy advisor to the U.S commission security and cooperation in Europe also known as the U.S Helsinki Commission. His work for the commission is a non-partisan staffer that focuses on religious freedom and the United States humanitarian crimes such as genocide.

Ms. Kelsey Zorzi serves as the director of advocacy for global religious freedom with ADF international. She leads efforts to address and counters global persecution against Christians and other religious minorities based in Washington DC. She engages with multinational network attorney government officials and international bodies to collaborate efforts aimed at challenging legal barriers to religious freedom and asserting religious freedom as the foundation to the international human rights framework.

Mr. Stephen Rasche is the vice-chancellor of the Catholic University in Iraq, he also serves as the executive of the institute for ancient threats for Christianity. He has over 35 years in the international business and aid development context including work in Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East. He entered and work full-time to support the humanitarian crises in northern Iraq created by the ISIS conflict.

## **Remarks**

Nathaniel: He began by pointing out that there have always been claims within the public policy departments between the promotion of religious freedom and the separation of the United States in religions internationally. What the United States has done in the U.S commission of religion is the grounded of religious freedom how he understands in the U.S through the declaration of independence. He emphasized that the alienation right from the declaration of independence from the constitution not also advocates for this right in the U.S but also everywhere in the world to fight for religious freedom in advancing the effects and life-changing in the world. He raised a point of religious freedom in the United States that has been faded in a way of the American's perception of religion itself. He claimed that the most important key issues with the American belief are the existence of the family, male and female's sexual oriented and the religious violence and separation within the community that shifted their attentions away from preserving and practicing religious freedom. He added that religious freedom should be privatized particularly when it has been claimed with the conflicts of interests with others among the society.

Kelsey: She stated that the majority of American citizens did not think of the problem of religious freedom as something that they should take care of because they believe that it is not a big deal and everyone adheres to the standard which is set by the government. She claimed that religious freedom does play a significant role in human society and it is not easy to advocate especially within the area of the international stage like the United Nations. She found that the right has been presented in the UN assembly have various interests between the EU, OIC (Organization of Islamic Cooperation), and the UN committee. The EU's draft resolution focuses merely on the individual right and the right to choose to believe and not to believe, while the OIC focus on religious freedom from defamation (i.e. the problem of the Islamic being

persecuted and condemned by state's actors). She also raised the question of whether religious freedom is meant to protect actors or the religion itself. She had two concerns within the work that she is advocating are the advocacy of religious violence and religious persecution rather than the debate whether or not for the United States to abolish the death penalty. Another vital concern indicated that religion can harm another human's rights including reproductive's rights, freedom of speech, right to practice religion within a community thus there should be more robust advocacy on those concerns instead.

Stephen: His main topic is the statistic of religious liberty in the middle east, specifically in Iraq where Islam is the state religion. He emphasized that the western nations have been working to promote religious freedom in Iraq, but they do not understand the core value and needs of the Iraqi people so they did not only cause some destructions within the state but also caused the problem to even bigger. There should be more implications in political administrations in understanding the situations in Iraq because there are always human beings involved. He focused on one main issue within the Iraqi society these days that the Iraqi are willing to listen to the people from the first world Economic, all they want is food, security, housing education that help them, the victim of the genocide from being executed from the extremist Islam. They do not want to make peace between other groups nor talk about peace-building and interfaith dialogue.

Andrew: The main point that he raised was primary on the privatization from the state (Canada) to religious groups, which ban all of the religious groups to practice their faiths including wearing attires related to the public space. He claimed that this is the failure of understanding that people cannot just privatize their faiths that religion is fundamentally the public space where people can, not only worship, but also express their conscience and the practice of their faiths, set up a constitution, and assemble. At the same time, people are also having amnesia to their faiths which gives perspectives to people that the practice of faiths and religion is not to be done in the public. Finally, the last point he mentioned is the constitution that has reasonable limits on religious freedom as an example of the U.S that has been working on this area robustly.

## Q&A

**Is there a difference between the current administration and the former administration in the way that they are interacting with the UN on some religious liberty that was discussed?**

Kelsey: She said that it is a bit early to tell because the former of the UN committee has resigned and there was no replacement since, thus it is a bit early to identify the difference between the current and the previous administration.

Nathaniel: He claimed that there has been a big gap between the administration of the republican and the democrat when the ambassador at large for religious freedom shows that the Democrat was at worst in opposing the interest of who to be in charge.

**How do we as the advocator and an inherent definition to religious freedom to impart in another place without being interfered with their sovereignties?**

All panelists: All of the panelists have the same opinions on how to deal with this issues by pointing out that there had been ratifications among other states in terms of the acceptance of religious freedom and there have also been eroded in some ways but the trajectory does not look as good as it could even though we lay our foundations as of from the UN declarations. Another thing was that; we the people, should remind ourselves about what we have done in the past before we can advocate the issues of others. We also should look at the word “Humility” because we do not understand entirely the truth and look at these situations honestly because the lack of humility is something that they should look at.