



**Religious Freedom &
Human Dignity Initiative
at BYU–Hawaii**

CONFERENCE REPORT

**3rd ANNUAL ASEAN & HUMAN DIGNITY: PURSUING PEACEFUL AND
INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA CONFERENCE**

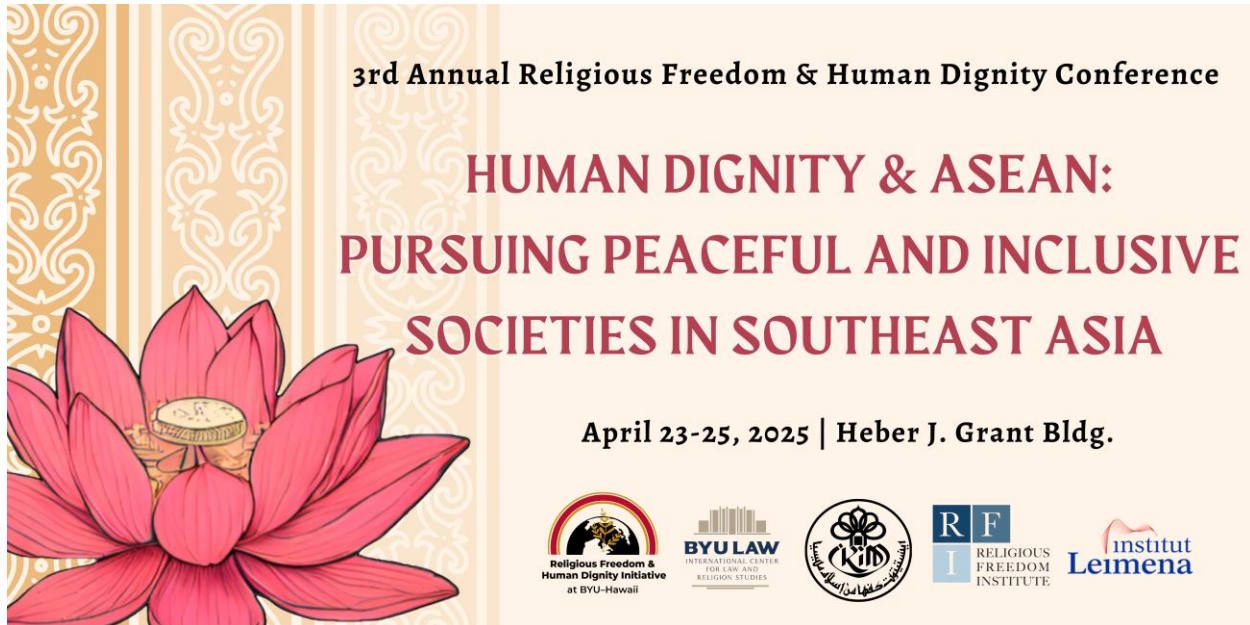
APRIL 22-25, 2025
Laie, Hawaii

<https://bg.byuh.edu/rfhd/human-dignity-asean-pursuing-peaceful-and-inclusive-societies-in-southeast-asia-conference-section>

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Overview



3rd Annual Religious Freedom & Human Dignity Conference

**HUMAN DIGNITY & ASEAN:
PURSUING PEACEFUL AND INCLUSIVE
SOCIETIES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA**

April 23-25, 2025 | Heber J. Grant Bldg.

Religious Freedom & Human Dignity Initiative at BYU-Hawaii

BYU LAW INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR LAW AND RELIGION STUDIES

RF I RELIGIOUS FREEDOM INSTITUTE

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The third annual conference of the Religious Freedom and Human Dignity Initiative at Brigham Young University–Hawaii will explore new approaches in Southeast Asia to promote peaceful and inclusive societies through various lenses, including multi-faith collaborations, cross-cultural religious literacy, and public-private partnerships. The conference will stimulate vital discussions to enhance peaceful and inclusive societies by highlighting policies, practices, and stories on how peacemaking is achieved within communities and society at large within this region. The conference will consist of a series of panel discussions around the following areas:

- Multi-faith collaborations in Southeast Asia
- Cross-cultural religious literacy in fostering peaceful and inclusive societies
- Successful models for inclusive communities in Southeast Asia
- Public-private partnerships building social capacities for peace
- Faith-based civil society programs that promote peace
- Strengthening values in the workplace
- Humanitarian partnerships in Southeast Asia
- Southeast Asian religious perspectives on peaceful and inclusive societies

Impressions

This conference was made a huge impact on attendees' perception on how faith and religion can play a role in many of our modern-day issues, specifically those occurring in Southeast Asia. Whether it be AI, workplace inclusivity, or academia, the theme of peaceful and inclusive societies was strong. We were able to walk away with more empathy and understanding of other religions around us. Additionally, we walked away with a toolkit of how we can impact positive change in our societies on a grassroots level.

This year's conference stands out as a deeply enriching and timely gathering that addresses one of the most pressing needs of our era: how to cultivate peaceful and inclusive societies amid increasing global complexity and polarization. The choice to focus on Southeast Asia brings crucial attention to a region that is both religiously diverse and socio-politically dynamic.

A consistent theme that emerged across the sessions was the **transformative potential of religious freedom, empathy, and collaboration** in advancing human dignity. The opening panels set a tone of humility, interfaith respect, and a shared moral responsibility, with voices from various religious traditions emphasizing not just coexistence but active peacemaking.

This year's conference was truly amazing, with more students getting involved than ever before! We had larger attendance, and an even bigger team of volunteers compared to previous years. It's wonderful to see so many BYUH students excited about global human rights, interfaith dialogue, and practical ways to promote peace. The enthusiasm really made a difference!

Much of the success of the conference can be credited to the **outstanding leadership and coordination of the student executive members and the BYUH RFHD Advisors**, whose tireless work behind the scenes ensured a seamless and impactful experience.

Overall, the event provided **an actionable vision for peacebuilding** that marries moral conviction with policy insight and community engagement. It modeled how faith-based institutions, scholars, civil society, and government actors can converge to make dignity not just a principle, but a lived experience.

Schedule

Here is a link to the conference program: [2025 ASEAN & Human Dignity Conference Schedule](#).

Summary

The third annual Religious Freedom and Human Dignity Conference brought together scholars, faith leaders, policymakers, and students to examine pathways for cultivating peaceful and inclusive societies in Southeast Asia. The event featured keynote speeches, panel discussions, and presentations from students showcasing their research. Key topics included cross-cultural religious literacy, interfaith cooperation, digital ethics, economic dignity, and innovative policy solutions.

Throughout the conference, speakers underscored the critical role of religious freedom, cultural understanding, and interfaith collaboration in upholding human dignity. They emphasized that genuine peace involves more than just the absence of conflict; it requires proactive efforts grounded in shared values, trust, and mutual respect. Student fellows presented insightful research on various subjects, including the connection between religious freedom and civil strife, post-genocide justice in Cambodia, and religious education in Malaysia and Indonesia.

Panels tackled pressing issues, such as the ethical use of AI in education, sustainable economic alternatives to capitalism, and the complexities of religious pluralism and justice in diverse societies. The conference highlighted the impact of faith-based civil society initiatives, inclusive workplace practices, and public-private partnerships in fostering peacebuilding efforts. In the closing remarks, participants celebrated the meaningful dialogue and collaborative spirit that made the conference a success, reinforcing their shared commitment to advancing dignity and freedom for all.

Tuesday, April 22, 2025

Welcome Dinner.

Summary:

The first panel session emphasized the vital role of religious communities in fostering peaceful and inclusive societies across Southeast Asia. Panelists highlighted that true peace is more than the absence of conflict; it requires intentional collaboration, a commitment to uphold human dignity, and a dedication to advancing truth. The speakers also underscored the importance of viewing diversity as a strength rather than a challenge and stressed that building bridges between faiths is essential to the region's future. They noted that religious freedom creates an environment where trust can flourish and that peacemaking is a central religious mandate, not merely an option. In addition, the panelists shared examples from Myanmar and the Philippines, demonstrating how grassroots initiatives among religious leaders have successfully fostered reconciliation and solidarity. The session concluded with a call for religious communities to embody the values of forgiveness and love in order to sustain lasting peace.

Elder Michael B. Strong: *General Authority Seventy & Counselor in the Philippines Area Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

Elder Strong opened his remarks by extending heartfelt condolences to the Catholic faith on the passing of Pope Francis, honoring him as a remarkable religious leader who influenced lives for good. He acknowledged the recent tragedies in Myanmar and Thailand, expressing mindfulness and compassion for those who suffered. Elder Strong also celebrated BYU–Hawaii's 70th anniversary, recognizing the university's unique role in uniting students from over 60 countries and highlighting David O. McKay's vision for Hawaii as a place of harmony.

He then introduced the core values of the Religious Freedom and Human Dignity Initiative, Appreciation, Tolerance, and Esteem, emphasizing the need to appreciate everyone, accept differences, and recognize the innate dignity of every human being. He stressed that the goal of the conference is to seek solutions that uphold human dignity and promote respect for basic human rights and freedom.

Elder Strong affirmed that protecting religious freedom is directly linked to preserving social stability, not by requiring identical beliefs but through a shared commitment to protect one another. He emphasized that religious liberty fosters peace by allowing friendships to form across deep differences. He also shared several positive examples from Southeast Asia: in the Philippines, the Mindanao Religious Leaders Conference promotes inclusivity and solidarity, with Carlito Galvez Jr. commending efforts to "break down walls of division"; Cambodia held its first Islamic Summit; Vietnam is building bridges between culture and religion; and Indonesia's Leimana Institute is advancing religious literacy and tolerance. He concluded with a hopeful message, encouraging all to work together to establish lasting peace.

Session Topic – Religious Perspectives on Peaceful and Inclusive Societies in Southeast Asia

Jerome Secillano: *Executive Secretary Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines Commission on Public Affairs*

Bishop Secillano began by expressing deep gratitude to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for the invitation. He emphasized the need to foster honesty and open-mindedness amid religious differences and noted the frequent uncharitable criticisms faced by faith communities. While acknowledging that religious positions may conflict with liberal and progressive legislation, he affirmed that these stances are rooted in Gospel principles. He defended the Catholic Church's positions on issues such as abortion and vote-buying, referencing parts from the Catechism, which upholds fundamental equality and condemns discrimination.

He stressed the Church's duty to proclaim God's truth rather than serve human convenience and called for openness to dialogue without compromising the Gospel. He shared the biblical story of Jesus forgiving the woman accused of adultery with the message: "Go and sin no more," and clarified that the Catholic Church supports true progress by defending the rights of the poor and marginalized out of love. He concluded by stating, "The Church's doors are open to you, but inside the Church, do not change God for you," and emphasized that truth must be the foundation of peaceful and inclusive societies.

Global Ambassador Bishop Efraim Tendero: *Global Ambassador World Evangelical Alliance*

Bishop Tendero spoke from an Evangelical theological perspective. He stressed that the future of Southeast Asia depends on whether religions build bridges or walls. Referencing Luke 4, he highlighted Christ's mission of reconciliation and declared that reconciliation is central to the religious mission. He affirmed that all people are created in God's image, with the right to think, believe, and worship freely. Where religious freedom is respected, he noted, peace and trust flourish.

He emphasized that the Gospel cannot thrive under coercion and shared the example of Peace Builders Community, Inc. (PBCI) in Mindanao, which engaged in dialogue to overcome prejudice. He quoted a Muslim Imam who told them, "You do not just teach peace, your actions brought peace." Bishop Tendero challenged attendees with the question: "Am I willing to lay down my comfort, security, and even my life for peace?" He declared that peacemaking is not optional but is Christ's calling, and recalled the March 27, 2014 peace agreement signed at Malacañang as a testimony to reconciliation over conflict. He closed with a call to actively promote peace and to be peacemakers, not just peace lovers.

Deepika Singh: *Deputy Secretary General Religions for Peace*

Deepika Singh affirmed that the participants of the conference are united by a common purpose. She asserted that dignity is an existential requirement and stated that peace arises when religious communities collaborate. She clarified that peace is not merely the absence of war but the upholding of human dignity.

Singh emphasized that lasting peace requires more than policy, it demands action centered on dignity. She cited the example of Buddhist and Muslim leaders in Myanmar, who in September 2015 gathered to dispel conflict rumors spread on social media. She stressed that peacebuilding must be both inclusive and intentional, and advocated for placing human dignity at the center of all policies and practices. Singh encouraged collaboration across diverse faith traditions and urged everyone to build bridges, not barriers, declaring that diversity is a gift, not a challenge.

Q&A Portion: *Questions asked by the delegation through Whova.*

Questions were asked and responded too throughout the week in a chat-like forum with the speakers.

Wednesday, April 23, 2025

Opening Session – Introductions and Keynote Speech

Isaiah Walker: *Academic Vice President and Professor, Brigham Young University–Hawaii*

Isaiah Walker welcomed everyone with a Hawaiian chant, Hiki Mai E Nā Pua. He continued by sharing that Laie is a *puanua*, safe haven, that has protected various people and their cultures for many years. It is a place of refuge and growth. This purpose is continued through the David O. McKay Center for Intercultural Understanding. The center promotes peace and understanding in the community, very similar to what is trying to be accomplished in this very conference.

Brett Scharffs: *Director, International Center for Law and Religion Studies, J. Reuben Clark Law School, Brigham Young University*

Brett introduced the theme of the conference and where the idea came from. He mentioned that many of the conferences ICLRS hosts are focused on discussing what the problem is and how to remedy it. However, in preparation for this conference they wanted to take advantage of the unique platform BYU-Hawaii offers to be able to discuss what is working.

He emphasized that the purpose of the conference is peacemaking, specifically in ASEAN countries. BYU-Hawaii, like Vice President Isaiah Walker mentioned, offers a peacebuilding major to students. Now more than ever we need more peacemakers. He ended by echoing the words of President Russell M. Nelson by saying that we have the responsibility to be those peace makers in the world.

H.E. Edmund Bon Tai Soon: *Chair, AICHR*

His Excellency discussed Malaysia's objective as the representative country of ASEAN this year. He explained they are focused on inclusivity and sustainability for vulnerable minorities. He explained that true inclusivity goes beyond tolerance. Human rights is the core of the work.

One human dignity topic that is especially important to them is religious freedom. They believe religious freedom is for all people. They have programs ready to help aid them in this focus such as the ASEAN Woman for Peace Initiative, Gender Perspectives on Peacebuilding, and Promoting CHR and Religious Freedom. His Excellency said, "Peace is not merely the absence of conflict. The journey of peace might be long."

Mohamed Azam Mohamed Adil: *Director-General Institute of Islamic Understanding, Malaysia (IKIM)*

Mohamed's words were short but powerful. He echoed many of the words shared by His Excellency. He shared that Malaysia is devoted to seeing real change in

ASEAN and the Institute is working to support this mission. He wants there to be peace and unity for all.

Panel Discussion – What Does an Inclusive & Dignified Vision of Education Look Like in an Age of Artificial Intelligence?

Siti Mazidah Mohamad: *Assistant Professor Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Universiti Brunei Darussalam*

Professor Siti Mazida Mohamad emphasized the importance of empowering young people through the ethical use of artificial intelligence (AI). She highlighted that while AI offers significant benefits, such as supporting emotional well-being, it also presents risks—most notably, the danger that over-reliance on AI can undermine critical thinking skills. Research supports this concern, showing that frequent use of AI tools can lead to cognitive offloading, where students become passive consumers of information rather than active problem-solvers, ultimately weakening their ability to think independently and critically.

On the positive side, Professor Siti noted that AI can contribute to emotional support among youth. For example, the trend of "bed cleaning"—where young people post videos of themselves cleaning their bedrooms on social media—has become popular in her country. This practice helps youth cope with distress and promotes healing, illustrating how digital platforms and AI can foster community and improve mental health.

To prepare ASEAN's youth as active agents in shaping their digital future, Professor Siti proposed several strategies:

- Developing educational resources tailored to AI literacy.
- Providing training and workshops to build technical and ethical competencies.
- Supporting research initiatives that engage youth in AI development and evaluation.
- Partnering with media organizations to promote responsible AI narratives.
- Integrating comprehensive policies and regulations to guide ethical AI use.

She also emphasized the need to frame digital literacy across multiple dimensions:

- Access and participation: Ensuring equitable opportunities to engage with digital technologies.
- Analysis and evaluation: Teaching youth to critically assess AI outputs and digital content.
- Creation and production: Encouraging the responsible creation of digital content and AI tools.
- Digital ethics and responsibility: Instilling a strong sense of ethical conduct in digital spaces.
- Digital citizenship and governance: Preparing youth to contribute to the governance and future direction of digital societies.

By adopting these strategies, Professor Siti argued, ASEAN can empower its youth to not only navigate but also actively shape an ethical and inclusive digital future.

Eugene Yapp: *Senior Fellow, Religious Freedom Institute, IKIM, Malaysia*

Eugene Yapp explored the role of artificial intelligence in relation to human rights. He discussed how AI is being used to bring together the best preaching resources, foster community interaction, encourage government participation, and regulate AI use in society. He urged us to remember three key ethical principles that emphasize the importance of right conduct.

First is the ethic of responsibility, which concerns determining who is accountable for regulating content on social media platforms. Second is the ethic of right and good; he argued that what is good is not always right, and that both must go hand in hand. Third is the ethic of integrity, where he emphasized that the best tool or design is grounded in knowing and upholding the truth.

Dr. Syafiq Borhannuddin: *Fellow Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia (IKIM)*

Dr. Syafiq shared messages based on Islamic philosophy and civilization. He explained how important these topics are in the space of education for Muslims. Tying this back to the topic of AI assisting in a more inclusive and dignified education, he shared that Muslim education has become more balanced with the help of AI, but it needs to better comply with human values. He added by saying, “parents will be responsible for passing on moral principles and values to their children, but AI will transform education.”

He also briefly discussed the difference between a good citizen and a good person. A good citizen is an active member of the community doing their part for the betterment of all, while a good person may not do the same. All in all, he feels education is a lifelong journey that requires the proper dialogue to frame it and promote it.

Q&A Portion: *Questions asked by the delegation through Whova.*

Questions were asked and responded too throughout the week in a chat-like forum with the speakers.

Panel Discussion – How Do We Pursue Human Dignity, Peace, and Justice in Times of Upheaval?

Khairudin Aljunied: *Associate Professor at the National University of Singapore*

Dr. Aljunied stated that technology permits individuals to see others as lesser humans. He explained that violence, social exclusion, and microaggression begin with pedagogy. Change must start small, beginning with the family. He emphasized the importance of sharing human dignity and preserving humanity. According to him, change starts from the bottom up. He argued that the liberal order failed and permitted the rise of threats to global peace. He called for thought leadership, saying we must change minds to change the world.

Alizaman Dumangcag Gamon: *Assistant Professor International Islamic University Malaysia*

Dr. Gamon discussed the obstacle of human dignity and justice within the liberal order. He raised the question: how should we approach the concept of human dignity? He encouraged reflection on the concepts and obstacles of society and how we should respond to them. He emphasized the need for synergy that brings intellectual associations. He said that justice must be viewed pragmatically, and warned not to repeat mistakes from the past. He called for changing the mindset of the global community and rejecting historical amnesia or ignorance. He also questioned whether today's conflicts are truly about religion, pointing instead to deeper root causes.

Desytia Nawris: *Representative of the Bahá'í International Community's Regional Office in Jakarta*

Ms. Nawris stated that cooperation is the principle that governs the functionality of a system or society. Although competition is prevalent, she emphasized that cooperation should be pushed further. She highlighted the role of religion in increasing the potential of the human spirit. She discussed the ideas of interconnectedness and interdependence, using the analogy of the human body to describe human society—where different roles and systems all work together to create a stable social order. She concluded that the new world order should be centered on collaboration and shaped by the spirit of oneness.

Q&A Portion: *Questions asked by the delegation through Whova.*

Questions were asked and responded too throughout the week in a chat-like forum with the speakers.

Panel Discussion – Is a Dignified & Sustainable Economic Life Possible in an Age of Global Capitalism?

Suzana Binti Md Samsudi: *Fellow Center for Economics and Social Studies, IKIM*

Suzana MD Samsudi opens the session by posing a critical question: Is it truly possible to live a dignified and sustainable economic life under the dominance of global capitalism? She critiques the current system, which is rooted in maximizing shareholder value and profit. This focus, she argues, often leads to exploitation, the commodification of life, and an endless pursuit of growth—frequently at the expense of ecological balance and human well-being.

As an alternative, Suzana introduces the concept of the solidarity economy, which shifts focus from profit to people, emphasizing community needs, mutual support, and inclusivity. She highlights the importance of reorienting economic frameworks to center on what sustains dignity and well-being for all, rather than just benefiting the few.

From an Islamic perspective, Suzana notes that capitalism is not inherently opposed, but must be approached critically. Islamic economic principles call for ethical contracts, inclusivity, and a balance between technological advancement and sustainability. The faith encourages economic practices that support the common good, discourage exploitation, and maintain environmental and social integrity.

Suzana concludes by emphasizing that policy interventions are essential to create space for these more ethical and sustainable practices. Governments, institutions, and communities must work together to implement frameworks that support dignified living in an age where economic systems often fall short.

Muhammad Ibnur Rashad Bin Zainal Abidin: *Chief Foresight Officer, ASEAN Youth Fellow & Chief GUILD Asia*

In this powerful and thought-provoking session, Muhammad Ibnur Rashad explores how sustainable change must begin from the ground up. Drawing on his experience with GUILD (Ground-Up Innovation Labs for Development), he stresses that true innovation must originate from communities themselves, not just top-down systems. Without local involvement, solutions often fail to take root or thrive.

He critiques modern economic interventions, highlighting how they often come at the expense of communities and the environment, warning that Singapore—and the world—must not become a society that knows the price of everything but the value of nothing.

Rashad calls for a transition from capitalism to "stewardism"—an economy grounded in responsibility, care, and co-creation. He links this with the climate crisis, emphasizing that eco-anxiety is real and must be addressed as part of climate action, turning it into eco-agency by empowering people with hope and purpose.

His projects such as IBAM and Floating Gardens demonstrate that waste can become a resource, and that capital doesn't always mean money—it can be effort,

creativity, or collaboration. He reminds us that both necessity and creativity drive innovation, and that healing the earth begins when diverse individuals work together at the grassroots.

Rand Blimes: *Professor of Political Science at Brigham Young University–Hawaii*

Rand Blimes was the moderator for this session, as such, he introduced each of the panelists and helped guide the discussion.

However he later shared that, this session challenges the traditional notion that economic success is defined by a nation's wealth. Instead, it proposes a more meaningful measure: the freedom and dignity that people experience in their daily lives.

While global trade and free trade agreements have opened up markets—especially in Southeast Asia, such as Vietnam's 7% annual growth driven by export-led manufacturing and the urban job boom in the Philippines—they have also failed many citizens. These benefits are not equally distributed. Often, those at the bottom of the economic ladder are the first to suffer when instability strikes, despite being essential to the system's functioning.

The speaker emphasizes that dignity means more than survival—it means the freedom to aspire and shape one's future. Developing countries shouldn't just follow the tone set by wealthier nations; they must also establish their own paths, rooted in local realities and sustainable practices.

The session ends with a call to action: a dignified and sustainable life isn't something that simply happens—it must be designed and intentionally pursued. It requires patience, hard work, and a commitment to inclusive growth.

Q&A Portion: *Questions asked by the delegation through Whova.*

Questions were asked and responded too throughout the week in a chat-like forum with the speakers.

Panel Discussion – ASEAN, Religious Pluralism, and Human Dignity

Yong Chanthalangsy: *Director General of the Institute of Foreign Affairs Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

Director Yong Chanthalangsy shared that diversity has always been a part of his personal life. He described himself as a person of two countries, his father is Chinese (Cantonese) and his mother is Vietnamese. Despite this multicultural background, he chose to identify as Lao and has maintained his Lao identity while practicing Buddhism.

He expressed deep admiration for the beauty and vast diversity of ASEAN, noting that the region is home to 700 million people, tens of thousands of islands, over 500 ethnic languages, and more than 350 ethnic groups. These differences, he stated, have become an integral part of everyday life in the region. However, he emphasized that unity must remain a common goal. It is essential, he said, to demonstrate respect for different religious beliefs and to foster unity while embracing diversity.

Director Yong also highlighted the core values of ASEAN, which he categorized into two components: constructed values and inherited values. He concluded by referencing key articles from the Lao Constitution that reflect these principles: Article 8, which guarantees that every ethnic group may preserve and develop its traditions and culture; Article 9, which ensures that the state respects and protects all Buddhist and other religious practices; and Article 44, which grants Lao citizens the freedom to choose whether or not to follow any religion.

Eugene KB Tan: *Associate Professor Singapore Management University*

Eugene K.B. Tan spoke on the theme “Traveling Well Amid Differences,” highlighting the importance of multiple identities, civic and ethnic distinctions, and religious freedom as a basis for secure identities and human dignity. He described Southeast Asia’s long-standing religious pluralism, referencing the diverse religious landscapes across Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and mainland Southeast Asia.

Tan emphasized that human dignity is the foundation of fundamental freedoms and societal flourishing. For religious pluralism to thrive, both religious and non-religious communities must feel secure. He concluded by stressing the need for meaningful dialogue and trust-building, both between the state and citizens and among communities.

Yuyun Wahyuningrum: *Executive Director ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights*

Yuyun Wahyuningrum emphasized that true religious pluralism must go beyond tolerance, it requires justice, equality, and a genuine sense of belonging. She highlighted the ongoing challenge of addressing deep-rooted structural inequalities that marginalize certain religious or ethnic communities. According to Wahyuningrum, human dignity must serve as the foundation of all efforts toward sustainable pluralism and inclusive governance. She warned that without policies grounded in dignity and

equality, efforts to promote pluralism will remain superficial. Her remarks reinforced the idea that pluralism is not merely about coexistence, but about ensuring that all individuals, regardless of faith or background, are equally valued and protected in society.

H.E. Edmund Bon Tai Soon: *Chair, AICHR*

H.E. Edmund Bon Tai Soon noted that while it is relatively easy to discuss broad principles, the real challenge lies in addressing and implementing the more specific and detailed issues. In examining violence through the lens of the conflict triangle, he emphasized the need to recognize not only direct violence but also structural and cultural violence. He pointed out that genuine dialogue becomes difficult when there are significant power imbalances between countries, and that many conflicts in Asia are rooted in power struggles between majority and minority groups.

Q&A Portion: *Questions asked by the crowd through Whova.*

Q: - Many conferences have focused on religious minorities, but Southeast Asia now faces the rise of religious majoritarianism. Is it possible for the religious freedom of the majority to deny the freedom of the minority? Religious majoritarianism has co-opted the language of human rights and harmony to further its agenda of intolerance, undermining the framework of religious freedom.

Ambassador Yong Chanthalangsy: He explained that Laos avoids using the term "minority" in its constitution, instead recognizing the rights of ethnic groups to ensure equality. He added that Laos has no official religion, supporting neutrality.

H.E Edmund Bon Tai Soon: He affirmed that the phenomenon described is real and currently happening; co-opting the language of human rights for suppression is a pressing issue.

Yuyun Wahyuningrum: She shared that any use of human rights language to suppress religious freedom is a distortion of human rights. Whether someone belongs to the majority or minority, they remain human beings.

Eugene KB Tan: He discussed that dividing people into majorities and minorities opens the door to discrimination. Human rights are borne by individuals, not by their group affiliations.

Questions continued to be asked and responded too throughout the week in a chat-like forum with the speakers.

Panel Discussion: BYUH Student Fellows Research in Southeast Asia

Hannah Kola and Samantha Rasmussen: *Student Fellows and Executive Committee Members, Brigham Young University–Hawaii*

Student fellows Hannah Kola and Sam Rasmussen presented a study examining the relationship between religious freedom and the onset of civil war. Their research explored how governmental restrictions on religious practices can deepen social divisions, erode trust among communities, and increase the potential for violent conflict. Employing robust statistical models and controlling for variables such as ethnic fractionalization, GDP per capita, life expectancy, and unemployment rates, their analysis supported the hypothesis that greater religious freedom significantly reduces the likelihood of civil war. The findings highlight religious freedom as a key policy consideration and a valuable tool for promoting domestic stability.

Joseph Sant: *Student Fellow and Executive Committee Member, Brigham Young University–Hawaii*

Student fellow Joseph Sant presented the findings of his qualitative research on post-conflict justice efforts in Cambodia, focusing on the legacy of the Cambodian genocide and subsequent civil conflicts. He highlighted the ongoing challenges faced by Cambodians in their pursuit of healing and justice. Drawing on a 2018 survey, Sant noted that while 61.3% of Cambodians expressed a desire for a truth commission, 81.4% were unable to identify any existing reparation projects (Williams et al., 2018), revealing a significant gap between public interest and institutional response. His content analysis of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions and Cambodia's historical conflicts examined how the integration of Restorative Justice principles and Buddhist values could be applied in future reconciliation efforts. Sant proposed that such an approach, if implemented in structured truth and reconciliation meetings, could foster greater peace and resolution among those still affected by the country's traumatic past.

Vilai Ilolahia: *Student Fellow and Executive Committee Member, Brigham Young University–Hawaii*

Student fellow Vilai Fotumoafulahi Ilolahia Jr. presented research examining the relationship between religious freedom and corruption. His study explored how religiosity—measured through variables such as frequency of religious service attendance, the perceived importance of God, and belief in heaven and hell—relates to levels of corruption across societies. While previous studies suggest that higher religiosity is associated with increased corruption, regardless of religious affiliation (Gokcekus & Ekici, 2019), Ilolahia's findings support this claim and indicate that religious freedom itself does not directly influence corruption levels. Instead, dominant religions within a country may shape corruption outcomes (Chase, 2010). Using

regression models with control variables such as GDP per capita, political freedom, and economic freedom, the research also highlighted varying effects of different religious affiliations. This study contributes to understanding how religious structures and freedoms intersect with governance and institutional integrity, particularly in the Asian context where religious identity often overlaps with ethnicity and is subject to centralized control.

Ayu Ningtyas Kartika Sari, Deneille Martin, and Raj Ravi Jerry : *Student Fellows and Executive Committee Member, Brigham Young University–Hawaii*

Student fellows Ayu Ningtyas Kartika Sari, Deneille Martin, and Raj Ravi Jerry presented their research on the role of religious education in promoting human dignity in Malaysia and Indonesia—two countries marked by significant religious diversity. Their study emphasized the need for a deeper understanding of human dignity and interfaith respect, noting that current educational systems in both countries often prioritize faith-specific or moral instruction, limiting students' exposure to other religions. This limited approach can unintentionally reinforce divisions rather than build mutual respect. The team investigated whether integrating world religions courses into public secondary school curricula could enhance interfaith understanding and promote human dignity among youth. Using both quantitative and qualitative methods, including surveys and interviews with former public school students, the researchers compared educational experiences across the two countries. While further research is needed, their findings offer important insights into the potential benefits and challenges of broadening religious education, and they provide recommendations for educators and policymakers seeking to cultivate greater tolerance and respect across faiths.

Thursday, April 24, 2025

Welcome & Opening Session - Joe

Nathaniel Stephens: *Dean & Professor, Faculty of Business and Government, Brigham Young University–Hawaii*

Nathaniel Stephens welcomed everyone to the second full day of the conference. He mentioned how special it was that BYU-Hawaii and the Religious Freedom and Human Dignity Initiative (RFHD) could be a part of this. He also introduced the moderator for the session, Cole Durham.

Panel Discussion – Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy in Fostering Peaceful and Inclusive Societies

Akh Muzakki: *Professor UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya*

Akh Muzakki focused on the word tolerance, which he defined as finding common ground, and to love and create a respectful environment. Tolerance is not forcing people to change. He then approached the topic of how the CCRL works for teachers of religious education on tolerance. Tolerance is becoming true brothers and sisters. He emphasized the importance of focusing on shared interests, even those outside of religion, such as music or sports. Our communication on these shared interests can help to improve religious tolerance.

Henriette Hutabarat Lebang: *General Chairperson Indonesia Bible Society*

Regarding this topic of cross-cultural religious literacy, Henriette Hutabarat Lebang stated that the first step is warm, daily interaction, regardless of religious background. The second step is to listen and relate to others. This requires an open heart. We need to desire to understand people and their human dignity. Regardless of someone's color or background, we are all from God. She finished by saying that we need to promote peace, work together, cultivate friendships, and have dialogue.

Matius Ho: *Executive Director Leimena Institute*

Matius Ho focused on bridging social capital and how we can do that. He started by emphasizing social trust and its importance. We have to learn how to collaborate and respect our differences. Collaboration leads to trust, which in turn leads to further collaboration.

Farid Saenong: *Faculty member of Islamic Studies, Universitas Islam Internasional Indonesia (UIII)*

Farid Saenong began by touching on the topic of voicing Indonesia's Washtiyya (Arabic term referring to moderate Islam) within cross-cultural religious literacy. It is important to consider genealogies and future trajectories. He then went on to discuss the culture in Indonesia and his desire for more equality and progression.

Q&A Portion: *Questions asked by the crowd through Whova.*

There was no Q and A for this session.

Panel Discussion: Vietnam Religion and Rule of Law

Brett Scharffs: *Director, International Center for Law and Religion Studies, J. Reuben Clark Law School, Brigham Young University*

Brett Scharffs began by briefly talking about Dr. Do's recently published book. In doing this, he complimented Dr. Do by calling him the founding father of religion and the rule of law in Vietnam. He then went on to discuss that Vietnam has established a living, changing dynamic system designed to help religious communities. It is designed not to control, but to facilitate religious life. He went on to discuss that there are some conflicts that are rooted in ethnicity and other factors that are sometimes described as religious conflicts, but that is easy for outsiders to understand. He closed by explaining how these changes and systems often come from conferences, and then go to collaborating, and then training government officials through Ho Chi Minh City.

Quang Hung Do: *Professor for University of Social Sciences and Humanities and Chairman for The Religious Advisory Council of the Central Committee of Vietnam Fatherland Front, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University*

Dr. Do began by explaining the secular state in Vietnam and the socialist rule of law. He then went on to discuss three characteristics of a model, which are harmony, collaboration, and pluralism. When talking about these characteristics, he mentioned that pluralism applies as long as it is appropriate with the law. Dr. Do then went on to explain that Vietnam has gone from five official religions to sixteen, and how building the secular state was difficult. In discussing this, he highlighted the importance of respecting the ideas and thoughts of people. In Vietnam specifically, Dr. Do advocated for finding representatives of religions and religious organizations so they can join Vietnamese political organizations. There are currently only six represented religions in Congress, and Dr. Do advocated for more.

Dr. Do continued by mentioning how much work there is still to do, especially because people do not often express or share their religion. They have been building a rule of law state since 1994, and he wishes that their international partners would acknowledge Vietnam's achievements. There are unique ways of making the law compared with other countries. Some thoughts he shared about the development of the law are: (1) Completing the law system is not good enough, (2) when we have a secular state with alignment to the rule of law, more inclined to rule of law, and (3) If we want a secular state to be good, we have to acknowledge issue of new religious phenomena and cults. In a specific conclusion, Dr. DO explained that people do have religion, but they keep quiet. Acknowledgement is important now that Vietnam and its government are opening their doors to religious freedom. Religion is a social force. Aim to live in harmony despite different beliefs.

Cole Durham: *President, Founding Director for the International Center for Law and Religious Studies at Brigham Young University G20 Interfaith Forum*

Cole Durham began by acknowledging that change will include a ripple effect. When one thing changes, more will continue to change. He also gave more of a background on Vietnam and Dr. Do. He introduced more of what Dr. Do does for his work. He concluded by briefly explaining more about comparative law and reform in Vietnam.

Thiều Hương: *Director of the Protestantism Office, Governmental Committee on Religious Affairs*

Thiều Hương began by explaining that awareness of religious freedom brings diversity, and that diversity also brings challenges that need to be understood so society can be better. They then highlighted an important problem to consider: collaboration and cooperation are not easy. There is no harmony between religions. To build temples, people have to cooperate, and yet many oppose because it is “against their religion” or “not their religion.” There is a tradition of helping each other in Vietnam, but there are those who do not agree with certain practices that cause disharmony (donating blood, some against religion, some have to because it is tradition to help). Traditions, religion, and beliefs clash between the people and create conflict. Religious freedom is lacking. The responsibility of the government should be put to work. Oftentimes, people build walls and condemn each other. Some of these conflicts come from the law, and the perception of society follows pressure. Online influencers and social media create a phenomenon of religious freedom. They then transitioned to the idea that religious freedom is not controlled by government, but a responsibility they can work on. She concluded with the important idea that we have to increase dialogue to increase understanding. We have to use the law to guide so that the country or society can be in alignment with religious freedom.

Q&A Portion: *Questions asked by the delegation through Whova.*

Questions were asked and responded to throughout the week in a chat-like forum with the speakers.

Panel Discussion – Academic Perspectives on Peaceful and Inclusive Societies in Southeast Asia

Inayah Rohmaniyah: *Professor UIN Sunan KALIJAGA*

Inayah Rohmaniyah shared insights on the successes and challenges of building inclusive societies in Indonesia, with a particular focus on the role of religion and education. She began by highlighting Indonesia's religious landscape, noting that while Muslims make up 87.2% of the population, the country is home to a rich diversity of faiths.

Rohmaniyah pointed to Islamic schools, or madrasah, as critical spaces where values are shaped. However, she raised concerns that 50% of the teachers in these institutions hold intolerant views toward other religions, posing a barrier to the cultivation of a truly inclusive society.

To counter this, she introduced the concept of axiology, which emphasizes the development of moral values and attitudes rooted in mutual respect, appreciation, and love. Rohmaniyah advocated for a deeper integration of axiological principles in education to challenge exclusivist mindsets and nurture a culture of peaceful coexistence.

What she shared ultimately presented Indonesia as a case study in both the promise and complexity of religious pluralism, urging greater efforts to promote inclusive values through both policy and pedagogy.

Pablito A. Baybado: *Professor University of Santo Tomas*

Pablito A. Baybayado, known as "Bong," offered a powerful reflection on the experiences and peacebuilding potential of minority religions, particularly Christianity, within the predominantly non-Christian societies of Asia and Southeast Asia. He began by acknowledging the challenges faced by Christian communities as minorities in the region, noting that their marginalization is often exacerbated by broader political and social dynamics.

Baybayado explored how minority religions can find meaningful pathways to integrate into the wider community, emphasizing a need for genuine dialogue and active participation in the public sphere. Drawing inspiration from Pope Francis and the concept of synodality, he presented this model as a framework for peacebuilding. One that prioritizes consensus, mutual understanding, and communal journeying.

Referencing the Bangkok Document, he emphasized its call for religious actors to become "bridge builders" through sincere and respectful engagement. However, he critically reflected on Pope Francis's inclusive theological statement that "all religions are pathways to God," cautioning that such views, while well-intentioned, may unintentionally obscure the distinctiveness of faith traditions and lead to problematic theological generalizations.

Despite these nuances, Baybayado affirmed that all religious traditions must reject violence, hate, and division. He shared a powerful example from Indonesia, where a Christian church and a mosque are physically connected by a “tunnel of friendship”, symbolizing solidarity, coexistence, and mutual respect.

Ultimately, he championed synodality as a practical and spiritual tool for peace, emphasizing that true peace arises not only from listening to God, but from listening to one another. In his vision, religious values must always serve the common good, ensuring that no one is left behind in the journey toward inclusive and peaceful societies.

Hurriyah: *Chair Indonesian Scholar Network on Freedom of Religion or Beliefs (ISFORB)*

Hurriyah delivered a compelling reflection on Indonesia’s complex and evolving path toward building an inclusive society, grounded in the concept of agonistic pluralism, a framework that embraces difference and dialogue rather than seeking to erase conflict. She emphasized that Indonesia’s motto, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, “Unity in Diversity”, is not just an aspirational slogan, but a principle forged through deep societal challenges in the formation of the modern republic.

She explored how pluralism in Indonesia encompasses a wide spectrum of ethnic, cultural, and religious identities. However, she acknowledged that rights have historically been unequally distributed, particularly for religious minorities, who often face legal and social discrimination despite constitutional protections.

Highlighting the roles of Indonesia’s two largest Islamic organizations, Hurriyah showcased how democratic and religious diversity can coexist and even flourish, contributing to efforts against radicalism and promoting state-supported religious harmony. She also pointed to the power of interfaith coalitions and grassroots reconciliation efforts, where marginalized groups collaborate to rebuild trust and foster communal healing.

Hurriyah stressed that peace is not merely the absence of violence, but the presence of relational justice fair, inclusive relationships between communities. She also underscored the importance of digital activism in keeping online spaces open for religious freedom and pluralistic expression.

Despite progressive frameworks on paper, she critiqued Indonesia’s failure in enforcement, where minority religions are often still labeled heretical and misrepresented in educational and public materials. As a way forward, she proposed formalizing partnerships between the state and civil society, rooting policies in local wisdom and dialogue, and promoting a vision of citizenship based on human dignity and meaningful engagement across differences.

Her closing sentiment, “I want to live for another thousand years,” symbolized a commitment to the future. A future where diversity is no longer seen as a division of ideas, but as a foundation for a stronger, more inclusive society.

Thao Nghiem: *University Lecturer University of Groningen*

Thao Nghiem presented a thought-provoking analysis of the intersection between legal norms, public discourse, human dignity, and religious freedom in Vietnam. Framing his remarks through historical and philosophical lenses, Nghiem invoked the legacy of Vietnamese thinkers like Nguyen An Ninh and Ho Chi Minh to emphasize the transformative power of personal and national identity.

He argued that beliefs and values should not be externally borrowed but must emerge from personal conviction and self-identity. Quoting Ho Chi Minh, Nghiem reinforced the idea that “if you want to make a revolution, we must revolutionize ourselves,” highlighting the essential role of moral transformation in achieving lasting political change.

Nghiem offered a collectivist perspective on human dignity, viewing it not as an abstract individual right, but as something deeply tied to one’s duties to society and the nation. In this view, religious freedom in Vietnam operates not as a personal entitlement but as a state-regulated practice, accepted only when aligned with national goals, particularly the promotion of socialism and national unity.

He critiqued the state's instrumental approach to religion, where faith is supported only insofar as it contributes to state-defined objectives. Nevertheless, Nghiem called for a more pluralistic and nuanced understanding of religious identity, one that transcends outdated binaries and recognizes the rich complexity of Vietnam’s cultural and spiritual landscape. He concluded by advocating for stronger community partnerships and deeper respect for religious identity as a path toward a more inclusive Vietnamese society.

Knox Thames: *Senior Fellow and Director of the Program on Global Faith and Inclusive Societies Pepperdine University*

Knox Thames explored the vital role of sacred sites in fostering pluralism, diversity, and inclusion across Southeast Asia. Drawing on his extensive research, Thames emphasized the power of building bridges between past and present by leveraging local histories and sacred spaces to address contemporary social challenges.

He highlighted that every community, regardless of background, holds a unique history, possesses sacred places, and grapples with the pursuit of a more inclusive society. These sacred sites, according to Thames, are more than just places of worship; they serve as intersections of human rights, heritage protection, and interfaith engagement, creating synergistic opportunities for mutual understanding and cooperation.

Thames underscored the pressing issue of a global “pandemic of persecution,” warning that statements alone are insufficient. Instead, he advocated for a proactive, customizable approach that uplifts local narratives and strengthens community resilience. Through a holistic vision of citizenship rooted in equality and dialogue,

Thames proposed that pluralistic societies can emerge—where diversity is not only acknowledged but embraced.

Ultimately, Thames called for the use of sacred places as platforms to inspire peaceful coexistence and promote inclusive national identities grounded in both tradition and human rights.

Q&A Portion: *Questions asked by the crowd through Whova.*

There was no Q&A because the panel ran out of time.

Panel Discussion – Faith-Based Civil Society Programs that Promote Peacemaking

Muhammad Hafiz: *CCRL and FoRB Facilitator Leimena Institute*

Muhammad Hafiz focused on Indonesia's specific challenges in promoting religious freedom, particularly the difficulty of introducing external religious ideas in a Muslim-majority country. He discussed how Indonesia's deeply embedded religious culture can be resistant to foreign perspectives and emphasized the importance of using Islamic teachings familiar to the population to foster openness and tolerance. The Leimena Institute's Faith-Based Civil Society Program incorporates the CCRL (Center for Civic and Religious Leadership), which promotes religious freedom through education, dialogue, and practical engagement with community leaders.

Hafiz described a methodical approach to peacemaking: recognizing key issues, identifying target communities, forming nodes of cooperation, and conducting workshops and training sessions. These components are designed to help Indonesian citizens be more open to religious pluralism. He also addressed challenges such as rejection and misunderstanding within religious communities themselves. For Hafiz, promoting tolerance starts with shared religious values and leads to clarification of suspicion, mutual support, and greater understanding. He stressed the importance of addressing gender biases and including all voices in the dialogue. His presentation emphasized that bridging differences requires a "head-to-head, heart-to-heart, and hand-to-hand" approach, meaning intellectual, emotional, and practical commitment to peace.

Aldrin Penamora: *Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches*

Aldrin Penamora gave a profound presentation connecting peacemaking with the Christian Eucharist, or Lord's Supper, as a paradigm for reconciliation. He explained that peacebuilding must be embodied in community life and theology. Drawing on the Filipino concept of *salo-salo* (sharing meals), he described how eating together, mourning together, and laughing together can humanize relationships that might otherwise remain abstract or strained. For Penamora, peacemaking is not just theoretical but lived, it is a process of being with others, especially the marginalized, and engaging in shared life experiences that deepen understanding.

Penamora also explored the theological concept of *malasakit*, or deep empathy and concern for others, especially those who have been hurt or marginalized. He encouraged Christian communities to recognize and repent for past harms, particularly violence done in the name of religion. This act of repentance, he argued, is part of the Eucharistic model, where breaking bread becomes an invitation to include the "other" and to heal. He concluded by emphasizing that peacemaking is a continuous journey, not a destination, and must involve the sharing of goods, acknowledgment of historical mistakes, and the active pursuit of restorative relationships.

Micah Fries: *Director Multi-Neighbors Neighbors Network*

Micah Fries offered a relational and practical model of peacemaking, advocating for authentic relationship-building over mere tolerance or coexistence. He introduced five models for interfaith peacemaking within multi-faith neighborhoods. The first was relational engagement, which he described as creating genuine human relationships beyond theological or political differences. Fries noted that people don't need to agree to work together, and that bringing one's full self, including convictions, is not a hindrance but a strength when combined with empathy and respect.

Fries emphasized theological conviction and truth-telling as essential to peacebuilding, but not as tools of coercion. He encouraged conversations that are transparent, unscripted, and even messy, but rooted in trust and affection. These conversations, he explained, allow people to remain true to their beliefs while still creating bonds of unity. He used service as a metaphor and practice for building relationships, arguing that shared acts of service open doors for transformation and deeper connection. His key message was that peace must be lived through relationships, not dictated by agreement. His personal experiences illustrated how peacemakers often stand "between two warring parties," taking hits from both sides, yet remaining committed to walking in love.

David Kirkham: *Executive Director GO-HRE*

David Kirkham's remarks centered on the integration of human rights education into childhood development. He described the GO-HRE initiative as one that helps children internalize principles of dignity and justice from an early age. Kirkham emphasized that human rights begin in "small places, close to home," such as schools and families. The curriculum developed by GO-HRE is interactive and rooted in moral values, making it more than just theoretical, it's meant to be lived out through action. One of the strengths of this program is that it introduces abstract human rights concepts using accessible tools like storytelling and objects from various cultures (e.g., talking sticks).

Kirkham highlighted the importance of teaching kids to think critically and compassionately. He stressed that the mission of GO-HRE is to help children recognize their own worth and the worth of others, especially before they become too self-important or desensitized to others' needs. He cited thinkers like St. Thomas Aquinas to emphasize the need to teach values early, before harmful ideologies can take root. His perspective demonstrated that peacemaking is most effective when it begins in childhood and is reinforced through consistent, culturally relevant education.

Judy Kirkham: *Executive Director GO-HRE*

Judy Kirkham expanded on David's points by discussing how GO-HRE's programs are structured to promote not just knowledge but active engagement. Each

lesson ends with a “homework” challenge, small, concrete acts of kindness and justice that children can carry out in their own communities. These challenges reinforce the principles taught in class and encourage students to apply what they've learned. She shared examples of how cultural practices like storytelling or the use of talking sticks from Indigenous cultures are used to promote respectful listening and sharing.

Judy described the GO-HRE model as being simple, adaptive, and focused on core human values. It is designed to be non-coercive and politically neutral, allowing for broad application across different communities and countries. She emphasized that human rights education should not be a one-size-fits-all approach but must be shaped by the lived experiences and cultural contexts of the children it serves. Judy’s conclusion underscored the power of education to change societies from the ground up, and her approach provided a practical, hopeful framework for long-term peacebuilding through youth.

Q&A Portion: *Questions asked by the delegation through Whova.*

Questions were asked and responded to throughout the week in a chat-like forum with the speakers.

Friday, April 25, 2025

Welcome & Opening Session - Hannah

Aaron Shumway: *Director and Associate Professor in Faculty of Religious Education, Advisory Board Member for Religious Freedom and Human Dignity Initiative, Brigham Young University–Hawaii*

Aaron Shumway started by welcoming everyone to the second day of the conference. He then proceeded to open the first session of the day by introducing the moderator, Joel Sybrowsky.

Panel Discussion – Strengthening Values in the Workplace

Gregory Clark: *Vice President Religious Freedom & Business Foundation*

As part of the Religious Freedom & Business Foundation, Greg Clark focused his remarks on the intersection of religion and economics. Not only do religious organizations contribute significantly to the economy, they also provide societal safety nets through services such as addiction, immigrant, or unemployment recovery programs. Despite how religious groups can face hostility in the workplace, being religiously inclusive is good for a company's culture. Ultimately, it benefits their success as a business, as well.

Christina Clark: *Education Engagement Specialist Religious Freedom and Business Foundation*

Faith in the workplace is good for employees and communities and helps businesses be more effective, proposed Christina Clark. Religiously inclusive workplaces give their employees safe spaces to work, which leads to an increase in creativity and innovation. It is critical for business results to create an environment good for employee mental and spiritual health, thus, religion should be taken into account. A faith-friendly company may offer programs such as religious literacy training, which helps employees check their biases. Faith-based employee resource groups are another good tool for promoting interfaith understanding and collaboration.

Nithyakumar Sunderraj: *Managing Director Valcom IT Services Pvt Ltd*

Elder Sunderraj discussed the possibilities and complications of respecting human dignity and reaching harmony when working within a country of many faiths, a complex mix of cultures, and a large population. He argues that the key to success is focusing on the self and interpersonal relationships. Harmony starts with self-reflection and an increased effort to treat our neighbors—everyone we interact with, from coworkers to friends—with kindness and respect. Inclusion can be pursued through religious

accommodation, such as supplying prayer rooms at workplaces. Involvement is another critical factor to reach harmony; learning about other religions and celebrating with them will help us focus on what is common across religions, instead of what divides us.

John Smith: *Chief Legal Officer Ryan LLC*

John Smith addressed the question of how an employer should approach speaking publicly about religious freedom. He suggested focusing on how issues of religious inclusion relate directly to the company, such as the social and workplace environment benefits. For an employee, he suggested watching for opportunities to express religiosity in a way that is appropriate in the corporate world. Religious service, such as a mission, may be included in an introductory biography. Certain symbols, stickers, or clothing related to religion may also be appropriate at work.

Mejindarpal Kaur: *International Legal Director United Sikhs*

“I am one with the person next to me, I am one with the people around me, we are one with God!” This quote reflects Mejindarpal Kaur’s commentary on religious freedom in Malaysia. To her, including religion in the workplace should not be about business benefits, but about strengthening values. To truly be inclusive, we must recognize that we are all one.

Q&A Portion: *Questions asked by crowd through Whova.*

Q: Some perceive that Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts went too far. How do arguments for being religiously inclusive in the workplace address these concerns?

Gregory Clark: Although DEI efforts are helpful, and religion should be included in them, we should not rely solely on DEI efforts. Remember that religious accommodation is an obligation by law.

Christina Clark: It is religious discrimination when companies do not fulfill these accommodations.

John Smith: Instead of focusing on social issues that truly do not relate to a company, establish key values and ground them in the concept of treating all with dignity.

Panel Discussion – Humanitarian, Interfaith & Public-private Partnerships Building Social Capacities for Peace

Christina Tobas-Nahi: *Director IRUSA*

Christina Tobas-Nahi emphasized that even when planning a response, her organization always involves local leaders to ensure cultural appropriateness.

Heather Bradbury: *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Humanitarian Services*

Heather Bradbury highlighted that humanitarian efforts cannot be done alone. She mentioned that when people gather together, they can magnify their responsibilities and impact. She also stressed the importance of working with the government, stating, "If you think about that, those are big things. That's not just like, 'let's come in and feed you for a day.' For it to be sustainable, it has to be built into the government's systems, its programs, its themes. Otherwise, it's just not sustainable." She added that "when you serve together, you stay together," and explained that as credibility is gained over time, organizations can step back and help bring others together. She also reflected that back in the 1950s, dignity was the missing piece in peacebuilding efforts.

Carlos Reyes: *Roman Catholic Church*

Reverend Carlos mentioned that all people are intelligent, and being intelligent also imposes upon individuals the possible burden of responsibility to the community.

Mohamed Imran Bin Mohamed Taib: *Founding Director Dialogue Centre*

Mohamed Imran Bin Mohamed Taib explained that there is no superior religion, as all religions can be considered minorities depending on the area. He mentioned that some religions might be minorities in certain regions but majorities in others, and vice versa. He also highlighted the significant role that women play in promoting religious freedom and human dignity.

Anh Hoang: *US-ASEAN Center*

Anh Hoang shared that building blocks for peace are very effective, long-lasting, and beneficial for partnerships around the world. She stated that sustainable peace starts with trust. She emphasized that the true spirit of inclusivity, built after understanding and trust, can bring people together again. Hoang also mentioned that public-private partnerships bring together governments, civil society, and religious groups to foster peacebuilding, mediation, and reconciliation.

Closing Session

Brett Scharffs: *Director, International Center for Law and Religion Studies, J. Reuben Clark Law School, Brigham Young University*

Brett thanked everyone, especially the panelists for all of the wonderful discussion we have heard the past few days. He called back to his opening statements at the beginning of the conference, and what a privilege it was to see it all come to fruition. He mentioned how impactful it has been to gain deeper insight on each of the topics shared. He is expressed his excitement as well for next year and being able to continue this discussion.

David Whippy: *Assistant Professor and Director of David O. McKay Center for Intercultural Understanding and Advisory Board Member for Religious Freedom and Human Dignity Initiative Brigham Young University–Hawaii*

David Whippy introduced the student panelists. He mentioned that they have both been a part of the initiative for many years and have helped at each Religious Freedom and Human Dignity Conference at BYU-Hawaii. He mentioned that before leaving, they would be sharing their knowledge and experience from not only this conference, but past as well.

Valerie Joy Agustin: *Master Scheduler and Executive Committee Member, Brigham Young University–Hawaii*

Valerie addressed the audience by centering her message on the value of the Rising Generation. First, she affirmed that the service provided by young people throughout the conference was proof of their potential, sharing how this was true and connecting it to her personal experience. She then stated, “What began here must continue—let this be just the opening chapter of your impactful journey.” She encouraged everyone, emphasizing that they are capable of leading and serving within their communities.

She then issued a challenge to the dignitaries of Southeast Asia to recognize the rising generation in their countries as capable leaders, worthy of inclusion in all vital discussions. She emphasized their readiness to contribute to peacebuilding and the development of inclusive societies.

Lastly, she expressed sincere gratitude to BYU Law and the International Center for Law and Religion Studies (ICLRS) for trusting them to organize this significant event. She also thanked the Religious Freedom and Human Dignity Initiative at BYU–Hawaii for empowering them to engage directly with global leaders. She concluded by expressing hope that the work would continue, noting that the experience had provided them with valuable insights and connections to drive meaningful change.

Cynthia Uvang: *Master Scheduler and Executive Committee Member, Brigham Young University–Hawaii*

Cynthia began her remarks by expressing gratitude to delegates and guests, acknowledging their choice to pursue work centered on religious freedom and human dignity. She affirmed their courage and commitment across Southeast Asia give true meaning to this entire conference. She emphasized that without their leadership, insight, and dedication, the conference would not have been possible.

Speaking on behalf of the students who participated in this conference, she conveyed deep appreciation and shared that many students felt inspired by their example and aspired to follow in their footsteps, each guided by their individual callings.

She then expressed heartfelt thanks to the BYU International Center for Law and Religion Studies (ICLRS) team and the IAC, recognizing their role in making this conference possible. Thank you for making this event possible. She highlighted that their efforts provided students with a life-changing opportunity to lead, serve, and contribute to something greater than themselves.

Reflecting on the spirit of the conference, she quoted Muhammad Ibnur Rashad, who said, “When people come together from different nations, across all political spectrums, we can heal the earth.” She noted that the conference served as a testament to this truth, demonstrating what is possible when compassion overcomes division and dialogue replaces distance.

She concluded with the hope that all participants of the conference felt the spirit of aloha and would leave with renewed purpose as peacebuilders, whether in religious, governmental, academic, or other community roles. She encouraged continued dialogue and collaboration, quoting a Malay proverb: “*Bersatu teguh, bercerai roboh*”, meaning “*United we are strong, divided we fall*”. She called on all to carry forward the spirit of unity, listen actively, collaborate openly, and build bridges of understanding for the good of all.

Biographies

Aaron Shumway

Director and Associate Professor in the Faculty of Religious Education; Advisory Board Member for the Religious Freedom and Human Dignity Initiative, Brigham Young University–Hawaii, United States

Aaron Shumway is the Director of Religious Education at BYU–Hawaii. He earned a bachelor's degree at BYU–Hawaii and then earned a law degree at Washington & Lee University School of Law. Upon graduation in 2000, Aaron began practicing business and real estate law at Ashford and Wriston LLLP in Honolulu. In 2012, Aaron left the practice of law to take a position with Seminaries and Institutes for the Church. He taught religious education classes to college-aged young people, trained volunteer teachers who taught religion classes to high schoolers before school, and worked with church leaders to strengthen young people in their faith. Beginning in 2013, he taught a “Fundamentals of Gospel Teaching” class at BYU–Hawaii as an adjunct professor in Religious Education. On August 1, 2021, Aaron began his service as the Director of Religious Education at BYU–Hawaii. Aaron and his wife May, are the grateful parents of six children – Kenner (Brinley), Reyna (Sam), Regina, Rachel, Rhiannon, and Gabriel.

Akhmad Muzakki

Rector, State Islamic University Sunan Ampel, Indonesia

Professor Akh. Muzakki is a professor of sociology education. He obtained his Master's from the Australian National University and his PhD from the University of Queensland, Australia. Currently, he is the Rector of State Islamic University (UIN) Sunan Ampel. He has published many academic papers focusing on sociology media and Islam, sociology education, philosophy, religion and classic, and politics and Islam. Besides, being recorded as a professor in the Faculty of Education and Teacher Training, he has several positions in the community, such as the General Secretary of Nahdatul Ulama (Islamic Organization) in East Java, reviewer of Beasiswa Indonesia Bangkit scholarship, and member of professors' conference in the Directorate of Islamic Higher Education. He also regularly publishes his writing in media including Kompas, the Jakarta Post, Media Indonesia, Tempo, and Sindo (Seputar Indonesia).

Aldrin M. Peñamora

Executive Director, Justice, Peace, and Reconciliation Commission and the Theological Commission of the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches; Executive Director, Center for the Study of Christian-Muslim Relations, Philippines

Rev. Dr. Aldrin M. Peñamora is the Executive Director of the Justice, Peace and Reconciliation Commission and the Theological Commission of the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches (PCEC). He is also the Executive Director of the Center for the Study of Christian-Muslim Relations which is affiliated with PCEC. In addition, Peñamora serves as Program Director of the PhD in Peace Studies Program of the Asia Graduate School of Theology-International Graduate School of Leadership (AGST-IGSL). He was appointed in 2024 as Executive Director of the Theological Commission of the Asia Evangelical Alliance (AEA). Peñamora teaches courses in systematic theology, theological ethics, public theology, political theology, and peace studies. He

teaches at AGST-IGSL and the Asian Theological Seminary (ATS). Peñamora has published articles and written and co-edited book chapters. His forthcoming publications as co-editor and contributor are *Pagsamba at Politika (Worship and Politics): Filipino Evangelical Insights in Political Theology*, and *Following the Prince of Peace: Christian-Muslim Relations in Southeast Asia*. Aldrin is an ordained minister of the Conservative Baptist Association of the Philippines (CBAP) and is married to Christine Ching Peñamora. He earned his PhD in Theology, with a concentration in Christian Ethics, from Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, USA.

Alfred Grace

President, Polynesian Cultural Center, United States

Alfred Grace is the President of the Polynesian Cultural Center on the north shore of Oahu, Hawaii. Alfred grew up in New Zealand and then moved to Hawaii for an engineering apprenticeship and later attended BYU–Hawaii. He had hoped to become a tour operator for New Zealand, but ended up working for the PCC, where he became president. The PCC is one of Hawaii’s top destinations, having served more than 40 million visitors since opening in 1963.

Alizaman Dumangcag Gamon

Assistant Professor, Abdulhamid Abusulayman Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, Islamic International University of Malaysia; Vice President, International Affairs, Ranao Council Al Khwarizmi International College Foundation Incorporated, Philippines

Dr. Alizaman D. Gamon is an assistant professor at the Department of Fundamental and Inter-Disciplinary Studies, Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences at the International Islamic University of Malaysia. Dr. Alizaman holds a Bachelor of Arts in Islamic Studies (Shari’ah) from Mindanao State University, where he graduated cum laude in 1991. He also earned a second bachelor’s degree in Sociology and Anthropology from the International Islamic University Malaysia in 1995. Dr. Alizaman pursued his academic journey further at the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), IIUM, where he obtained his master’s degree in Islamic Civilization in 2001 and his PhD in Islamic and Other Civilizations in 2014. Dr. Alizaman is the Vice President for International Affairs at Ranao Council Al Khwarizmi International College Foundation Incorporated in Marawi City, Philippines (RC—AKIC). He is also the IIIT Country Representative for the Philippines and is actively helping private colleges empower teachers and lecturers in developing curricula based on the Integration of Knowledge framework. Dr. Alizaman’s research primarily focuses on reviving the intellectual and religious dimensions of Islam and examining its relevance in secular contexts, particularly within Muslim communities in Southeast Asia. He advocates for the reformulation of a culture of knowledge that fosters peace, integration, and sustainable development, aimed at advancing a contemporary narrative.

Anh Hoang

Director, US-ASEAN Center, United States

Anh Hoang serves as the Director of the US-ASEAN Center in Washington, D.C., where she spearheads initiatives to strengthen economic, technological, and research partnerships between the United States and ASEAN nations. She leads the center's strategic collaborations with ASEAN member countries, the U.S. State Department, NGOs, universities, and industry leaders, advancing its mission to deepen diplomatic and economic ties in the region. Prior to her current role, she served as Director of Government Affairs and Public Policy at BowerGroupAsia, where she advised Fortune 500 companies in navigating complex regulatory landscapes, aligning investment strategies, and fostering partnerships to drive expansion across the Indo-Pacific region. From 2017 to 2019, Anh managed capacity-building programs for global NGOs at Humentum. Before relocating to the United States, she was with the Vietnam Education Foundation (VEF) in Hanoi. Earlier in her career, Anh worked as an Education Research Officer at the Australian Embassy in Hanoi. Anh holds a master's degree in international public policy from DePaul University and graduated magna cum laude with a degree in international relations from Mount Holyoke College.

Ayu Ningtyas Kartika Sari

Fellow, Religious Freedom and Human Dignity Initiative, BYU–Hawaii, Indonesia

A sophomore at BYU–Hawaii pursuing a double degree in Computer Science and Applied Mathematics, and currently a fellow for the Religious Freedom and Human Dignity Initiative (RFHD) at BYU–Hawaii. Her unique background has led her to become involved in promoting the importance of religious freedom and human dignity on campus and within the community. She is excited to contribute things that will bring positive impacts, especially to Southeast Asia countries.

Benny Y.P. Siahaan

Senior Official, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia

Mr. Benny Yan Pieter Siahaan is a senior Indonesian diplomat, working in the Directorate of ASEAN Socio-Cultural Cooperation, Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Mr. Siahaan has held key positions in the Ministry and his diplomatic assignments. From 2020 to 2024, he served as the Head of Mission of the Indonesian Embassy in Antananarivo, Madagascar, concurrently accredited to Mauritius, Seychelle, and Comoros. His prior diplomatic assignments include roles at the Indonesian Consulate General in New York, the Permanent Mission of Indonesia in Geneva, and the Indonesian Embassy in Damascus concurrently accredited to the Republic of Cyprus. Domestically, Mr. Siahaan was appointed Director for ASEAN External Cooperation in 2017-2020, where he managed and strengthened ASEAN's partnerships with external stakeholders. Mr. Siahaan holds a Master of International Relations degree from the University of Tsukuba, Japan.

Bishop Efraim Tendero

Global Ambassador, Former Secretary-General, World Evangelical Alliance, Philippines
Bishop Efraim Manguiat Tendero serves as the Global Ambassador of the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA), a position he assumed after completing his term as Secretary General/CEO. Founded in 1846, the WEA is a global ministry spanning 143 countries, with 600 million constituents. Concurrently, Bishop Tendero is the Executive Director of The Galilean Movement, a global campaign that aims to equip millions of Christlike Disciple-Making Leaders by 2033. Prior to his current roles, Bishop Tendero served as National Director of the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches (PCEC) for 22 years, leading the organization's growth from 7,000 to over 30,000 local churches. He also served as President of the Philippine Relief and Development Services. Bishop Tendero held various leadership positions, including Chairman of the National Ecumenical Consultative Committee (NECCOM), a consultative body created by an Executive Order of President Cory Aquino. He initiated national interfaith dialogues on pressing issues such as climate change, anti-human trafficking, and poverty alleviation. Bishop Tendero represented the Philippines in several interfaith dialogues in Asia, Europe, and the United Nations. He also served as a spiritual adviser to former Philippine Presidents Fidel Valdez Ramos and Gloria Macapagal Arroyo.

Brett G Scharffs

Director, International Center for Law and Religion Studies, J. Reuben Clark Law School, Brigham Young University, United States

Brett G. Scharffs is Rex E. Lee Chair and Professor of Law and Director of the International Center for Law and Religion Studies at Brigham Young University Law School. He received a BSBA in international business and an MA in philosophy at Georgetown University and, as a Rhodes Scholar, earned a BPhil in philosophy at Oxford. He received his JD from Yale Law School, where he was senior editor of the Yale Law Journal. He is a recurring visiting professor at Central European University in Budapest and at the University of Adelaide Law School. He has for several years helped organize certificate training programs in religion and the rule of law in China and in Vietnam and has taught and helped organize programs at several Indonesian universities on sharia and human rights. Author of more than 100 articles and book chapters, he has made more than 300 scholarly presentations in 30 countries. His casebook, *Law and Religion: National, International and Comparative Perspectives* (with Cole Durham), has been translated into Chinese and Vietnamese, with Turkish, Burmese, and Arabic in process. He is the author with Elizabeth Clark and Amy Andrus of *Religion and Law in the USA*, a contribution to Wolters Kluwer's International Encyclopaedia of Laws.

Carlos V. Reyes

Minister, Ministry for Ecumenical and Interfaith Affairs of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Manila, Philippines

Reverend Father Carlos V. Reyes is a licensed civil engineer. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Sacred Theology at the Royal and Pontifical University of Santo Tomas, and graduated magna cum laude in 1999. He received a licentiate in Sacred Theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, graduating magna cum laude in 2001. In 2003 he was appointed as Minister for the Ministry of Ecumenical and Interfaith Affairs. Since

November 2022, he is the Rector and Parish Priest of the National Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Christine J. Clark

Senior Education Fellow, Religious Freedom and Business Foundation, United States
Christine J. Clark was born and raised in Cannes, France. She attended the Sorbonne University in Paris, France, and received her master's degree and PhD in Romance Languages from the University of Oklahoma. Christine has taught at the university level for 30-plus years and is the Senior Education Engagement Fellow for the Religious Freedom and Business Foundation. She has enjoyed promoting the message of the foundation through various public speaking opportunities around the world, including at universities.

Christina Tobias-Nahi

Director of Public Affairs, Research, and Advocacy, Islamic Relief USA, United States
Christina Tobias-Nahi is the Director of Public Affairs, Research, and Advocacy and has been at the helm of Islamic Relief USA's DC-based government and policy engagement and interfaith efforts since late 2006, working mostly on global refugee issues. She is also an Oxfam Sisters on the Planet Ambassador. Tobias-Nahi holds two master's degrees, one from Harvard Graduate School of Education and another from Boston University-Paris in International Relations. She studied for two years at the University of Utah before completing her bachelor's degree at the University of Hawai'i in Dance Ethnology with a focus on Asia/Pacific, and has spent time in Indonesia, Malaysia, and China. She possesses executive certificates in Community-Based Development from Colorado State University and Public Policy from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. During a short stint away from her current position, Tobias-Nahi led an Asia-focused CSR project at the Joint Council on International Children's Services around orphans, nutrition, and early childhood development. Before moving to DC, she spent nearly a decade working at Harvard University with the Islamic Legal Studies Program and the Civil Rights Project, and before that was in Paris with the Japanese Delegation Attache office to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

Daniel Tu'utau

Assistant Professor, Faculty of Culture, Language and Performing Arts, Brigham Young University-Hawaii, United States

Dr. Daniel Tu'utau is currently the Visiting Voice Professor at BYUH. Originally from Los Angeles, California, Dr. Tu'utau holds a BA and MM degrees from UC Santa Barbara and a Doctor of Musical Arts in Vocal Performance from the University of Utah. With over a decade of experience with Utah Opera, he has performed comprimario roles and contributed to more than 20 productions with the Utah Opera Chorus, including *Thaïs*, *La Bohème*, and *Pirates of Penzance*. He frequently performed with Lyrical Opera Theater in Salt Lake City, showcasing his talent in leading roles such as Doctor Bartolo in Rossini's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, Scarpia in Puccini's *Tosca*, and the title role in Verdi's *Rigoletto*. He has also been a repeat soloist with orchestras including the Salt Lake

Symphony, Utah Oratorio Society, and the American-West Symphony. He resides in Laie, Hawaii with his wife, Brandy, and their four children.

David Kirkham

Co-executive Director, Geneva Office for Human Rights Education, Switzerland
David M. Kirkham currently serves as Executive Director of the Geneva Office for Human Rights Education as a senior fellow at the BYU Law School International Center for Law and Religion Studies, and as president of the International Society. He previously held academic and senior leadership positions at the BYU London Centre, the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, the US Air Force Academy, and in the BYU Department of Political Science. He has also served as Senior Humanitarian Affairs Officer at the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Geneva and as Special Representative of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Dubai and Abu Dhabi. David holds a PhD from George Washington University and a Juris Doctorate from the BYU Law School. His research and teaching focus on human rights and international humanitarian law. The parents of eight children and grandparents of twenty-four, David and his wife Judy, make their home in Orem, Utah.

Deepika Singh

Deputy Secretary General, Religions for Peace, United States
Deepika Singh is the Deputy Secretary General at Religions for Peace, the world's largest and most representative multi-religious coalition that advances common action among the world's religious communities for peace. Ms. Singh also directs the overall program strategy and implementation at Religions for Peace, work that is informed by over two decades of professional experience in international affairs and development, including service in USAID-funded programs in Nepal and consultancies with UNDP, UNICEF, and other international NGOs. In addition, she provides technical guidance in areas of conflict, international development, and organizational strengthening to Religions for Peace global, regional, national, and local affiliates, including their Women of Faith and Youth Networks in over 90 countries. Ms. Singh holds an MPA degree from Pace University, USA; an MA from Dhaka University, Bangladesh; and a BA (Hon) from St. Bede's College, India.

Deneille M. Martin

Fellow, Religious Freedom and Human Dignity Initiative, BYU–Hawaii, Malaysia
A student at BYU–Hawaii from Malaysia, majoring in business human resources, and currently a research assistant for Dr. Po Nien (Felipe) Chou at the BYU–Hawaii Faculty of Religion. Coming from a diverse country and with experience in research, she is passionate about exploring topics related to human dignity and religious freedom and is excited to share what she has learned to benefit others

Desytia Nawris

Representative, Bahá'í International Community, Jakarta Office—Regional Southeast Asia, Indonesia

Desytia Nawris is a representative of the Bahá'í International Community's Regional Office in Jakarta to inter-governmental associations such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), as well as various governmental agencies, civil society organizations, and research institutes in the region. Based in Jakarta, she actively participates in various regional fora and spaces, seeking to collaborate with individuals and entities concerned with the well-being of Southeast Asia, especially in advancing the cause of peace in the region. As a young woman, she is interested in promoting the role of youth and women in building a peaceful and cohesive society both at the grassroots and at the decision-making table from local to international levels. She is actively engaged in grassroots initiatives by serving as a facilitator of youth empowerment and is engaged in various consultative spaces promoting meaningful youth and women participation.

Đỗ Quang Hưng

Professor, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University; Chairman, The Religious Advisory Council of the Central Committee of Vietnam Fatherland Front, Vietnam

Dr. Đỗ Quang Hưng is one of the founders of religious studies in Vietnam and is the former director of the Institute for Religious Studies (IRS) under the Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences. He is also the former editor-in-chief of the institute's Religious Studies magazine. From 2010 to 2020, he was head of the International Politics Department of the Faculty of Political Science at Vietnam National University's University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Hanoi. He has a PhD in history from the Russian Academy of Sciences and was conferred the rank of state professor in 2001. His publications include *Religion and Modernity* (2014), *Religion – State – Law* (2015, Vietnam National Book Award), *Religious Policy and Rule of Law State* (2014), *Secular State* (2021, Vietnam National Book Award), and the trilogy *Religion and Rule of Law State in Vietnam*, which includes the books *Religion and Society*, *Religion and Law*, and *Religion and State* (2022). He was a member of the National Assembly's advisory committee, drafting the Ordinance on Beliefs and Religions (2004) and the Law on Belief and Religion (2016). He is chairman of the Religious Advisory Council of the Central Committee of the Vietnam Fatherland Front.

Dr. Hurriyah

Chair, Indonesian Scholar Network on Freedom of Religion or Beliefs, Indonesia

Dr. Hurriyah is a scholar of religion and politics in Indonesia with over 20 years of experience in academic and applied research. She is the Chair of the Indonesian Scholar Network on Freedom of Religion or Beliefs (ISFORB), in addition to her roles as Assistant Professor at the Department of Political Science and Director of the Centre for Political Studies at Universitas Indonesia. Her research interests include Islamic politics, gender issues, human rights, civic space, religious freedom, and religious minorities. Since 2019, Hurriyah has been investigating the politics of religious freedom in Indonesia, with a current focus on religious minority threat issues. She is currently researching the Rohingya minority threat issues in Southeast Asia in collaboration with

the Asia Research Centre Universitas Indonesia (ARC UI) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). Hurriyah works with local, national, and international scholars to spread awareness of issues in Indonesia. Outside of the academy, her work is often used at the highest level to inform government and non-government organizations on how to promote policy change in Indonesia. She is currently a research fellow at Boston University's Centre for the Study of Asia (BUCSA).

Eugene KB Tan

Associate Professor, School of Law, Singapore Management University; Representative of Singapore to the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights, Singapore

Eugene K.B. Tan is an associate professor of law at the School of Law, Singapore Management University, where he regularly teaches law, business, and social sciences at the undergraduate, graduate, and executive education levels. His substantial body of scholarly works in legal and nonlegal publications and parliamentary speeches has been cited regularly in academic publications, government reports, and media reports, as well as by Singapore's High Court and Apex Court of Appeal. Between February 2012 and August 2014, Eugene served as a Nominated Member of Parliament in Singapore's 12th Parliament. He is Singapore's Representative to the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) from 2025 to 2027 and served as the alternate representative between 2019 and 2024. An advocate and solicitor of the Supreme Court of Singapore, Eugene was educated at the National University of Singapore, the London School of Economics and Political Science, and Stanford University where he was a Fulbright Fellow.

Eugene Yapp

Senior Fellow, Religious Freedom Institute, Malaysia

Eugene Yapp is a senior fellow with the Religious Freedom Institute of the South and South East Asia team (RFI SSEAT) and the Director for RFL Partnership, an organization for the promotion of religious freedom and inter-religious harmony in Malaysia. He is the Exco Member of a coalition of 27 civil society organizations in Malaysia called Gabungan Bertindak Malaysia and serves as the National Unity Programme Director for his own NGO, UID Sejahtera Malaysia, where he directs harmony initiatives including issues on interfaith and religious diversity. Regionally, he has been involved in consultations and work with the ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights and the ASEAN Inter-governmental Commission on Human Rights. He is a member of the International Council of Experts on Religious Freedom, which advises the Alliance of States on International Religious Freedom. He was formerly the Secretary-General of the National Evangelical Christian Fellowship Malaysia (the evangelical alliance of Malaysia). His work in Malaysia focuses on the promotion of national unity, conflict resolution, religious freedom, and inter-religious diversity working with local grassroots community in the poorer bottom 40% areas and the Muslim communities and NGOs. He writes articles for the St Charles Institute and the Religious Freedom Institute and co-authored the recently released Religious Freedom Institute's Landscape Report on Malaysia.

Farid F. Saenong

Lecturer, Universitas Islam Internasional Indonesia (UIII); Special Staff Coordinator to the Minister of Religious Affairs, Indonesia

Farid F. Saenong is a faculty member of Islamic Studies, Universitas Islam Internasional Indonesia (UIII). He earned his PhD from the Australian National University (ANU) and MAs from the University of Manchester and Universiteit Leiden. His research interests include, but are not limited to, Islamic studies, religious studies, social media and cultural studies, anthropology of religion, and wasatiya studies. He has published a book, book chapters, journal articles, and entries.

H.E. Edmund Bon Tai Soon

Representative of Malaysia to the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights, Malaysia

Edmund is currently the chair of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) and represents Malaysia on the Commission. He is a human rights lawyer who has been practicing in Malaysia for more than 20 years.

Hannah Kola

Student Fellow Lead, Religious Freedom and Human Dignity Initiative, BYU–Hawaii, United States

Hannah Kola is an Intercultural Peacebuilding student at Brigham Young University–Hawaii, also majoring in Political Science. As a Student Fellow for the Religious Freedom & Human Dignity Initiative, she has helped host multiple international conferences on human dignity. Along with conducting research for the Religious Freedom & Business Foundation, she recently helped adapt a curriculum of human rights and business skills, now piloted among secondary education students in India. In addition to her academic work, she contributes to international peacebuilding efforts through collaborations with faith-based programs such as the FoRB Foundation. Fluent in five languages and connected to initiatives in North America, South Asia, and Europe, she is passionate about cultivating empathy across divides. Her current research explores how changes in religious freedom impact the risk of civil war.

Hannah Smith

Associate Director, International Center for Law and Religion Studies, J. Reuben Clark Law School, Brigham Young University, United States

Hannah Smith became Associate Director at the International Center for Law and Religion Studies in 2023. Hannah joined ICLRS following two clerkships at the U.S. Supreme Court for Justices Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito and a decade of service as Senior Counsel at Becket Law where she helped secure victories in key religious liberty cases, including *Hosanna-Tabor Evangelical Lutheran Church and School v. EEOC*, *Holt v. Hobbs*, *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby*, and *Zubik v. Burwell* (the Little

Sisters of the Poor case). She has contributed to over 35 Supreme Court briefs and represented more than a dozen major faith groups. Hannah has been awarded BYU's Alumni Achievement Award, the JRCLS's Women-in-Law Leadership Award, and the Center for Constitutional Studies' James Madison Award. As a law student, she received the J. Reuben Clark Award and the Law Faculty Award for Meritorious Achievement and Distinguished Service. Hannah received her BA from Princeton University and her JD from BYU Law School, where she graduated Order of the Coif. She served as a full-time French-speaking missionary for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in France and Switzerland. Hannah and her husband John have four wonderful children.

Heather Bradbury

Strategic Relationships Manager, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, United States

Heather Bradbury is a dedicated and accomplished professional known for her significant contributions as a Strategic Relationships Manager in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Welfare and Self-Reliance Services Department. In this role, Heather fosters and maintains strong, collaborative relationships that are key in supporting the Church's mission and initiatives. She also aids in developing strategies that enhance the Church's outreach and engagement with communities, ensuring its values and goals are communicated and supported. Heather studied international business at Weber State University and later earned a Master of Business Administration from Brigham Young University. Throughout her career, she has demonstrated her ability to successfully manage relationships across diverse sectors, connecting with people, understanding their needs, and creating mutually beneficial collaborations. Her expertise in this area has been recognized at various conferences and workshops, where she has shared her insights on building and maintaining strong relationships. Heather approaches relationship management with empathy, strategic thinking, and a dedication to fostering long-term connections. She believes in the power of relationships to drive positive change and is committed to helping organizations and individuals achieve their goals through effective collaboration.

Henriette Hutabarat Lebang

President, World Council of Churches (representing Asia region), Indonesia

Rev. Dr. Henriette Hutabarat Lebang, a pastor of Toraja Church in Indonesia, is presently chair of the advisory board of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia, general chairperson of Indonesian Bible Society, one of the presidents of the World Council of Churches (WCC) representing Asian churches, and a resource person for the Leimena Institute program on cross-cultural religious literacy. She was general chairperson of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (2014–2019), a member of the WCC executive committee (2013–2018), a member of the WCC central committee (2013–2021), general secretary of Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) (2010–2015), and director of the Institute Theology of Toraja Church (2006–2010). Additionally, she served as a member of the joint working group of WCC and the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity (2007–2013), chair of education and mission of the Synod of Toraja Church (2001–2006), vice president of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches

(2004–2010), associate general secretary of CCA (1991–2001), and the head of the Women's Desk of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (1984–1986). Rev. Hutabarat Lebang graduated from Jakarta Theological Seminary (M.Div. 1977) and Presbyterian School of Christian Education/Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Virginia, USA (MA 1987; EdD 1991). She is the widow of the late Ralph Donald M. Hutabarat and has two children and four grandchildren.

Inayah Rohmaniyah

Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic Thought, State Islamic University Sunan Kalijaga, Indonesia

Prof Dr. Inayah Rohmaniyah S.Ag, M. Hum., M.A., is a senior lecturer of the Graduate Program of Islamic Theology and Philosophy, Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic Thought, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta. Educated in traditional Muslim schools and Islamic and secular universities in Indonesia, Inayah earned two master's degrees—in philosophy from Gadjah Mada University in Indonesia and in Religious Studies from Arizona State University, USA. She was a Fulbright Scholar and studied at Duke University with a Luce Foundation Fellowship in 2010. She got her PhD from the Indonesian Consortium for Religious Studies (ICRS) Yogyakarta in 2013. Her interests are gender issues, Muslim radicalism, and interfaith dialogue, and she has published several academic articles. She has experience as a gender research consultant, including as a consultant of Vital Voice of International Research Center in Washington DC (2018), a consultant of the United Nations of Population Fund (UNFPA) of Indonesia (2016), and a researcher at Arizona State University, USA (2009-2015). She was appointed as the Dean of the Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic Thought (2020-2024), and she is currently the Director of Lampu Merapi, Center for the Study of Islam and Tolerance. Professor Rohmaniyah is Assessor of the National Accreditation Board for Higher Education; Board Member of the Association of Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Yogyakarta; a member of the organizing committee of the Association of Yogyakarta Indonesian Family Planning (PKBI DIY); and a reviewer of international and nationally accredited journals.

Isaiah Walker

Academic Vice President and Professor, Brigham Young University–Hawaii, United States

Isaiah Walker was born and raised in Keaukaha, Hilo, Hawai'i. After joining the LDS church in 1990 and graduating from Hilo High School in 1991, he moved to Lā'ie and attended BYUH. He served a mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in San Diego, California from 1992-1994. In 1996 Isaiah married Rebekah Matagi of Lā'ie, and they have four beautiful children. After graduating with a bachelor's in history from BYU–Hawaii in 1997 and earning a master's degree from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, Isaiah completed a PhD from the University of California, in Santa Barbara. Isaiah studies Hawaiian history and colonialism from a unique perspective, from the vantage of Hawaiian surfers. Focusing primarily on a Hawaiian surfing club formed on the North Shore of O'ahu in 1976, his dissertation analyzes the history of surfing, resistance, and masculinity in Hawai'i. Contending that the ocean surfing realm was a sanctuary and borderland for Hawaiians, his research creatively analyzes a

space where Hawaiians were empowered and colonial hierarchies were often turned upside down. He is currently revising his dissertation to be published in book form by the University of Hawaii Press. Other portions of his research have been published as articles, found in the Spring 2008 issue of *Contemporary Pacific* and the November 2005 issue of *Pacific Historical Review*. He is currently a professor and department chair in the History Department where he teaches world, Hawaiian, and Pacific Islands history.

James B. Tueller

Professor, Faculty of Culture, Language and Performing Arts, Brigham Young University–Hawaii, United States

James B. Tueller has been a faculty member at Brigham Young University–Hawaii campus since August 1997. Before moving to La'ie, O'ahu, he received his PhD in history from Columbia University in New York City. Jim was born in Morocco where his father worked in the Tangier Consulate of the United States of America. With his father's assignments, he has also lived in Caracas, Venezuela; Panama City, Panama; Manila, Philippines; and Madrid, Spain. His first book, *Good and Faithful Christians: Moriscos and Catholicism in Early Modern Spain*, was published by the University Press of the South in 2002. It examines the Morisco expulsion from Spain in 1609 and how the descendants of forcibly baptized Christians adapted to a century's worth of Catholicism. He co-authored the book, *Navigating the Spanish Lake: The Pacific in the Iberian World, 1521-1898* (University of Hawaii Press, 2014). This history explores examples of the Spanish Empire in the Pacific Ocean. His current projects include maritime history, children's stories, and history education.

Jennifer Mie Kajiyama Tinkham

Program Lead and Adjunct Assistant Professor for the Legal Studies Program in the Faculty of Business and Government, and Faculty Chair and Advisory Board Member for the Religious Freedom and Human Dignity Initiative, Brigham Young University–Hawaii, United States

Jennifer Kajiyama Tinkham graduated from BYU–Hawaii as valedictorian in 2002, studying political science and Japanese. As an undergraduate, she worked in the U.S. Senate for the Secretary of the Senate, the Hawai'i Attorney General's Office, the Hawai'i State Supreme Court, and the Hawai'i State House of Representatives. Jennifer also served a mission in the Japan Nagoya Mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Upon her return, she attended the J. Reuben Clark Law School in Provo, Utah, emphasizing international law and alternative dispute resolutions. Jennifer also completed a Master of Public Administration from the Marriott School of Management, specifying her studies on non-profit and human resources management. Jennifer is a licensed attorney and is also a certified court mediator, divorce mediator, and arbitrator. She has worked for several judges and law firms, working on cases ranging from business law to worker's compensation and most recently, family law. Jennifer is the Legal Studies Program director at BYU–Hawaii.

Jeremy Gatdula

Dean, Institute of Law, University of Asia and the Pacific Law School, Philippines

Dr. Jeremy Gatdula is a lawyer specializing in international law, constitutional law, and the philosophy of law. He has authored, co-authored, or edited books and articles on public international law, international economic law, and natural law. Dr. Gatdula has spoken before governments and international organizations on matters relating to international law and the Constitution, particularly regarding foreign relations, international trade agreements, Philippine territorial issues, religious freedom, the nature of judicial power, and family and marriage.

Joel Sybrowsky

Managing Partner, Dynamic City Capital, United States

Joel joined Lodging Dynamics Hospitality Group (LDHG), the operations affiliate of Dynamic City Capital (DCC), as its president in 2008. As president of LDHG, Joel breathed new life into the company at a time when the nation was amid the largest economic crisis since the Great Depression. He propelled the company into a new era of growth, developing several new hotels and adding managed hotel assets from other 23 ownership groups. By 2012 LDHG had invested in its organization, systems, and processes and grew its management portfolio to include 19 hotels. To date, LDHG has managed a total of 38 Marriott, Hilton, Hyatt, and IHG properties—28 of those since Joel became president. Joel remains president of LDHG today and is also a co-managing partner of DCC. Joel received his bachelor's and Master of Business Administration from Brigham Young University.

John M. Smith

Chief Legal Office, Ryan LLC, United States

John is the Senior Vice President, Chief Legal Officer, and General Counsel of Ryan, a global tax services and software provider, based in the Dallas office. John spent 12 years in Texas and Virginia at Raytheon Technologies, an American multinational aerospace and defense corporation. He also served as associate counsel to U.S. President George W. Bush and the lead lawyer for the White House Homeland Security Council staff. He began his legal career by clerking for Judge Samuel Alito and then by practicing at the international law firm of Covington & Burling. John graduated with high honors from both Princeton University and Brigham Young University Law School.

Joseph Sant

Fellow, Religious Freedom and Human Dignity Initiative, BYU–Hawaii, United States

Joseph Sant is an undergraduate student at BYU–Hawaii, double majoring in Political Science and Intercultural Peacebuilding. Passionate about the intersection of law, human rights, and cross-cultural dialogue, Joseph is dedicated to advocating for those whose voices often go unheard. With a deep interest in religious freedom, alternative dispute resolution, and international law, he brings a unique academic and personal

perspective to discussions on human dignity and justice. He serves as a fellow with the Religious Freedom and Human Dignity Initiative at BYU–Hawaii. Drawing from both scholarly research and real-world experience, he seeks to promote legal systems that protect fundamental freedoms while fostering mutual

Judith Kirkham

Co-executive Director, Geneva Office for Human Rights Education, Switzerland

As co-executive director of the Geneva Office for Human Rights Education, Judith Marie Kirkham advises, guides, and supports country directors throughout the world in efforts to make human rights a regular part of children's education. Judy's previous public and professional service has posted her in the United States, London, the Swiss and German Alps, and the United Arab Emirates—the last of these as Special Representative of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for government and interfaith relations. Judy holds a bachelor's degree from BYU in physical and health education, a certificate in teaching English as a second language from BYU–Idaho, and a diploma in German Language from the US Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California. She and her co-executive director husband David Kirkham are parents of eight and grandparents of 24.

Khairudin Aljunied

Associate Professor, National University of Singapore

Dr. Khairudin Aljunied (PhD SOAS, London) is a tenured Associate Professor at the National University of Singapore. He is a senior fellow and professor as well as the Malaysia Chair of Islam in Southeast Asia at the Alwaleed Centre for Muslim-Christian Understanding, Georgetown University. He has held visiting full professorships at Columbia University, USA (Fulbright Program) in 2013, the University of Brunei Darussalam in 2021-2022, and the University of Malaya in 2022-2023. In 2024 and 2025, he is listed as one of the 500 influential Muslims in the world. A recognized specialist in the field of intellectual history, Khairudin Aljunied's research focuses on the connections between Southeast Asia and Global Islam. He is the author and editor of thirteen books and more than thirty internationally refereed articles. Recent publications include *Muslim Cosmopolitanism: Southeast Asian Islam in Comparative Perspective* (Edinburgh University Press, 2017), *Hamka and Islam: Cosmopolitan Reform in the Malay World* (Cornell University Press, 2018), *Islam in Malaysia: An Entwined History* (Oxford University Press, 2019), and *Shapers of Islam in Southeast Asia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022). His upcoming book is entitled *Contemplating Sufism: Dialogue and Tradition Across Southeast Asia* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2024).

Matius Ho

Executive Director, Leimena Institute, Indonesia

Matius Ho is the executive director of Leimena Institute in Jakarta, Indonesia. He led the development of the Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy program that since 2021 has trained thousands of teachers in Indonesia on competencies to strengthen peaceful multi-faith and multicultural societies. Under his direction, Leimena Institute has partnered and collaborated with the Indonesian Ministry of Law and Human Rights and many leading religious and educational institutions. Ho has been invited to speak about

the program in many countries. He wrote about Indonesia in the Routledge Handbook of Religious Literacy, Pluralism, and Global Engagement (2021). He worked in Indonesia and Singapore with Accenture, a multinational consulting firm, and served as vice secretary of Akademi Leimena Foundation, Leimena Institute's precursor, before cofounding the institute in 2005. He received his bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

Mejindarpal Kaur

International Legal Director, UNITED SIKHS, United Kingdom

Mejindarpal Kaur is a trustee and the International Legal Director of UNITED SIKHS, a UN associated, humanitarian, human development, and advocacy NGO. She is also a steering group member of the International Partnership of Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD). She has led a global multi-faith effort to address human rights violations post 9/11. This has included the legal campaign against the 2004 French law that prohibits religious signs in state schools. The first victory came in 2012 when the UN Human Rights Committee (UNHRC) found that France had violated the human rights of 18-year-old Bikramjit Singh when they expelled him from school for refusing to remove his turban, an article of his faith. As a humanitarian, she has headed two UNITED SIKHS humanitarian projects - Rescue a Family and Daal Roti. The former empowers farmer suicide widows in Panjab through an education-linked pension program that helps a widow support her children's education. The Daal Roti project provides monthly food rations for farmer families who live below the poverty line. Mejindarpal also heads another NGO based in Punjab called the Sikh Aid Foundation, whose flagship project is Punjab After School Study (PASS). 72 PASS centers in 33 villages in Punjab, India, provide after-school support five days a week to 2000 needy students from 34 government primary schools.

Michael B. Strong

General Authority Seventy and Counselor in the Philippines Area Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, USA

Elder Michael B. Strong was sustained as a General Authority Seventy of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at the April 2024 general conference. At the time of his call, he had been serving as a member of the Twelfth Quorum of the Seventy in the Utah Area. He is currently serving in the Philippines Area Presidency. Elder Strong has served in several Church callings, including full-time missionary in the Bolivia Cochabamba Mission, bishop, stake president, and president of the Perú Lima Central Mission from 2018 to 2021. Elder Strong received a Bachelor of Science degree in microbiology and a minor in chemistry from Brigham Young University in 1989 and a medical degree from Baylor College of Medicine in 1993. He worked as a physician and the Chief Medical Information Officer for the University of Utah. Elder Strong and his wife Cristin Connelly are the parents of six children.

Micah Fries

Director, Multi-Faith Neighbor's Network, United States

Micah Fries (pronounced freeze) is the Director of the Multi-Faith Neighbor's Network and the Director of Engagement at Glocal.net. He has served as a senior pastor in

Tennessee and Missouri, at LifeWay Christian Resources in Nashville, TN, as a Christian minister in Burkina Faso, West Africa, and as a frequent speaker in churches and conferences. He holds a Master of Divinity from Midwestern Seminary and a Bachelor of Arts in Theology from The Baptist University of Florida. Micah is currently ABD as a PhD student at Southeastern Seminary. Micah is married to Tracy and is the father of Sarah Grace, Kessed Noel, and Haddon. Micah is the co-editor and author of *Islam and North America: Loving our Muslim Neighbors*. He has also co-authored *Leveling the Church* and a commentary volume on Haggai and Zephaniah in the Christ-Centered Commentary Series. He has contributed to the *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching*, *Make Disciples of All Nations*, and *That Word Above All Earthly Powers*.

Mohamed Imran Bin Mohamed Taib

Director, Dialogue Centre; Founding Board Member, Center for Interfaith Understanding, Singapore

Mohamed Imran Bin Mohamed Taib is an independent researcher, writer, and advocate for interfaith relations. He is the founding director of the Dialogue Centre and a founding board member of the Centre for Interfaith Understanding (CIFU). Both are inclusive interfaith organizations based in Singapore. He also sits on the advisory board of the National Museum of Singapore. A widely recognized expert and practitioner of interfaith dialogue, he has delivered guest lectures at various universities, government agencies, schools, and community organizations. His writings on topics of religion, culture, and diversity have appeared in dailies such as Channel News Asia, The Straits Times, and South China Morning Post. He is a published author with three co-edited books on Islam and Malay thought. His latest publication is a co-authored book, *Remembering Singapore River* (2022), and a co-edited volume, *Syed Hussein Alatas and the School of Autonomous Knowledge* (2025). Imran is a graduate in Philosophy from the University of London, with a keen interest in sociology of religion and comparative theology.

Muhammad Hafiz

CCRL and FoRB Facilitator, Leimena Institute, Indonesia

Muhammad Hafiz is a human rights activist working on a national human rights action plan in Indonesia. He is an international advocate for human rights, both treaty and charter based, and has experience in FoRB advocacy in Indonesia and the ASEAN context. With Leimena Institute, Hafiz is working to develop training modules on Cross-Cultural and Religious Literacy (CCRL) and Freedom of Human Rights for the Madrasah teachers. He is also developing a training module on CCRL for the grassroots communities in cooperation with Leimana Institute and Kalijaga Institute for Justice. Hafiz also works on disability issues in Indonesia and campaigns for conflict resolution in Papua.

Muhammad Ibnur Rashad Bin Zainal Abidin

Chief Foresight Officer, GUILD Asia, Singapore

M Ibnur Rashad B Zainal Abidin published a scientific paper and co-invented a laser interferometer at age 16. Through his award-winning consultancy Ground-up Innovation

Labs for Development (Guild), Ibnur unites nature, technology, and community to create learning experiences. Guild's latest projects include curating an invention bootcamp with the Singapore Science Centre for schools to design solutions for an elderly centre and family service centre, as well as developing riverbots to help marine researchers in Southeast Asia in their conservation work.

Muhammad Syafiq Borhannuddin

Fellow, Center for Economics and Social Studies, Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia (IKIM), Malaysia

Dr. Muhammad Syafiq Borhannuddin is currently a fellow at the Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia (IKIM), where he has been since 2017. He obtained his pre-university education in London, United Kingdom, before returning to Malaysia, where he obtained a bachelor's degree in international business. He embarked on graduate studies at the Centre for Advanced Studies on Islam, Science and Civilisation (CASIS; now known as Raja Zarith Sofiah-CASIS) in 2011, where he earned his Master of Philosophy in 2015 and PhD in 2022. His writings on civilizational dialogue, Islamic philosophical perspectives on emerging global issues, and Islamic perspectives on progress and development have been published in various Malaysian newspapers. He has spoken on numerous international platforms on a range of subjects, including in Kyushu Island for Japan Foundation, at the World Congress of Philosophy in Beijing, China, at TRT World's Istanbul headquarters, Türkiye, and in Moscow, Russia, for the International Inventing the Future Symposium. In 2022, his first book, titled *Ungku Aziz's Vision of Development (IKIM)*, was published and launched by His Majesty Sultan Nazrin Shah, the Deputy King of Malaysia. His upcoming book is tentatively titled *Modern Islamic Scholarship on Ethics: The Case of Fazlur Rahman (1911-1988)*. His current research focuses on the role of Islamic civilization in the multipolar world.

Nathaniel Stephens

Dean and Professor, Faculty of Business and Government, Brigham Young University–Hawaii, United States

Dr. Nate Stephens, PhD is currently serving as Dean and is a Professor of accounting in the Faculty of Business & Government. Prior to joining the faculty at BYU–Hawaii, Nate spent 13 years on the faculty of Utah State University where he served in several roles, including director of the Master of Accounting program. He graduated in 2008 from the University of Arizona's PhD program. Prior to his doctoral studies, Nate attended BYU in Provo where he earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in accounting. From 1997 to 1999 he served as a fulltime missionary in the Australia, Sydney North Mission where he taught the gospel of Jesus Christ in Mandarin Chinese. Nate's research focuses on the external auditor's role in the capital markets, the market for external audit services, and corporate financial reporting quality. He has also published multiple case studies, primarily in the financial statement auditing area. His research has been published in top accounting journals including *Review of Accounting Studies*; *Auditing: A Journal of Practice & Theory*; *Accounting Horizons*; *Journal of Accounting, Auditing, and Finance*; and *Issues in Accounting Education*. Nate is married to Kristie Babcock, who is an alumna of BYUH. They have five children.

Nithyakumar Sunderraj

Director, Valcom IT Services Pvt Ltd, India

Nithyakumar Sunderraj is an accomplished IT Professional with over 24 years of experience in IT infrastructure and datacenter design consulting. He is a graduate of Manipal University with a Bachelor of Science in Information Technology and a certified BICSI RCCD engineer. Currently, he is the owner and managing director for an IT infrastructure company in India, Valcom IT Services Pvt Ltd, and serves on the board of directors for Mindway Tech Consulting Services Pvt Ltd and BNSE Design Solutions Pvt Ltd. He is married to Stella Christina Anthony. They are the parents of three children and currently reside in Bengaluru, India. Nithyakumar Sunderraj is serving as an Area Seventy and a member of the Fourth Quorum of the Seventy of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. With a strong background in IT and spiritual leadership, Nithyakumar Sunderraj continues to contribute significantly to technology and faith-based communities.

Pablito A. Baybado

Professor, University of Santo Tomas, Philippines

Pablito A. Baybado, Jr., PhD is a theology professor and program lead of the Graduate School of Technology program, a professor of theology at the Institute of Religion, and a researcher at the Center for Theology Religious Studies, and Ethics of the University of Santo Tomas, Manila. He is the Executive Secretary of the FABC Office of Education and Faith Formation, and the Associate Secretary General of Religions for Peace Asia. He is also a member of the Regional Experts of ASEAN Institute of Peace and Reconciliation and a trainer at the KAICIID Training on Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue for ASEAN Officials. His research interests are the theology of dialogue and peacebuilding.

Phạm Quốc Thành

Rector, Thai Binh University; Head, Strong Research Group on Vietnamese Politics, Rule of Law and Religion, Vietnam National University, Vietnam

Pham Quoc Thanh, Associate Professor, PhD, is the dean of the Faculty of Political Science, VNU-USSH. He has been a prominent Vietnamese partner of the J. Reuben Clark Law School (BYU) in deploying numerous research projects and training courses on the rule of law and religion in Vietnam. His studies mainly focus on the political system and the rule of law in Vietnam and comparative politics. Some of his recent publications: Vietnamese Grassroots Political System in the Northwest of Vietnam: Political Philosophy: Some fundamental issues (2016), Some theoretical and practical issues (2018), Theoretical trends, state models, institutions and laws in the contemporary world (2022), etc.

Rand Blimes

Associate Professor, Faculty of Business and Government; Advisory Board Member for the Religious Freedom and Human Dignity Initiative, Brigham Young University–Hawaii, United States

Rand Blimes is a professor of political science at Brigham Young University–Hawaii,

where his work focuses on international relations. Dr. Blimes regularly leads groups of students to meet with UN and NGO groups in Bangkok, Thailand, and he considers inspiring and mentoring young people to be the most important part of his job. His current research projects include a study of how the international price of staple foods impacts domestic stability, and on the factors that lead nations to develop greater overall capacity. Dr. Blimes is married and has three daughters.

Raj Ravi David Jerry

Fellow, Religious Freedom and Human Dignity Initiative, BYU–Hawaii, Malaysia

A senior student at BYU–Hawaii from Malaysia, majoring in business human resources. Raj comes from the eastern part of Malaysia, where he grew up in a diverse community of religions, ethnicities, and dialects. His background shaped his understanding of different perspectives, and he deeply cares about topics related to humanity. Because of this, human dignity and religious freedom are subjects he is very passionate about discussing.

Reverend Jerome R. Secillano

Executive Secretary, Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines Episcopal Commission on Public Affairs (CBCP-ECPA), Philippines

Rev. Fr. Jerome R. Secillano, MPA is the Rector of the National Shrine of Mary, Queen of Peace under the Archdiocese of Manila. He concurrently serves as the Executive Secretary of the Episcopal Commission on Public Affairs of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines. He is also the Spokesperson of the Archdiocese of Manila and the Minister of the Archdiocesan Ministry on Public Affairs. He hosts a public affairs program every Saturday at Radio Veritas titled VERITASAN. He graduated in Theology and Canon Law at the Royal and Pontifical University of Santo Tomas, España, Manila. He obtained his master's degree in Public Administration and in Public Policy at the University of the Philippines National College of Public Administration and Governance (UP-NCPAG), Diliman, Quezon City. He took an Executive Course on National Security at the National Defense College of the Philippines (NDCP), Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City. His work includes engaging with the public and private sectors on Church and State affairs.

Riji Levaci

Student Fellow Lead, Religious Freedom and Human Dignity Initiative, BYU–Hawaii, Fiji

Riji Levaci is a BYU–Hawaii senior majoring in Social Work with minors in psychology, education, and Pacific Island Studies. He currently serves as the student fellow lead in the Religious Freedom and Human Dignity Department, where he advocates for religious freedom and inclusivity. Originally from Fiji and married to his wife Tia, who is from Samoa, Riji is passionate about honoring each individual's right to worship freely and be treated with dignity and care.

Samantha Rasmussen

Student Fellow and Executive Committee Member, Religious Freedom and Human Dignity Initiative, BYU–Hawaii, United States

Samantha Rasmussen is passionate about religious freedom and human dignity. She is majoring in political science with minors in intercultural peacebuilding, communications, and legal studies at Brigham Young University Hawaii. Her focus is on protecting laws that promote religious freedom and bringing awareness to issues that threaten this right worldwide. Samantha is involved in the Religious Freedom and Human Dignity initiative at BYU–Hawaii, where she has honed skills in qualitative and quantitative research, advocacy, and interfaith dialogue. Samantha was an intern for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints’ Public and International Affairs Office in Washington, D.C., as well as at the Religious Freedom and Business Foundations’ Dare to Overcome Conference. Looking ahead, she plans to continue working with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints’ Public and International Affairs and their Interfaith councils or the United States Embassies, contributing as an advocate for human dignity and religious freedom.

Siti Mazidah Mohamad

Director, Center for Advanced Research, Universiti Brunei Darussalam, Brunei

Dr. Siti Mazidah Mohamad is an assistant professor at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) and Director of the Centre for Advanced Research (CARE) at Universiti Brunei Darussalam. She is currently a research fellow at INTI International University, Malaysia (2024-2025) and was a visiting fellow at ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore (2022-2023). As a youth geographer, she researched Muslim youth culture and engagements with popular culture and new media in Southeast Asia, focusing on mobilities, everyday socio-spatial affective engagements, practices, and realities of young people reflected through various new social media platforms. Her main research interest lies at the intersection of young people, digital media, and popular culture, and everyday lived religion studies. Recently, she has been exploring emotion, youth futurity, and digital media literacy. She has published widely in top-tier ranked journals and recently published her first sole-authored book, *Mediated Muslim Cosmopolitanism: New Media and Popular Culture Engagements in Brunei and Malaysia*, Routledge (2025).

Suzana MD Samsudi

Fellow, Center for Economics and Social Studies, IKIM, Malaysia

Suzana MD Samsudi is a fellow at the Centre for Economic and Social Studies at the Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia (IKIM). She holds a bachelor's degree with honors in finance from Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) and a master's degree in economics from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM). In addition, she is a Certified Financial Planner accredited by the Securities Commission Malaysia. With over 25 years of combined experience in academia and the financial industry, she specializes in Islamic fund and wealth management. Recognized for her contributions, she was named among the 500 Most Influential Women in Islamic Business and Finance (2021-2024) by Cambridge IFA. At IKIM, her research encompasses Islamic marketing, finance, the halal economy, and the Islamic Family Wellbeing Index.

Thao Nghiem

Researcher in History and Politics of Religion in Vietnam, University of Groningen, Netherlands

Thao Nghiem is a PhD researcher in History and Religious Studies at the University of Groningen, the Netherlands. Before his doctoral studies, Thao trained in political science at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, and studied religion in public life at Yale University, USA. He previously held a teaching position at Vietnam National University in Ho Chi Minh City. His current research focuses on the social history of political secularism in post-colonial Vietnam, with particular emphasis on law and religion, examining how the boundaries of religion were shaped, contested, and negotiated between different levels of state and society. In his work, Thao investigates the interplay between religious governance, communist ideology, and nationalism within the broader landscape of socio-political changes in Southeast Asia. Next to his academic endeavors, Thao is passionate about policy advocacy and community engagement that seek to cultivate dialogue and address disparate forms of exclusion across cultural and religious frontiers.

Thieu Thi Huong

Director of the Protestantism Office, Governmental Committee on Religious Affairs, Vietnam

Thieu Thi Huong serves as the Protestant Division Chief for the Government Committee of Religious Affairs (GCRA) and is responsible for advising on the building and enforcement of laws and policies related to Protestantism nationwide. Ms. Thieu has over 20 years of religious work experience in Vietnam, especially in ethnic minority areas. She participated in drafting the Law of Belief and Religion of Vietnam. She is a legal reporter on the implementation of the law for central and provincial cadres. She contributed to the scientific works on Protestantism and pastoral disoduction of drugs; the contribution of the Protestant in eliminating the custom. Ms. Thieu hopes to engage with experts in law, policy, and religion of the countries to attend the conference and then subsequently share her newly acquired knowledge and potentially influence these engagements in Vietnam.

Yong Chanthalangsy

Representative of Lao PDR to the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights, Lao PDR

H. E. Mr. Yong Chanthalangsy has been the Director General of the Institute of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Lao PDR since 2012. He was Ambassador Permanent Representative of the Lao PDR to the United Nations Office in Geneva. He worked for 22 years for the Lao News Agency and five years at the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Secretariat in Jakarta. He served as the Director General of the Press Department and Spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 2002 to 2009. He served as an official interpreter of the Lao Government for over 30 years. Ambassador Yong Chanthalangsy is fluent in English, French, Vietnamese, and Thai. His favorite hobbies are football, rugby, and badminton. Ambassador Chanthalangsy earned a degree in journalism. He has received several Distinction

Medals from the Government of Lao PDR and the Chevalier de l'Ordre Nationale de Mérite from France.

Yuyun Wahyuningrum

Executive Director, ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights, Indonesia

Yuyun Wahyuningrum is the Executive Director of the ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR) and an affiliated researcher at the Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University. In July 2024, she joined the Asia Justice Coalition (AJC) as one of its board members for a WIJA project. From 2019 to 2024, she served as the Representative of Indonesia to the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR). She was the International Democracy Goodwill Ambassador (2021 to 2022) for the Korean Democracy Foundation, Republic of Korea. She has more than 30 years of experience working in human rights organizations, including at the Human Rights Working Group-HRWG (Jakarta), Oxfam International (Jakarta), Forum-Asia (Bangkok), Child Workers in Asia (Bangkok), the Solidarity Centre (Jakarta), and the National Commission on Child Protection (Jakarta). She founded the Weaving Women's Voices in ASEAN (WEAVE) in 2013. She was the team leader of the Regional EU-ASEAN Dialogue Instrument on Human Rights Facility (2015 – 2017). She was recognized as one of Mahidol's Outstanding Alumna 2024, and as one of the Indonesian women experts at the #100womenwiki, 2018. She writes regularly for news media. Her latest publication, "A Decade of Institutionalizing Human Rights in ASEAN: Progress and Challenges," was published in the Journal of Human Rights in 2021. She is finishing her PhD at the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS), Erasmus University of Rotterdam, the Netherlands.

(source of the bios: <https://bg.byuh.edu/2025-delegates>)