

“Faith for Rights” commUNITY of practices

Sixth annual meeting (13-17 October 2025)

Peer-to-peer learning and action points



I. Brief overview

In October 2025, the [Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) convened in partnership with the [Bodhigaya Vijjalaya 980 Institute](#) and [Dharma Alliance](#) the sixth annual meeting of the “Faith for Rights” commUNITY of practices in Siem Reap, Cambodia, and Bangkok, Thailand. The meeting spotlighted Dharmic (Buddhist, Hindu, Jain and Sikh traditions) and Indigenous perspectives on human rights and peacebuilding. Participants included the UN Special Rapporteurs on minority issues and on freedom of religion or belief, the Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, representatives of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, religious leaders and Indigenous representatives from South-East Asia, West African *Mourchidates* (female religious guides), scholars from Al-Azhar in Egypt as well as other experts from Africa, the Americas, Asia-Pacific and Europe.

In the “[Bangkok Declaration on Dharmic Perspectives on Faith for Rights](#)”, read out at the conclusion of the meeting in the United Nations Conference Center in Bangkok on 17 October 2025, participants stressed the importance of continuous inquiry, reflection and peer-to-peer learning in advancing both human rights and spiritual understanding. They also recognized the diversity of spiritual, ethical and cultural traditions, including those of Dharmic and Indigenous Peoples, as a source of insight for promoting dignity, justice and compassion, as well as for contributing to reconciliation, conflict prevention and mutual understanding. The participants:

- Reaffirmed the value of ethical responsibility, seeking to balance entitlements with duties, and to encourage justice grounded in empathy (*karuna*), integrity (*dharma*) and non-harm (*ahimsa*).
- Resolved to strengthen interfaith dialogue, fostering inclusive spaces for Dharmic, Indigenous, minority, and other traditions to engage equitably in conversations about human rights.
- Affirmed the advancement of gender equality, recognizing that the dignity and agency of women and girls are integral both to cohesive societies and to the realization of universal human rights.
- Committed to supporting education for human flourishing, embedding principles of ethics, compassion, and responsibility in curricula, academic partnerships, and initiatives inspired by the Faith for Rights framework.
- Undertook efforts to prevent incitement to hatred, promoting mindful communication and rejecting all forms of violence or discrimination.
- Encouraged the engagement of youth as ethical leaders, nurturing new generations who understand faith, science and human rights as interconnected pathways toward global harmony.
- Promoted cooperation among all actors, building bridges across traditions, regions, and disciplines to advance peaceful coexistence, inclusiveness, and the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Resolved to sustain the commUNITY of practices, through peer learning, joint research, and regular meetings that include Dharmic and Indigenous perspectives

II. Snapshot of peer-to-peer learning and action points¹

The sixth annual meeting of the “Faith for Rights” commUNITY of practices in October 2025 represented a pivotal stage in the evolution of the **dialogue between spiritual wisdom and universal human rights**. Building upon years of collaboration among faith-based actors, scholars and human rights practitioners, this meeting expanded the moral and intellectual scope of the initiative by engaging deeply with Dharmic and Indigenous perspectives.

The meeting’s discussions revolved around how these traditions, grounded in millennia of ethical inquiry, could **illuminate contemporary approaches to dignity, equality, peace and social responsibility**. Participants reflected on the need for a renewed moral vocabulary, one that transcends the separation between inner conviction and outward action, and that reconnects rights with the spiritual and ethical roots from which they originally drew meaning.

The gathering asked a simple yet profound question: **What does it mean to live the values we claim to uphold?** The response unfolded through a collective exploration of the moral foundations of human rights, the spiritual dimensions of responsibility, and the potential of faith to become a transformative force for justice and compassion in an interconnected world.

The **convergence of moral insight from many traditions** – Abrahamic, Dharmic and Indigenous alike – demonstrated that shared human values can manifest through different languages, symbols and practices. A recurring insight throughout the sessions was that universality does not imply uniformity. Drawing on Dharmic teachings, participants proposed a vision of universality as a lived experience – dynamic, inclusive and grounded in the recognition that multiple paths can lead to shared truths. As expressed through the Sanskrit verse *Ekam Sat Vipra Bahudha Vadanti* (“Truth is one; the wise speak of it in many ways”), universality was seen not as a doctrine but as a practice of mutual recognition and respect.



Participants observed that contemporary societies often interpret rights as individual entitlements detached from moral duty. Yet across faith and philosophical traditions, dignity arises from relational harmony, the balance between what one claims and what one gives. Dharmic ethics, in particular, conceive of moral life as a **continuum between inner awareness and social obligation**. The principle of *karma* expresses the law of moral causation: actions generate consequences, and ethical living requires mindfulness of that interdependence. Similarly, the concept of *dharma* refers to the natural and moral order that sustains the universe – a reminder that justice depends on balance, not dominance.

By invoking these ideas, participants emphasized the **need for compassionate accountability**: a form of moral responsibility that integrates empathy into justice. Such an approach rehumanizes law, anchoring legal systems in ethical consciousness rather than mere compliance. It also provides a corrective to the tendencies of moral fragmentation in global society, where individualism can obscure collective responsibility. Rebalancing rights with duties thus became not only a theoretical proposition but a call to moral practice – an appeal to cultivate virtue, restraint and compassion as integral components of civic life.

¹ With many thanks to Nora Wolf (Qatar Centre for Peace and Democracy), Dr. Prashant Sharma (Dharma Alliance) and Dr. Ibrahim Salama (British University in Egypt/coordinator of the “Faith for Rights” commUNITY of practices) for their contributions to this snapshot of peer-to-peer learning and action points.

Participants reaffirmed that **faith, understood as a living ethic, transcends doctrinal boundaries**. Faith is not merely an object of belief but a mode of being, a continuous act of aligning intention with justice and compassion. Within this view, spirituality is inseparable from ethical engagement. Faith-based ethics demand the courage to transform belief into practice. The true test of faith lies in its capacity to humanize action: to turn empathy into policy, reflection into reform, and compassion into concrete change. Faith, therefore, is not static reverence but dynamic ethics – a practice that calls individuals and institutions to responsibility.

This interpretation connects directly to the essence of human rights. While laws articulate the boundaries of justice, faith cultivates the moral imagination that makes justice meaningful. The **“Faith for Rights” framework serves as a bridge between the two**, offering a space where ethical reflection informs collective decision-making. Through this synthesis, faith becomes an active force for building peace, equality and sustainable coexistence.

A key contribution of the Dharmic and Indigenous worldviews lies in their **holistic understanding of interdependence**. The moral principle of *ahimsa* (non-harm) and the metaphysical insight of interbeing express a profound ecological sensibility: all forms of life are interconnected, and harm inflicted upon one reverberates through the whole. This perspective reframes peace not as a political agreement but as a moral ecology. Peace arises from the harmony between beings, societies and the natural world. In this sense, violence – whether in speech, action or structure – is understood as an expression of imbalance. To restore peace is to restore balance.

The discussions pointed to the need for a **multidimensional peacebuilding ethic** grounded in compassion, mindfulness and responsibility. Non-violence is not a passive withdrawal but an active practice of restraint, patience and understanding. It requires the cultivation of an inner disposition that mirrors the world one hopes to create. Such an approach extends beyond interpersonal ethics to include the planet itself. Environmental stewardship becomes an expression of moral awareness, integrating ecological sustainability into the broader pursuit of human rights. The protection of life – in all its forms – is thereby recognized as a sacred and universal duty.

Education was identified as the primary means through which ethical consciousness can be transmitted and renewed. The dialogue emphasized that intellectual development must be accompanied by ethical literacy: the capacity to discern right from wrong, empathy from indifference, and justice from expedience. Participants explored the role of education in nurturing reflective citizenship – one that integrates critical reasoning with moral sensitivity. Faith-inspired learning, in this sense, is not about indoctrination but about awakening awareness: the awareness of interdependence, humility and shared humanity.

There was broad recognition that **educational institutions – both religious and secular – must become laboratories for ethical imagination**. Curricula should incorporate values such as compassion, mindfulness and civic responsibility. Teaching methods should encourage dialogue between reason and conscience, and promote intercultural understanding. Participants highlighted initiatives such as the [Postgraduate Diploma on Peaceful Coexistence](#) (University for Peace in Costa Rica and Gioya Higher Education Institution in Malta, in partnership with the King Hamad Global Center for Coexistence and Tolerance, Bahrain), the [University Diploma on Religions and Human Rights](#) (Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth, Lebanon), the [Human Rights Research and Training Centre in Cairo](#) (British University in Egypt), the [Observatory on Human Rights at the United Nations](#) (University of Ottawa, Canada) and the “Faith for Rights” online course on [Empowering Religious Leaders to Protect Human Rights](#) (University of Oxford, United Kingdom). They also stressed that embedding values of empathy,

mindfulness and civic responsibility in education is essential to shaping future generations able to unite knowledge with moral purpose.

Young participants illustrated this potential vividly through creative projects that translated spiritual values into environmental and social advocacy. They offered compelling testimonies through their films and local initiatives, illustrating that “faith in motion” manifests through action. Their documentaries on marine life and conservation translated spiritual stewardship into tangible advocacy, reminding that protecting nature and upholding human rights are inseparable acts of faith – and that hope, when rooted in compassion, can become a transformative force.

The discussions on **gender equality** highlighted that justice cannot be achieved without the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems. The UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, in its general recommendation No. 40, also noted that some misinterpretations of religion and culture can shape gender stereotypes, and the Committee recommended that States engage religious leaders and faith-based actors in the process of addressing areas of possible tensions between some interpretations of religious traditions and human rights, such as through the “Faith for Rights” framework ([CEDAW/C/GC/40](#), paras. 30-31).

Faith traditions, when interpreted through compassion and fairness rather than patriarchal hierarchy, hold within them the resources to affirm gender equity as a form of moral and spiritual balance. Gender justice is not merely an external claim for rights but an intrinsic expression of *dharma* – a **state of harmony within and between all beings**. Inclusion, understood through this integral ethic, extends beyond gender to embrace cultural, generational and spiritual diversity. A just society is one in which every voice contributes to the collective moral and political life, each completing the other in a dynamic unity. Equality and empathy, far from being abstract ideals, are the living principles through which human wholeness and shared dignity are realized.

The **prevention of violence and incitement to hatred** was explored as an essential field of faith-based responsibility. Participants reflected on how religious leaders can either fuel division or foster reconciliation. Words, like actions, carry moral weight; mindful communication was therefore identified as a key dimension of ethical leadership. The discussions emphasized that preventing hate requires more than censorship – it requires moral example. Faith actors have the ability to shape public conscience by modeling compassion, patience and self-restraint. Dialogue is the path toward healing polarization.

Peacebuilding was understood as a process of listening as much as speaking. True reconciliation involves the courage to hear the pain of others, to acknowledge shared vulnerabilities, and to rebuild trust through empathy. This approach moves beyond conflict resolution toward conflict avoidance and transformation – the conversion of suffering into understanding, and of difference into mutual respect.

Beyond individual and community life, the meeting explored **how ethical and spiritual insights can shape systems of governance**. When faith-based ethics are aligned with universal values, they can nurture a more humane and compassionate model of leadership and decision-making. Participants reflected that global institutions, though often guided by legal and procedural mandates, frequently struggle to embody moral coherence. The infusion of ethical reflection into governance – through empathy, humility and a sense of stewardship – can help restore the legitimacy and trust essential for genuine collective problem-solving.

Participants noted that Dharmic thought, with its **emphasis on moral integrity, inner discipline and wisdom**, offers a framework for cultivating ethical strength in leadership. A society guided by these virtues becomes resilient not through coercion, but through self-awareness and moral responsibility. They suggested that human rights institutions could benefit from integrating such inner dimensions of governance. When decision-making is grounded in clarity, mindfulness and compassion, policy evolves into a means of healing and service rather than control or domination.

Participants also reflected upon the **trajectory of meetings held in 2025 on Faith for Rights**. Wilton Park, in partnership with the British Embassy to the Holy See and Globethics, and in association with OHCHR, organized in February 2025 a conference on the role and responsibility of religious leaders in times of war, atrocities and polarization. Religious leaders at the Wilton Park conference [acknowledged](#) that faith actors should dare to speak truth to power instead of allowing their voices to be used to legitimize ethno-nationalistic divides. In addition, they jointly called for women to be encouraged to take the lead in interfaith engagement and peacebuilding to reshape authentic dialogue and contribute to facilitating an ethical leadership model based on faith and human rights. These recommendations were also [shared](#) with politicians and religious leaders gathered in Rome for the second Parliamentary Conference on Interfaith Dialogue in June 2025, as well as during the [Global Ethics Forum](#) held in Geneva in October 2025 just ahead of the sixth annual “Faith for Rights” meeting (see also the related [spotlight article](#) written by Nora Wolf).

Furthermore, the Inter-Parliamentary Union and OHCHR jointly organized a series of hybrid **exchanges between faith-based actors and parliamentarians** to identify challenges and share good practices in countering hatred based on religion or belief. These exchanges deepened United Nations engagement with national parliaments and enhanced the human rights literacy of parliamentarians to maintain support for implementing the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well as Human Rights Council [resolution 16/18](#), the [Rabat Plan Action](#) and the [Beirut Declaration](#). In the [Rome Communiqué](#), issued in June 2025 following the second Parliamentary Conference on Interfaith Dialogue, participants rejected the misuse of religions or beliefs and the manipulation of their followers to incite hatred and violence, for example, for electoral purposes or political gains ([commitment X on Faith for Rights](#)). They also encouraged parliamentary and multi-stakeholder diplomacy, including faith and civil society leaders and other societal actors, as recommended by the [Pact for the Future](#) (Action 55) to collaboratively promote peace and inclusion globally.

As the **“Faith for Rights” initiative** evolves, participants highlighted that it increasingly resembles a moral ecosystem – a living network of reflection, practice and collaboration. The commUNITY of practices should maintain an open architecture of participation: academic institutions, faith-based organizations and civil society groups working together to translate ethical insights into shared action. At the conclusion of the sixth annual meeting on 17 October 2025, the participants reappointed the existing [tetrarchy](#) of the “Faith for Rights” commUNITY of practices for another year.

Sustainability was also discussed in institutional terms: the need for **continuing research, documentation and education that bridge spiritual ethics with policy frameworks**. The creation of interfaith observatories, research networks and educational platforms was seen as vital for consolidating progress. In essence, the “Faith for Rights” commUNITY of practices is emerging as a global moral commons – a space where faith traditions and human rights practitioners jointly cultivate the habits of listening, empathy and co-responsibility.

A deeper reflection arising from the meeting concerned the notion of **moral coherence**. Modern societies, though rich in information and law, often suffer from ethical disorientation. Faith, when understood as lived ethics, offers a corrective: it reintegrates meaning with action and purpose with responsibility. The collective aspiration expressed in the dialogue was to build a world where ethical coherence becomes the norm of governance, education and daily life. Such coherence requires ongoing reflection, humility and a willingness to act from compassion even when expediency tempts otherwise.

The “Faith for Rights” framework provides the **scaffolding for this transformation** – linking personal conscience with social justice, and private belief with public good. Its aim is not to theologize politics but to humanize it; not to impose doctrine but to cultivate discernment.



III. Key Reflections by Commitments on “Faith for Rights”

Commitments I and II: Dignity and Equality

Participants reaffirmed that all faiths share the conviction that every human being is endowed with inherent dignity. In Dharmic traditions, this conviction takes the form of *dharma*, the moral order that holds the universe together. Faith leaders emphasized that equality derives from interdependence, not uniformity, and that pluralism – or pluriversality – can strengthen rather than weaken universality. The participants highlighted how the recognition of diverse spiritual epistemologies can reinforce, rather than relativize, the universality of human rights. In Commitment II on “Faith for Rights”, the theistic, non-theistic, atheistic and other believers also stressed that interpretations of religion or belief should add to protecting human dignity.

Commitment V: Gender Equality and Agency

Several interventions focused on gender equality as both an ethical and spiritual imperative. The *Mourchidates* initiative in Mauritania and the ongoing project by OHCHR’s West Africa Regional Office were highlighted as compelling examples of how faith leadership combined with gender-sensitive engagement can transform communities – showing that female religious guides can foster social cohesion, prevent extremism and promote prosperity from within their faith traditions. Parallel references were made to Buddhist nuns’ networks in South-East Asia as well as Jain and Hindu interpretations of balance, illustrating that the dignity and agency of women and girls are integral to social harmony and the realization of universal human rights. Faith actors were encouraged to use their moral influence to challenge discriminatory interpretations and ensure that compassion translates into inclusion.

Commitments VI, VII and XVI: Peacebuilding and Prevention of Incitement

The sessions on peace and conflict prevention notably explored peace as a verb – an active, continuous process of listening and healing. The Moriuri concept of *Me Rongo*, meaning both “peace” and “to listen”, was cited as an example of how peace can be understood as relational and participatory. Participants examined the spiritual roots of reconciliation and the responsibility of faith leaders to counter hate speech, polarization and incitement to violence, including against members of religious minorities or atheists/humanists. Examples from post-conflict contexts underscored that trauma, when unaddressed, is transferred rather than transformed, reinforcing the need to place healing and dialogue at the heart of peacebuilding.

Commitments XII and XIII: Education and Intergenerational Learning

Education was described as a vehicle for nurturing ethical literacy and sustaining inter-faith understanding. The participants explored how academic institutions and faith-based organizations can collaborate to embed principles of compassion, critical thinking and responsibility into curricula. The youth participants demonstrated how creative media – including documentary filmmaking and arts-based education – can become tools of transformation. Their interventions vividly illustrated that stewardship of the planet is an ethical and spiritual responsibility shared across generations. Proposals also included “Faith for Rights” academies, regional youth immersion programmes and shared modules for theological and secular universities to co-teach ethics and human rights.



IV. Innovative Proposals and Reflections

Building on this dialogue, participants discussed several forward-looking ideas for strengthening the “Faith for Rights” commUNITY of practices:

- A **Dharma–Human Rights Research Network**, to document and analyze how moral and spiritual laws have historically supported justice, balance and coexistence.
- The **“Seven Dharmic Proposals”**, introduced by [Venerable Anil Sakya](#), offering a pathway to align Dharmic values with universal human rights principles.

- **Inter-faith education and youth platforms**, to deepen understanding across traditions and promote reflective leadership.
- **Art, sport and cultural diplomacy** as means of connecting people through shared values rather than political interests – with examples such as musical and artistic events, the [Dhamma Century Cup](#) and the [Together Through Sports](#) initiative illustrating how cultural expression and athletic cooperation can foster inclusion and mutual respect.
- **Sport governing bodies** should also consider allocating some of the resources generated from profitable sporting events to promote the inclusion and participation of groups that are excluded from sport (as suggested by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in the 2025 report, [A/HRC/60/69](#), para. 58).
- **Academic and observatory partnerships** should be fostered, such as with the [British University in Egypt’s](#) Human Rights Research and Training Centre, [Al-Azhar’s Observatory for combating extremism](#) and the *Mourchidates* network in West Africa.
- **Expanding the commUNITY of practices** through bottom-up engagement and peer-learning, ensuring that new traditions, regional actors and women-led initiatives are equitably represented in shaping future priorities.

These ideas reflected a consensus that **genuine transformation requires humility, listening and shared responsibility**. As several participants observed, faith actors must “walk the talk” by transforming compassion into policy engagement and ethical leadership. As one participant observed, “there is no harmony without coming together when humanity itself is at stake.”

The move **from words to deeds**, from belief to compassionate engagement, was identified as the core transformation the “Faith for Rights” framework seeks to inspire. Participants recalled that human rights flourish where inner conviction meets just action – and that justice without compassion risks becoming dehumanized and detached. They drew connections between the Middle Way in Buddhism, oneness in Jain and Hindu thought, and reverence for nature in Indigenous cosmologies – each reflecting interdependence as the moral architecture of peace.



V. The Bangkok Declaration – A Shared Commitment

On 17 October 2025, the meeting concluded at the UN Conference Center in Bangkok with reading out the “[Bangkok Declaration on Dharmic Perspectives on Faith for Rights](#)”, which consolidates the insights and commitments generated throughout the week. The Declaration reaffirms the complementarity between human rights and spiritual principles that encourage responsibility toward oneself, one’s community, and the natural world. It calls for balancing entitlement with duty and advancing justice grounded in empathy, integrity and non-harm.

Key pledges include:

- **Strengthening inter-faith dialogue**, ensuring inclusive participation of Dharmic, indigenous and minority traditions.
- **Promoting gender equality** and the empowerment of women and girls as integral to human dignity.
- **Embedding ethics, compassion and responsibility** within education systems and academic partnerships.
- **Preventing incitement to hatred** and promoting mindful communication.
- **Engaging youth** as ethical leaders who connect faith, science and human rights towards global harmony.
- **Building bridges** across disciplines and traditions to advance peaceful coexistence and the Sustainable Development Goals.
- **Sustaining the Faith for Rights commUNITY of practices** through ongoing peer-learning and joint research.

In essence, the Declaration translates reflection into responsibility and dialogue into transformation, aligning inner conviction with just action.



VI. Outlook

The sixth “Faith for Rights” meeting reaffirmed that **diversity of faith is not a challenge to universality but its deepest expression**. Across traditions, the same moral truths emerge: that life is sacred, that justice requires compassion, and that peace begins with self-awareness. By engaging Dharmic and Indigenous wisdom, the dialogue expanded the moral horizon of human rights, demonstrating that ethical universality is most authentic when rooted in plural experience. It offered a vision of human coexistence grounded not merely in tolerance but in mutual transformation.

The discussions in Angkor Wat and Bangkok illustrated the maturity of the “Faith for Rights” framework – **evolving from an initiative to a commUNITY of practices** capable of bridging beliefs and human rights through concrete collaboration. The Bangkok Declaration stands as a collective pledge to transform faith into action, wisdom into compassion, and conviction into coexistence.

The **next “Faith for Rights” gatherings**, foreseen for 2026 in Cairo (Egypt), Dakar (Senegal) and Bolzano/Bozen (Italy), will build on this foundation, expanding the community’s reach and deepening its engagement with diverse traditions. The spirit of the Angkor Wat and Bangkok meetings endures as a reminder that faith, in all its forms, carries not only the power to inspire but also the duty to heal – guiding humanity towards justice, empathy and sustainable peace.

In the words that echoed through the **collective spirit of the sixth annual meeting**: When compassion becomes the measure of justice, the moral order of the world is restored. The journey of “Faith for Rights” continues as a living expression of this truth – an evolving movement toward balance, dignity and peace, illuminated by the shared light of humanity.

VII. Hyperlinks from the Sixth Annual Meeting

[Bangkok Declaration on Dharmic Perspectives on Faith for Rights](#)

[Welcome address by Mr. Maris Sangiampongsa, Deputy Secretary General, BGVI](#)

[Welcome address by Ms. Cynthia Veliko, Regional Representative for South-East Asia OHCHR](#)

[Welcome address by Dr. Prashant Sharma, President, Dharma Alliance](#)

[Keynote address by Ven. Dr. Anil Sakya, Wat Bowonnivet Vihara, Bangkok](#)

[Keynote address by Dr. Supachai Verapuchong, Secretary General, BGVI](#)

[Presentation by Prof. Jagbir Singh, Chancellor, Central University of Punjab](#)

[Presentation by Dr. Nitin Shah, Federation of Jain Associations in North America](#)

[Presentation by Dr. Jaya Krishnakumar, Professor Emeritus, University of Geneva](#)

[Background note on the sixth annual Faith for Rights meeting](#)

[Agenda of the meetings in Angkor Wat and Bangkok \(13-17 October 2025\)](#)

[Programme of the public event at the UN Conference Center Bangkok \(17 October 2025\)](#)

[Videos and photos from the sixth annual meeting on “Faith for Rights”](#)