

IAMS Sydney Conference Submission  
'FoRB as a call to mission'

This paper works from the premise that, Article 18 of the UDHR which provides a bedrock for freedom of religion or Belief (FoRB) was the product of missional influences and the theological assertion of human dignity and the *imago dei*. Consequently, it should not be regarded as a 'secular' statement.

FoRB is therefore the human right of people of all faiths and none. This paper argues therefore, that whilst the persecution of Christians remains a legitimate concern for Christian organizations, engagement in FoRB has both theological and missiological precedence and is *consistent* with and *required* by the mission of God.

Three principle convictions lay behind this assertion.

Firstly, far from compromising Christian distinctives and the priority of Christian message, authentic engagement in FoRB reinforces Christian identity as the historic and ideological framework for its specific response to human suffering.

Secondly, engagement in FoRB as opposed to an exclusive defense of persecuted Christians creates important dialogical encounters about the common good and human flourishing in wider society. Participation in FoRB inevitably involves juggling the secular vocabulary of rights along with the language of Christian faith premised on the ideas of revelation and the sovereignty of God.

Thirdly, engagement in FoRB creates the potential for transformational partnerships beyond the Christian church, creating a missional continuum in which Christian ethics and hospitality becomes recognised as integral to its proclamation of good news.

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