

Religious Freedom in a Changing World

September 29, 2026

Venue: Museum of the Bible, Washington

Tuesday, September 29, 2026

09:00 - 09:30 Registration & Coffee Reception

Opening Session

09:30 - 09:45 Welcoming remarks by **Dr. Jesse Abelman**, Curator of Judaica & Hebraica, Museum of the Bible.

09:45 - 10:00 Introductory Remarks by **Dr. Davood Moradian**, Director, Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies (AISS)

Panel I: The Evolving Role of Religion in Contemporary Societies

10:00 - 11:30 **Moderator: Dr. Omar Sadr**, Fellow, Princeton University's Afghanistan Policy Lab / AISS.

Panelists:

Mr. Ismail Royer, Director, the Islam & Religious Freedom Action Team, Religious Freedom Institute.

Professor Jacques Berlinerblau, Rabbi Harold S. White Professor of Jewish Civilization, Georgetown University. ("Speaks on Political Secularism as a Solution to Religious Conflict")

Mr. Subhash Kakar, Co-Founder & Chairman, Global Federation of Societies of Afghan-Hindus & Sikhs (SAHAS).

Ambassador Hamdi Saleh, Member of the American council on the message of peace.

Open Discussion

Topics will include religious awakening, public religion, pluralism, identity politics, & democratic governance.

11:30 - 11:45 **Tea Break & Networking**

Panel II: Metaphysics Meets Artificial Intelligence

11:45 - 13:00 **Moderator: Mr. Nathan Mech**, Founding Director, Collins Center for Abrahamic Heritage, Acton Institute.

Panelists:

Rabbanit Sara Tillinger Wolkenfeld, Senior Rabbinic Fellow, Shalom Hartman Institute & Chief Learning Officer at Sefaria.

Dr. Elisa Zhai Autry, Research Fellow, Stanford University's Hoover Institution.

Dr. Yahia Baiza, Senior Research Associate, Aga Khan Center, The Institute of Ismaili Studies. (Virtual)

Open Discussion

Topics will include AI ethics, digital religion, algorithmic amplification of religious discourse, & spirituality in the age of technology.

13:00 -13:30 **Lunch Break**

Special Conversation / Fireside Talk: Religious Freedom & the Future of Global Order

13:30 - 14:00 Moderator: **Professor Jennifer Brick Murtazashvili**, Professor & Founding Director, Center for Governance & Markets, University of Pittsburgh / Fulbright Distinguished Scholar, Tel Aviv University.

Mr. Richard Bennett, UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan.

Panel III: Religious Despotism & Political Pluralism

14:00 - 15:30 **Moderator: Ms. Fatema D. Ahmadi**, Human Rights Researcher & Advocate.

Panelists:

Professor Nazila Ghanea, Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations. (Virtual)

Dr. Omar Sadr, Fellow, Princeton University's Afghanistan Policy Lab / AISS.

Dr. Mohamed Elsanousi, Executive Director, Network for Religious & Traditional Peacemakers.

Ms. Maryam Namazie, Writer & Activist, Spokesperson, One Law for All & the Council of Ex-Muslims of Britain.

Open Discussion

Topics may include state control of religion, authoritarian governance, minority rights, apostasy debates, & freedom from religion.

15:30-15:45 **Tea Break**

Panel IV: The Muslim Enlightenment: Towards Freedom, Equality & Democratic Awakening

15:45 - 17:00 Moderator: **Dr. Suha Hassan**, Adjunct Faculty Member, American Public University System (APUS).

Panelists:

Professor Mohsen Kadivar, Research Professor, Department of Religious Studies, Duke University.

Dr. Mirwais Balkhi, Adjunct Professor, James Madison University.

Mr. Mustafa Akyol, Senior Fellow, Center for Global Liberty & Prosperity, Cato Institute.

Open Discussion

Topics may include reformist thought, intellectual renewal, education, religious freedom in Muslim-majority societies, & contemporary Islamic discourse.



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