



THE
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WORLD
FEDERATION

A Communion
of Churches

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STATEMENT ON THE FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

Adopted by the LWF Council on 18 June 2024

The Lutheran World Federation Council, meeting under the theme 'Abound in Hope – Rom 15:13' issues the following statement:

The Council recognizes that faith, religion and belief are gifts with a great potential to nurture our society and communities. It is for that reason that the Freedom of Religion or Belief is included in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Our own Christian Lutheran faith and its values inspire and guide us, enabling us to respond to contemporary challenges and to equip ourselves for a more vibrant and effective witness.

The Council is concerned that over several years, the freedom of millions of people to have and to express their belief individually or collectively has been severely eroded and in some contexts completely violated and denied for example through actions by government or other religious groups. The Council particularly stands with churches which are marginalized in their societies. The Council expresses its solidarity with people from all faiths and none across the world affected by suppressions and oppression.

The Council acknowledges that the right to Freedom of Religion or Belief has clear gender dimensions. Women's bodies are often used as battlefields for the honor of the communities and women's right to choose their religion, for instance when they marry, is often violated.

The Council calls for greater solidarity with and between people of all faiths affected by violations of their Freedom of Religion or Belief around the world and affirms the ongoing process of developing a report on the Freedom of Religion and Belief led by the LWF and the World Communion of Reformed Churches.

The Council calls on governments, as the primary duty bearer for ensuring this right, and the international community to:

- Ensure that all people enjoy the right to practice their faith and belief freely without any hinderance or interference.

- Pay particular attention to the rights and freedoms of faith and religious groups who are marginalized to ensure that they are protected from targeting, attacks, and systematic discrimination.
- Recognize, affirm and support the contribution of faith communities and faith-based actors to the well-being of communities within their countries and across the world.
- Ensure that women of all religions enjoy the freedom to choose religion freely without being subjected to limitations or oppression, including honor-based threats and violence.