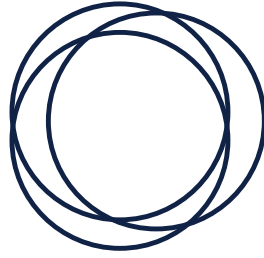




Let's Build Together

Freedom of Religion or Belief
Leadership Network





FoRB

LEADERSHIP NETWORK

Freedom of Religion or Belief leadership Network (FoRBLN)

An Initiative of Resilient women network to promote freedom of Religion or Belief, As Muhammad Ali Jinnah stated in his speech on 11th Aug 1947

“You are free to go to your mosques or to any other places of worship in this State of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion, caste or creed—that religion has nothing to do with the business of the state.”

The objective of the FoRB

Through seminars, conferences, and networking meetings highlight the role of parliamentarians and government bodies in raising awareness of social cohesion and interfaith harmony.

Through column writings, talk shows, building opinion, and creating an understanding of the issues pertaining to other faiths, particularly forced conversions and marriages.

Creating an environment for unity in diversity.

Introduction

Registered with Balochistan Charities Registration & Regulation Authority, the Resilient Women Network (RWN) is a Non-Government and Non-Profit Development Organization that aims at working towards the uplift of underprivileged communities of Pakistan. RWN strictly believes in inclusive approach towards sustainable development by ensuring full participation of all segments of the society, without discrimination, at all levels of planning, decision and policy-making and service delivery. Thus, providing equal opportunities and accessibility to everyone, without discrimination, and encouraging them to become productive and responsible citizens of the country remains the core objective of RWN. In this regard, RWN has been making a number of substantive efforts including forming an interfaith group to raise and deliberate on emerging issues and challenges by leaderships of different beliefs/religious segments of the society with an aim to raise, understand and find solutions to the problems being confronted by each. The recommendations are presented before the legislative and policymakers for their sensitization and lobbying purposes. RWN also undertakes awareness raising, research initiatives and scholarships to promote social and religious cohesion in fragile situations.



Underprivileged communities are mainstreamed for sustainable development.



Elevate and Educate the underprivileged communities by promoting basic rights, enhancing awareness, provision of basic needs, access to information and eliminating of gender imbalances



- Dignity, Respect, and sensitivity
- United efforts with teamwork, mutual co-operation, and sharing.
- Equality and inclusion regardless of gender, ethnic group, or other social divisions
- Honesty and transparency in our intentions and activities.
- Quality service to our beneficiaries.
- Respect for our heritage.

CHIEF PATRON FORBLN-PAKISTAN



As chief patron of FoRBLN Pakistan, I appreciate the efforts of the FoRB team in creating awareness about social cohesion and harmony which is much needed for a peaceful and progressive Pakistan.

In the last two years the efforts of FoRB in building linkages among the faith leaders, Parliamentarians, Academia are commendable. there is a famous quote

“Every breath we take, every step we make, can be filled with peace, joy, and serenity.” —Thich Nhat Hanh.

My sincere support and best wishes are for the FoRB team to continue this journey of peace and harmony for a strong/ Just Pakistan.

BISHOP HUMPHREY SARFARAZ PETERS

Church of Pakistan (KPK)

AS COORDINATOR FORBLN PAKISTAN



The constitution of Pakistan guarantees equal rights to all with equity and this needs to be reflected in all policies and legislations.

Our vision is of a world where people work together to mainstream minorities for the promotion of a peaceful and inclusive society in Pakistan .

Our mission is to provide practical support to change everyday interaction between people and groups affected by conflicts, discrimination and exclusion to work, FoRBLN is working to build up their communities by choosing problem solving approaches over violence.

ASIYA NASIR

Chairperson RWN | Coordinator FoRBLN Pakistan

HIGHLIGHTS 2022

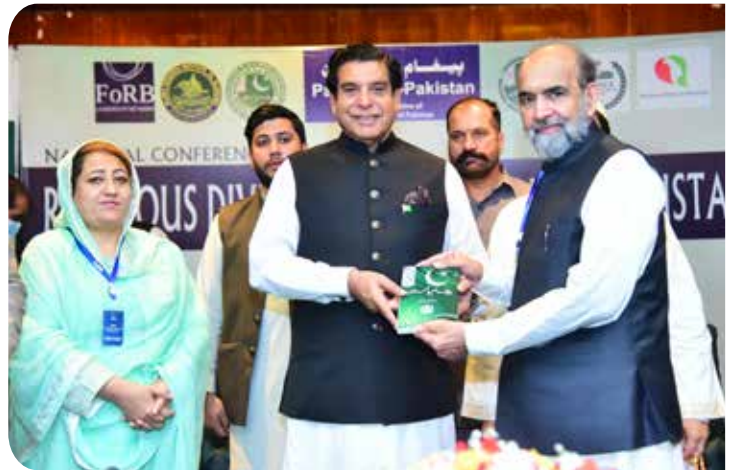
Conference Summary

The First FoRB National conference was held in the Islamic research Institute (Faisal Mosque Campus) It was jointly organized by FoRBLN and the Islamic Research Institute (IRI) The conference was attended by more than 200 people from all walks of life, including key political leadership of Pakistan/Key faith leaders representing all faiths.

There was a 45% participation of female feminists and 55% of the participants were political, faith leaders, community leaders, human rights activists, and government officials. The key highlights of the conference were the Speaker of the National Assembly, Deputy Speaker of National, Dr.Ahsan Iqbal, Federal Minister for planning and development, Canadian High Commissioner, Poland Ambassador, Czech Ambassador, Dr.Nafisa Shah, Member National Assembly, Senator Farhat Ullah Babar, Naveed Amir Jeeva, Member National Assembly, Ms.Naeema Kishwar, Member provincial assembly KPK, Ex-Federal Minister, Dr.Attiya Inayat Ullah, Senator Rukhsana Zuberi, Naveed Anthony. Member Sindh assembly Ms.Mehnaz Akhtar, Member of National Assembly, Mr.Hamid Hameed. Member National Assembly. There were a number of ex-parliamentarians present at the conference too which made 10-15% participation of MP's in total. All the MP's assured their cooperation in resolving the issues of minorities in Pakistan.

Regional Fact finding Visit Lahore

In this respect, RWN also organized several fact-finding visits was to have a close working relationship with provincial key political and religious leaders on forced conversion issues relating to Punjab. Over the years the situation of forced conversion in the province of Punjab has been a matter of great concern, and many underage girls have been victims of forced conversion. The figures show that 54.3pc of the victims (girls and women) belonged to the



Hindu community, 44.44pc Christian while 0.62 pc belonged to the Sikh and Kalash communities. FoRBLN very recently signed an MoU with the PIPS to jointly organized some sessions at PIPS in the year 2022. PIPS and FoRB are confident that this partnership will have a greater impact to pursue the objective of FoRB in Pakistan at the national level. PIPS is a think tank, a body of national Assembly facilitating dialogues at its premises. FoRB in collaboration with PIPS organized a session on the subject of forced conversion/underage marriages.



Series of dialogues with Members parliament

The series of dialogue sessions were held with MPs at Parliament House in the last 2 years. Women's parliamentary caucus supported in engaging with sitting parliamentarians in the parliament.



One of the strong dialogue session was led by Ms. Surriya Asghar with leading parliamentarians and former prime minister. She highlighted the issue of forced conversion with honourable parliamentarians and asked for their support in order to bring an end to this problem.

Working Group Consensus Building Meeting For Particular Pieces Of Legislation

The regular working group meeting was held in islamabad. The meeting commenced with prayers to show solidarity to all faith groups involved in this project. The coordinator FoRBLN high- lighted the journey of FoRB and its achievements made so far. The working group felt more motivated and discussed the way forward of becoming more influential with the stakeholders. The working group members enriched the participants with their valueable suggestions and urged that the representatives of the government sitting in the parliament must show strong solidarity with other faiths living in pakistan, referreing to the constitution of pakistan states that every citizen shall have the right to profess, practice and propagate his/her religion."



Working Group Consensus Building Meeting For Particular Pieces Of Legislation

Another working group meeting was organized to have a brief discussion on the issues of the growing trend of forced/child marriages/forced conversions, the working group members in this meeting discussed ways and means to engage with members of parliament, government officials, and key religious leaders in the year 2022 in a more effective manner, as the role of all these stakeholders is critical in any legislation pertaining to other faiths in Pakistan. The FoRB members also acknowledged that the FoRB wider network members have made huge contributions to FoRB in the year 2021, and hoped it will continue in the years to come.

Regional Fact finding Visit Faisalabad

The FoRBLN coordinator visited Faisalabad city, Faisalabad is an Industrial Hub and the fourth largest city in Pakistan.

A large number of Christian community lives in the Faisalabad division. There has been a problem with the majority community since the time when Shehbaz Bhatti (Late) Started his struggle to bring a change in the mindset of the majority. Ms. Asiya Nasir on the request of local community leaders planned this visit. This visit was organized in collaboration with AWARD a local NGO. A large number of community leaders were invited to present their views on the incidents which have taken place in the city in regards to forced conversion. The finding of this visit was an eye-opening and thought-provoking. The journey is continued.



COMMENTS ON FoRB



Mr. Raja Pervez Ashraf
(Speaker of National Assembly)

The guest of honor Mr. Raja Pervez Ashraf (Speaker National Assembly) addressed the participants in the inaugural session and said that interfaith dialogue should be promoted in the country, pointed out communal disharmony is born when people practice faith in selfish and inauthentic ways and that needs to be addressed, all the citizens should play an active role to make Pakistan a peaceful country for the followers of different religions. He further added that this Conference will provide an opportunity for political and religious leaders to take stock of the various initiatives aiming to enhance inter-faith and intercultural dialogue and agree on a roadmap of people-centered measures and action to better translate their various commitments into national and local realities. He thanked the FoRBLN and IRI for taking lead in organizing this event, and hoped that such dialogue will continue, he recommended liaising effectively with government institutions and Parliamentary partners as well as key faith leaders to promote the culture of equality in Pakistan. He assured in this respect his party will support the other faith's concern in the parliament. He appreciated that FoRB has really done an excellent job.



Dr. Qibla Ayaz
(Chairman Council of Islamic Ideology)

Dr. Qibla Ayaz is heading the council of Islamic ideology, As chairman of the Islamic council, his role in the context of interfaith is very important. In his address as patron chief of FoRBLN, he shared the contribution of Islamic ideology to FoRB. While pledging to strive for a peaceful and tolerant society in Pakistan, he emphasized that differences of opinion should not be used as a channel to engender hatred and hostilities among the people, especially towards minorities/other faiths.



H.E. Wendy Gilmour
(Canadian High Commissioner)

She gave a global perspective on religious diversity, in her address, she said Religious diversity is the fact that there are significant differences in religious belief and practice in today's world. Subsequently, the challenge of religious diversity has a great concern for a peaceful society. She was of the view that Pakistan is a great country but unfortunately increasing trend of mob violence is a great concern for the vulnerable communities. She thanked the FoRB team for organizing the great conference on a very important issue. She offered her support to raise awareness at the grass-root level to counter the challenge of intolerance.



Maulana Syed Muhammad Abdul Khabir Azad

Chairman, Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee Pakistan
Grand Imam & Khateeb, Badshahi Mosque,
Lahore, Pakistan.

While addressing the audience in the session, he highlighted the role of Ulema and other faith leaders. He referred to Islam by saying there is no compulsion in the religion. Therefore, there is no need to force anyone to embrace Islam. He thanked Ms. Asiya Nasir for kind invitation and he assured full cooperation of religious leaders to minimize these challenges which were highlighted through this conference, especially misuse of the blasphemy law, forced conversion,



Dr. Nafisa Shah
Member of National Assembly

Dr. Nafisa in her speech highlighted the trend of mob violence in Pakistan, which depicts the face of our society on the global canvas. She recommended that people involved in such activities must be punished by the government as per law. She urged for strong measures need to be taken by the government. She also highlighted that there are a number of factors contributing to the violent trends.



Dr. Prof Ahsan Iqbal

Federal Minister for Planning & Development.

Prof.Dr. Ahsan Iqbal is well-known for the development of philanthropy work in Pakistan, in order to curb the radicalization/extremism and hatred speech, he has established an institute of peace a center of excellence that will engage with all the stakeholders to find the solutions for a peaceful co-existence in Pakistan.

In his address he gave an example of what inspired him to work for a tolerant society, he shared with the audience that he was hit by a hatred bullet, and since then he decided to work with all key stakeholders to address the challenge of intolerance in Pakistan.

He urged in his address social media is a very strong medium to establish public perception, this is the kind of tool where one can easily propagate negativity and spread very quickly. He recommended the engagement of media in spreading positivity in society can bring about a positive change. He also suggested that we must work to end prejudice which leads to hate. He thanked the FoRB team for contributing to peace.



Bishop Irfan Jamil

Bishop of Lahore (Church of Pakistan)

Bishop Irfan is a well-known faith leader amongst the Christian community, he has always positively contributed to the betterment of Pakistan. His services have been recognized at the national level for peace. He expressed his concern about the current situation, he emphasized that we all have to play a role in our families, and we have to teach our children about other faiths and cultures, this is the only way we can change the mindset of coming generations.



Senator Farhat Ullah Babar

Member Senate of Pakistan

Senator Farhat ullhah Babar is a seasoned politician and social activist. He has always supported legislation that more likely address the issues of other faiths. He referred that one piece of legislation recommended to the parliament in the year 2019. He urged civil society and like-minded groups to exert pressure on the parliament to public that senate legislation which is specifically for the minorities living in Pakistan, and can bring a change in the country.



Zahid Akram Durrani

Deputy speaker National Assembly

The Deputy Speaker in the closing session thanked Ms. Asiya Nasir for her great efforts at the national level. He assured cooperation in his role as deputy speaker of the national assembly. He hoped such dialogue will help to bring back peace and harmony in society and urged to continue such efforts. He assured his cooperation for future endeavours.



Mr. Naveed Amir Jeeva

Member National Assembly(PPP)

In his speech, he highlighted that all the political parties have used religion as a tool to attract people. This new phenomenon has a negative impact in general on society. He recommended that political parties must not use religion cards for their politically motivated interests. he recommended awareness of social cohesion through dialogue must be promoted at district and grassroots levels, He is an active member and supporter of FoRBLN.



**Resilient
Women
Network**

“

CREATE SOCIAL COHESION AND
HARMONY THROUGH HOLDING JOINT
VENTURES AND NEGOTIATION WITH
PEOPLE BELONGING TO DIFFERENT
SCHOOL OF THOUGHTS

”

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