

IRF Secretariat

Boldline Religious Freedom (RF)

Proposal

August 22, 2018

1. Name of Organization:

IRF Secretariat (IRFSec)

2. Address:

1001 19th Street North, Suite 1200
Arlington, VA 22209

3. Not-For-Profit:

IRF Secretariat was incorporated on August 9, 2018, as a charitable and educational organization organized and operated exclusively for exempt purposes set forth in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. We will submit the not-for-profit application for recognition of exemption by August 30, 2018.

4. Industry Affiliation:

Human Rights/Religious Freedom

5. LinkedIn profiles of Participants:

[Greg Mitchell](#)

[Kristin Wright](#)

[Judith Golub](#)

[John Pinna](#)

6. Partnering with the U.S. Government:

While IRFSec is a new organization, it is an outgrowth of the International Religious Freedom (IRF) Roundtable, an informal group of individuals from non-governmental organizations and the U.S. government who gather regularly to discuss IRF issues on a non-attribution basis. It is simply a safe space where participants gather, speak freely in sharing ideas and information, and propose joint advocacy actions to address specific IRF issues and problems. In response to various participant-led initiatives regarding the protection and promotion of freedom of religion, conscience, and belief in the U.S. and abroad, all participants have the opportunity to self-select into coalitions of the willing.

Since its beginning approximately eight years ago, the State Department IRF Office has always been represented at the Roundtable. Further, we have also had representatives from the White House, the National Security Council, the Department of Defense, the Department of Commerce, the Government Accountability Office, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom and Congress participate in regular meetings.

Since late February 2018, the IRF Roundtable has been organizing weekly roundtables with U.S. Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom Sam Brownback and IRF Office staff, which has increased the amount of communication, info sharing and coordination of actions between the U.S. government and the IRF community. And the IRF Roundtable partnered with the State Department to organize and facilitate the civil society side events on the margins of the Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom; to serve as a clearinghouse and publish a formal program of all the formal meetings and side events; to share the program with all civil society attendees of the Ministerial; and to speak at some of the formal meetings and side events.

7. **Stage of Partnership Business Plan:** This plan is a new idea, but it will institutionalize, convene and expand the IRF Roundtable—a proven platform for bringing together faith communities, civil society and government leaders—into a global, interlocking network of multi-faith religious freedom/policy roundtables that will communicate and coordinate with global networks of governments and parliamentarians.
8. **Signed Commitment Statement** to participate in the full three-day accelerator program in or around Washington, D.C: I hereby commit to attend and participate in the full three-day accelerator program in or around Washington, D.C. Signed:

Greg Mitchell

Problem Statement (250 words max): *Describe the problem you are trying to solve and any relevant background information. Address the impact and innovation potential of your idea given the status quo.*

THE CHALLENGE

The State of International Religious Freedom is One of Deepening Crisis

According to Pew Research Center’s ninth annual study of global restrictions on religion, 83% of the world’s population lived in countries with high or very high religious restrictions in 2016 (up from 79% in 2015 and 74% in 2014).

This threatens national and international security. U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo recently said, “Where fundamental freedoms of religion, expression, press, and peaceful assembly are under attack, we find conflict, instability, and terrorism.”

Goal: Global respect for religious freedom for all is institutionalized.

Participants of each multi-faith roundtable in this network should affirmatively agree with Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which provides a common point of departure; a common understanding from which to build from.

All people shall be empowered to practice their faith freely, participate in the public square, and love and help “the other”; and all majority and minority religions shall be empowered to work together and coordinate with governments on policy matters related to peace and prosperity.

Idea (250 words max): *What is the core concept for the partnership; what would it look like? How will working in a partnership obtain the outcome that is required? How does this advance religious freedom in a way that aligns with U.S. interests?*

First, IRFSec seeks to strengthen the IRF Roundtable partnership with the U.S. government in Washington.

Second, coming out of the Ministerial, three networks should be actively supported so they can expand their capacities:

1. An international consortium of like-minded executive branches (per the International Contact Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief);
2. A global network of legislators (per the International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief); and
3. A global network of multi-faith religious freedom and policy “roundtables” (per the International Religious Freedom Roundtable in Washington, D.C.).

IRFSec seeks to partner with the U.S. government to support all three of these networks to ensure:

- All three should be effectively interconnected and meet regularly;
- They should work in partnership and coordination with each other to promote and advance religious freedom around the world; and
- They should become the foundation for the long-term impact we have all been working to achieve.

Specifically, IRFSec will institutionalize the IRF Roundtable as the premier space in Washington, D.C. for multi-faith discussion, ongoing dialogue between civil society and government regarding these issues, and joint advocacy actions; and utilize it as a model/departure point to establish a global interlocking network of multi-faith roundtables or “safe spaces” that practically advance religious freedom as consistent with the best of the Golden Rule found in most faith traditions, and as consistent with the self-interest of states and societies that desire the security and stability necessary for economic development and women’s empowerment.

Resource Requirements (250 words max): *Describe what is needed to implement your idea (resources, stakeholder buy-in, legal requirements, etc.). Address the feasibility of your idea.*

What Sets This Apart

IRFSec is a truly multi-faith organization founded as an outgrowth of the IRF Roundtable by the most passionate believers in its multi-faith model (described below)—led by those who developed the Roundtable from the ground up. The IRF Secretariat’s cofounders, board of directors and executive council include people of several faiths working together—despite their deepest theological and political differences—to promote and protect religious freedom for all.

The idea is feasible as evidenced by the Roundtable’s success in Washington, D.C. and initial outreach activities abroad. Representatives from more than 240 organizations have attended

meetings of the Roundtable. Close to 100 multi-faith policy initiatives have been launched. Participants have opened meaningful dialogues with ambassadors, embassies, and delegations designed to grow into results-driven partnerships.

We need buy-in and resources from the U.S. and other governments of the International Contact Group, from private foundations, and from the corporate world. We also need buy-in from the International Panel of Parliamentarians and religious and civil society organizations around the world.

Best Potential Partners (250 words max): *Describe ideal partners (from 2-10) or types of partners that would make for a successful partnership.*

IRFSec would continue to strengthen, expand and formalize existing partnerships of the IRF Roundtable, and continue to engage the U.S. government and coordinate with the State Department and Congress.

In creating its network abroad of roundtables, IRFSec would seek to partner with, among others: representatives from majority and minority faith-based groups, political, economic and social leaders of ethnic and religious communities, other civil society representatives, and government representatives (from the local to national levels). Participants of each multi-faith roundtable in this network will affirmatively agree with Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which provides a common understanding from which to build.

In 2013 and 2014, Roundtable Co-Chairs visited Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Nepal, promoting the network's goals and vision. In 2017 and 2018, the Co-Chairs traveled to Taiwan, Columbia and Brussels, Belgium to promote the expansion of the model into a global network. Given the information collected during these visits and subsequent meetings and discussions, IRFSec would investigate creating roundtables in Columbia and Kurdistan. IRFSec also would discuss creating roundtables in Western Africa and Uzbekistan, given initial interest.

Other potential partners include The International Contact Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief (ICG), an international consortium of like-minded executive branches, and the International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief (IPPFoRB), a global network of legislators. In addition, IRFSec would seek to reach out to countries which have created IRF-like offices, such as Germany, United Kingdom, Denmark, and Norway have created IRF offices.

Ideal End State (150 words max): *Describe what success will look like with the implementation of your idea. Address the impact of your idea and its innovation potential*

A successful IRFSec would institutionalize the IRF Roundtable in Washington D.C. to invigorate its efforts to: establish multi-faith dialogues between civil society and government; enhance civil society's engagement with international religious freedom issues; further engage the U.S. government and international partners to prioritize international religious freedom in U.S. foreign policy, national security, and economic development; and engage in meaningful dialogues with foreign governments to bring their laws into conformity with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

A successful IRFSec also would build, convene and coordinate a global, interlocking network of multi-faith roundtables abroad, ensuring they are coordinating with the global networks of like-minded governments and legislators. Each network, among other activities, would: bring together representatives of all faiths and none to build on issues of multi-faith consensus; and engage civil society and government leaders to more effectively integrate religious freedom into the governments' policies.