Spiritual Roots & Shared Well Being Report

‘Faith, Rights & Community Building in Times of Crisis’

International Academic and Community Collaborations

(7th May 2024)

Dr Siobhan Bygate (University of Hertfordshire and Bridging Spiritual Cultures) and Professor Margaret Greenfields, (Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge)

Executive Event Summary

Introduction & Objectives

Spiritual Roots & Shared Well Being, 'Faith, Rights and Community Building in Times of Crisis: International and Academic Collaborations' took place at the Anglia Ruskin Campus in Lord Ashcroft Building, Broad Street, Cambridge on the 7th May 2024 as a day event, running from 10.30 in the morning to 5.15pm.

The purpose of this event was to explore the UN Faith 4 Rights Framework and toolkit as a potential framework for enabling responses to the impact and implications of international conflicts for UK practitioners working to promote and protect safe and inclusive communities, both from the pedagogical university and a civil society perspective.

The specific objectives were threefold:

1. to assess whether the UN Faith 4 Rights Framework could be utilized at a University Network level to effectively incorporate an understanding of faith and faith-based conceptions of Human Rights in tertiary education
2. to assess its potential in community settings to build understanding between communities in times of crisis by consulting with a network of interested

parties in looking to build solutions and practices towards maintaining community cohesion.

3. To explore artistic and cultural workshops as a means to build shared understanding and community cohesion and resilience

This conception of the event grew out of the collaboration between the two UK academic leads and their respective work within education and with civil society and community organizations, and as a result of BSPC initiatives in faith-oriented civil society collaboration and engagement with the UN Faith 4 Rights programme. In addition, it is also rooted in a response to areas of concern internationally, particularly in the wake of the Gaza-Israeli Crisis.

Event evaluation & Impacts

1.Programme review

Faith 4 Rights Framework

Panel Discussions:

Panel 1

Panel 2

Gap Analysis

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Panel 1 & Panel 2 Overall Event Feedback

Panel 1 Faith4Rights Framework Specific Feedback

Workshop 1 Art Installation Feedback

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Workshop 2 Storytelling Feedback

Workshop 3 Comments on Musical Contributions

4. Summary & recommendations for Next Step .

1.Programme review

Overview and aims, Speakers, Contributions, Activities
The programme reflected the shared concerns, insights and competencies of the three partner organisations, Anglia Ruskin University, Bridging Spiritual Cultures and the University of Hertfordshire around building and ensuring safe and inclusive communities with social resilience in the UK, especially in times of international conflict.

Faith4Rights Framework

The programme also reflected the UN Faith for Rights Framework as a set of guiding standards. The Faith4Rights Framework is based on the Beirut declaration and its five fundamental principles guiding its implementation: transcending dialogue to action; avoiding theological divides; being introspective; speaking in one voice; and acting in an independent manner. The Cambridge event explored the Faith 4 Rights toolkit as a basis for activities to pursue the F4R aims and to test proposed interventions from the toolkit. The toolkit needed to be considered within the framework of its appropriateness for higher education within a university network and whether

this could be extended to network with and to support socially resilient communities.

Link of interest: OHCHR Faith 4 Rights

Faith 4 Rights Toolkit

Cambridge Event at Anglia Ruskin University with University of Hertfordshire and Bridging Spiritual Cultures

The event was opened by the Chair of Bridging Spiritual Cultures, Mr Marek Lubelski, Followed by Professor Arletta Norval from Anglia Ruskin University and Professor Lyndsey Bottoms for the University of Hertfordshire. Mr Lubelski started by emphasising the focus of Commitment 16 in the UN F4R Framework,

> "To leverage the spiritual and moral weight of religions and beliefs in order to strengthen the protection of universal human rights and develop preventative strategies."

He remarked that it was heartening to see the specific reference to the spiritual dimension as this was essential to building social resilience and is

generally absent in academic enquiry and less often the focus of civil society discussion.

Representatives of the three Abrahamic Faiths then offered an opening recitation/prayer to set the mutually respectful tone of the event which was sustained throughout in accordance with the three objectives of the event:

Link: Bridging Spiritual Cultures Website

Event Design

The event was designed by the three partners so that two discussion panels ran alongside three creative workshops to underpin the main thematic discussion, including an art installation, a storytelling intervention and a shared musical contribution rooted in the three Abrahamic Faith traditions. The overall aims were:

1. to assess whether the UN Faith 4 Rights Framework could be utilized at a University Network level to effectively incorporate an understanding of faith and faith-based conceptions of Human Rights in tertiary education

2. to assess its potential in community settings to build understanding between communities in times of crisis by consulting with a network of interested parties in looking to build solutions and practices towards maintaining community cohesion.

3. to explore artistic and cultural workshops as a means to build shared understanding and community cohesion and resilience

Panel Discussions

We had two panels, the first examining the Faith for Rights framework which centred on discussions and dialogue with UN representatives and existing UN and UK academic contacts who set out to explore how the Framework could be used in higher educational settings.

Panel 1 Discussion: Universities & Faith

Professor Arletta Norval (Deputy Vice Chancellor (Education) at Anglia Ruskin University) set out the commitment of Anglia Ruskin University to exploring the relevance of faith and human rights in the context of higher education and civil society

initiatives and then introduced and chaired the first panel, which included: Professor Margaret Greenfields (ARU), Professor Ahmed Shaheed (University of Essex), Dr Michael Wiener (UN), Dr Ibrahim Salama (UN), Rabbi Alex Goldberg (University of Surrey), Dr Thiago Pinto Alves (University of Oxford), Professor Tim Winters University of Cambridge. In addition, Dr Roula Talhouk, Center for Muslim-Christian Relations, St. Joseph's University Beirut joined this discussion online.

The discussion centred on the role of the UN Charter for Human Rights, based on the Beirut and Rabat Charters' understanding of Human Rights from different faith perspectives, Further discussions took place around how the UK event was similar to, but took a different approach from that undertaken earlier in 2024 at the American University to Paris, at a sister event co-organised with the UN. At the Cambridge event the addition of Professor Tim Winters from the University of Cambridge, provided an opportunity for a postcolonial critique of the Faith for Rights framework's approach.

Professor Shaheed, University of Essex and an author of the Faith for Rights toolkit designed with UN colleagues, explored the topic of where they may be a conflict of opinion over what faith may or may not permit, and where beliefs may come into conflict with declared human rights as per the UN recognised charter. An example of such a conflict was posed by the audience in terms of LGBTQ rights and faith prohibitions. Prof. Shaheed noted that there were a number of possible responses to such

conflicting views, not least the right to disagree with someone else's view but ready to respect their right to hold it.

Other commentators such as Dr Ibrahim Salama explored concerns that the potentially rich contribution of faith communities to the enshrinement and practice of human rights may often be overlooked or marginalised by a focus on the purely secular and legalistic approaches which are dominant within the UN charter.

The importance of mutual respect and mutual support for communities experiencing any kind of bias, prejudice or violence purely because of ethnic, racial or religious identification was emphasised. This was raised particularly with reference to the ongoing Gaza-Israel conflict and repercussions within national, international and inter-community relations within the UK. This theme was raised in response to a question from the audience and excited keen discussion.

Links of Interest

Rabbi Goldberg: Goldberg: Profile RAG

Prof Margaret Greenfields: Profile: PMG

Prof Arlette Norval: Profile PANl

Dr Thiago Alves Pinto: Profile PA

Prof Tim Winters: Profile PTW

Prof Ahmed Shaheed: :

Dr Michael Wiener: Profile MW

Dr Ibrahim Salama: Profile: IS

Dr Roula Talhouk, Profile RT

Prof Waddiq Doyle: Profile: WD

Comments & preliminary Gap Analysis of the Faith 4 Rights Framework & Toolkit at University level based on discussions and feedback:

- Youth voice and engagement: more young voices should be heard when designing/implementing such a framework as they are dealing with impacts of international events on the ground in their own communities.
- Hard pressed communities and civil society organisations are those most impacted by State demands to underpin or maintain community cohesion and representatives of these communities typically have the least access to the toolkit or knowledge of related activities or resources.

- Questions arose over how university networks will function for students and staff on the ground? How will the toolkit be effectively implemented in academic settings?
- Questions were asked over how best to measure effectiveness of the impacts of the toolkit?
- It was noted that there was a clear gender imbalance on the first panel of speakers with many keynote speakers in this space being male.
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Example of Padlet Feedback on Panel 1

Anonymous 5/14/24 4:29PM
This event acted as a reflection of what could take place at an international level between different spiritual cultures. Coming from a Muslim background, I did not feel uncomfortable at all in learning about other beliefs and practices, on the contrary I thought this was very insightful and made me learn more about myself too! Peace seems to rhyme with co-existence and cooperation, and this event illustrates, in my opinion, the possibility of building a safer place for all of us.

Anonymous 5/9/24 6:41PM
Faith leaders across the world tend to be men. Discussions normally exclude women. This means the experience, perspectives and ideas of half the population are automatically lost.

University of Hertfordshire UH

Panel 2 Discussion: Safe & Inclusive Communities & Faith

The second panel was opened by Dr Lindsay Bottoms, University of Hertfordshire who noted the importance of the community and civil society perspective in addition to the academic debate. This panel was chaired by Dr Siobhan Bygate on behalf of the University of Hertfordshire and Bridging Spiritual Cultures (BSPC).

This panel included British community activists who run food banks for refugees and people in need, representative from synagogues, churches, and Islamic charities such as the Karim Foundation in Cambridge and Citizens UK. We explored with the audience the issues of a UN 'Faith for Rights' legal framework moving on from discussions on the impact and practicalities within higher education and reflecting on how this Framework and model might apply in the community context in the UK.

The panel included Shahida Rahman, (novelist, founder of a charity/foodbank in Cambridge, trustee of Cambridge Central

ecological Mosque) and Tamara Joseph, (representative of Citizens UK, trade unionist and founder of a food bank feeding mainly Muslim refugees based in a London synagogue and activist for refugee rights) and the Rev. Jonathan Chaplin, Fellow of Wesley House, University of Cambridge and contributor to

the Centre for Faith in Public Life, author of a number of books on faith and democracy, supporter of community initiatives for poverty alleviation and aid/support for Palestinians in Gaza.

This panel reflected critically on the reach of the Faith for Rights Framework beyond international institutions and the seminar room/academic setting and wondered what the application within a community setting might be, including reflecting that such initiatives which involve inter-faith collaborations to build mutual understanding were sorely needed (and very necessary) in the UK under the polarising impacts of the present conflict in the Middle East. Indeed these reflections chimed with a number of questions from the audience, in particular students

and the younger generation and those of minority and diverse backgrounds who attended in community activist roles. In particular, speakers from Luton, a city with high levels of super-diversity, reflected pertinently on the disjoint and gap between academic theory and 'grass roots' situations.

Links of Interest

Karim Foundation, Cambridge

Citizens UK

Dr Siobhan Bygate: Profile SB

Rev Jonathan Chaplain:: Profile: JC

Tamara Joseph: Iron Rule Blog Tamara Joseph

Tamara Joesph, London & Liberal Judaism: How Liberal Judaism Informs My Values

Shahida Rahman, Cambridge,, author: Author & Philanthropist

FaithsForumLondon: https://www.faithsforum.com/

Comments & initial Gap Analysis

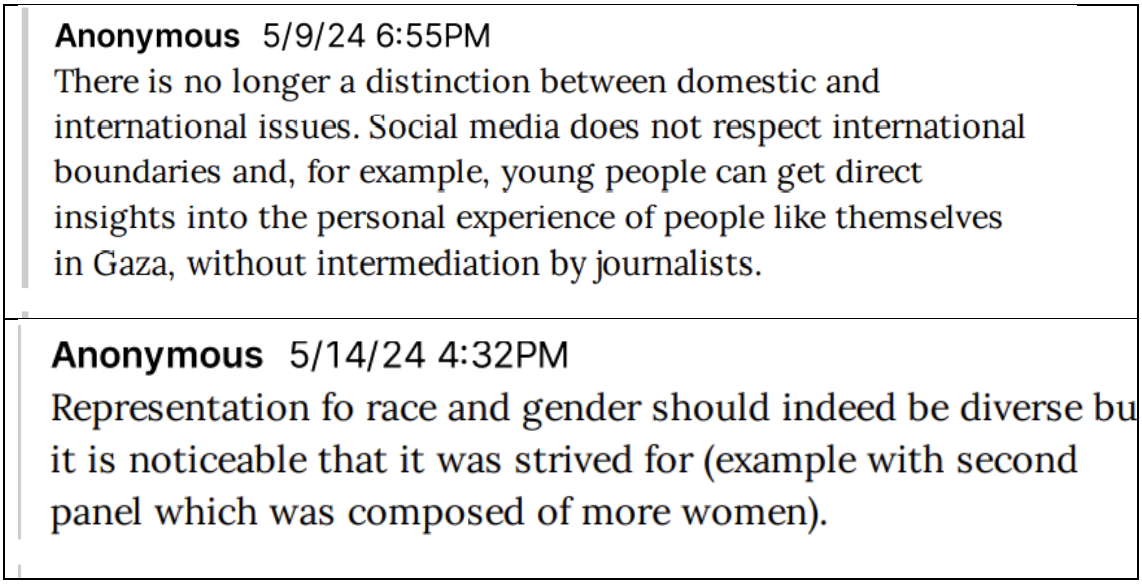
It was felts by panellists and audience that:

- There were gaps in the Faith4Rights framework when it came to negotiating tensions across civil society community relations, most specifically in times of external crisis such as the Gaza-Israel conflict

- There was a need for communities in the United Kingdom to redouble their efforts to ensure continuity of community cohesion in the light of political narratives that threaten it and stoke tensions.
- Questions focused on how can the toolkit be used to bridge the gap between and within communities, moving beyond academic conversations?

- Concerns and questions were raised on how effective the Framework would be in enabling “difficult conversations to take place in safe spaces”
- It was asked what steps might feasibly be taken to build upon the Faith 4 Rights framework which could add value to current attempts to bridging the gap between communities, civil society organizers and state agencies at a grassroots level?

Padlet Feedback Example



Three Exploratory Workshops

In line with the event design, three exploratory creative workshops were run with participants to provide opportunities to reflect on its aims and the dialogue it generated through diverse media and forms - visual art, storytelling and spiritual song.

These workshop sessions explicitly sought to acknowledge and explore the inner emotional and spiritual dimensions that are critical to building the empathy, mutual respect, understanding and trust needed to underpin the resilience necessary for safer and stronger communities.

The creative workshops included an art installation co-created by MA Arts students and a professional artist, supported by lecturers from ARU Ruskin School of Art, a storytelling intervention which used narrative and metaphor to build bridges across cultures and through dialogue, and sacred musical contributions from the three Abrahamic faith traditions.

The workshops were also designed to provide space to consider the gaps identified and reflections raised by consideration of the Faith 4 Rights Toolkit. The toolkit , whilst encouraging art and music initiatives as models of building mutual understanding, was felt to be possibly limited in the understanding of impacts on the ground and how these could be overcome by utilising the knowledge and skills found within richly multicultural and diverse communities in the UK.

The two academic lead organisers and the charity partner BSPC, thus decided to move beyond the theoretical discussions to test the applicability and usefulness as such arts and creative models through the mechanisms of creativity outlined above, and captured through the photo-documentation and film

Art Installation

The art installation led by well-known Muslim artist, Teakster, who specialises in murals and street art amongst other forms, and who has exhibited widely and internationally, (https://www.teakster.co.uk/), provided the necessary conceptual groundwork and practical canvas for this first initiative, generously supported by ARU Senior Lecturer, and Course Leader for the MA Illustration at Cambridge School of Art, Anglia Ruskin University , Dr Nanette Hoogslag and 10 ARU MA Illustration students, from a highly diverse UK and international programme intake.

A white table and chairs were used as a blank canvas to capture the students' experiences and perception of the day's events. Their artwork was based on their participation in talks, receipt of feedback from delegates, and created a running creative commentary on what was happening in the panel discussions. Narrative and reflections were recorded and utilised to expressed hopes,

concerns, fears and challenges articulated by those participating in the events. ARU students and other participants were encouraged to note ideas and feelings throughout the day, and these comments, captured on an 'information wall' were then crafted into their illustrations by the artistic team to produce a rich canvas of reflections. The finished installation – presented to delegates at the end of the event proved particularly popular with all attendees, many of whom wished to be photographed sitting at the table holding hands and breaking bread. The art installation is exhibited at ARU in its gallery.

Link: Teakster Artist, UK (Hatiq Mohammed)

Link: Dr Nanette Hoogslag

Additional Photographic Exhibition

An additional photographic exhibition of “Women of Jerusalem” (which featured women of many different faiths:: Jerusalem Women's Project) was installed by Cambridge photographer Mary Humphries

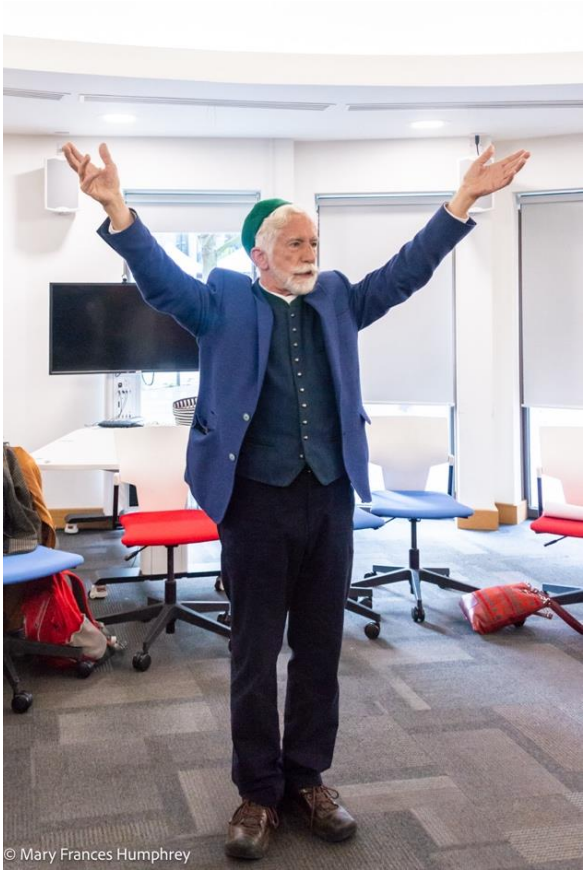
A final room, also on the ground floor and hence as accessible for people

with physical disabilities as all of the other space was used for the after event refreshments and networking opportunity.

Link: Mary Humphrey Photographer, Cambridge, UK

Storytelling

We also held a narrative storytelling workshop incorporating elements of physical theatre. The workshop was focused on a traditional Moroccan folk story rooted in the idea of how communities (mis) understood the cause of conflict based only on seeing/hearing their own 'side' of an incident. Ultimately the theme of the tale was how to enter into dialogue to overcome a conflictual situation, and how only hearing from all witnesses and parties enables a clearer understanding of what others think and belief. The activity was led by a Jewish actor and storyteller Sef Townsend.



The design of the workshop, created by Sef ensured that participants were face with a dilemma to which they had to find solutions. Information was unfolded, ensuring that participants were faced with new information as the event progressed and through this they realised that some of their prejudices and assumption were being challenged without them

actually knowing it. The event was very enjoyable and a surprise to all participants, as the reality of the dilemma was revealed at the end of the narrative.

Link of Interest: Sef Townsend Storyteller

Spiritual Song

We finished the event by a return to the mail hall where performances reflective of the three Abrahamic faiths were presented by delegates/presenters. Dr Vivi Lachs – an academic and historian of music from the University of Birkbeck led singing in Yiddish with an explanation of meaning first. This was followed by, a Christian song of healing and greeting, performed by Christian Chaplain and music specialist, , Dr Alison Kennedy. Finally, a group performance of Sufi

sacred singing by the Birmingham based Moroccan Sufi singing group, Safaa, UK. The audience were happy to listen to all the traditions but were enthralled to be able to sing and clap in time to the vocal performance of the Safaa Ensemble UK (from the Qadiriya Boutshishiya Tariqa, Birmingham: (https://www.instagram.com/ensemblesafaa/) who rounded off the events to great effect. This entire musical intervention/workshop was particularly well received by attendees.

Links of Interest

Safaa, UK: Safaa UK Facebook

The Zawiya Trust Birmingham: https://zawiyatrust.com/

Dr Vivi Lachs: Profile VL

Dr Alison Kennedy: Profile RAK

2.Audience metrics

The audience comprised ARU and UH staff and students, representatives of various charitable organisations working in the faith and human rights space and comprising representatives from each Abrahamic Faith group, a contingent of University Chaplains from Anglia Ruskin, Cambridge Universities and University of Hertfordshire and delegates from other UK universities. Further academic representation and student delegates travelled from Paris, and we were joined by online participants from the University of Beirut as well as representatives of the Faith For Rights leadership group of the UNHCR.

Invitations were extended to 180 people and over 100 accepted and booked, in addition to the panel speakers. However, the rail strike impacted attendance which meant that on the day an audience of approximately 83 people were present. This figure includes speakers, audience, staff and students and community organisation/faith group attendees.

Universities: Total 38 delegates

Organisers and other ARU & UH Staff and students: Total attendees registered (excluding those who joined some more 'open sessions' in the lobby area) 27 [Disciplines represented included: Social Policy, Politics & International Relations, Geography, Law, Health Sciences, Education, Fine Art & Illustration]

External/Other universities: Total 11 [Staff: 8 University of Oxford, University of Surrey, ; American University in Paris, ; University of St Joseph, Beirut, ; University of Cambridge, ; Birkbeck College/London University; Kings College London; University of Essex. Other University's Students 3 (American University in Paris).

International Organisations: Total 2

United Nations, Human Rights (OHRC) 2 speakers/representatives, as well as international delegates from the American University of Paris (see above)
St Jospeh's University of Beirut (see above)

Charities and Community Organisations: Total 24 attendees

*Of these, 4 were speakers and 20 were other attendees : [*Trustees and volunteers and youth members BSPC (10), Citizens UK (1), Karim Foundation (1), Faiths Forum London (1), Equality in Diversity (2), Luton, Centre for Community & Youth Development (1); Zawiya Foundation, Birmingham (2); Safaa Ensemble UK (6)]

Faith Representatives: Total 17

Speakers (6); Other attendees 11: Woolf Institute (1), Cambridge University (3) , University of Surrey (1), Faiths Forum for London (1), ARU Chaplaincy Centre (5), UH Chaplaincy Centre (1), Cambridge Mosque (2); Other University Chaplaincies (London) (3)].

Professional Artists/Creatives, Narrative Storytellers: Total 6

Installation, photographers & filming (plus, MA illustration students - who were predominantly international students included in the count of ARU students)

Online

A University Professor from St Joseph's University of Beirut attended online.

3.Aggregate Feedback Metrics

Feedback was collected through a variety of media and physical means. These included, mind map feedback through collection of notelets left on a wall near to the emergent art /table installation; online Padlet contributions and other direct art installation contributions, storytelling responses focused on problem solving contributions to the narrative, singing contributions and reflections so such creative interventions, and verbal feedback from the audience within the panel discussions. In addition, feedback was collected through online forums such as X, Instagram, LinkedIn and subsequent email feedback supported by Padlet responses sought after the event to permit of reflection on the day.

Panel 1 & Panel 2 Overall Event Feedback

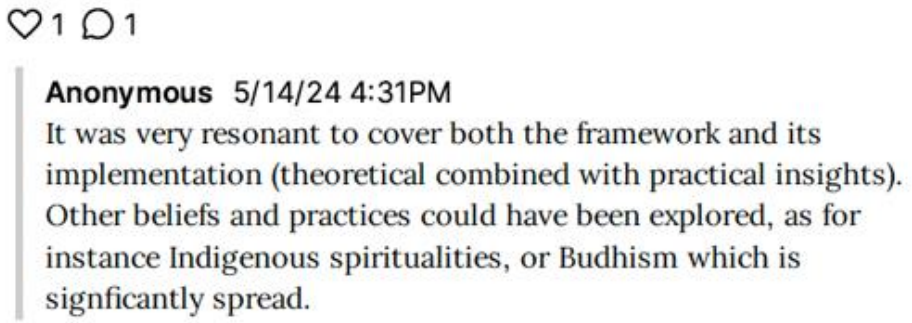
Overall Event: Mind map & Padlets

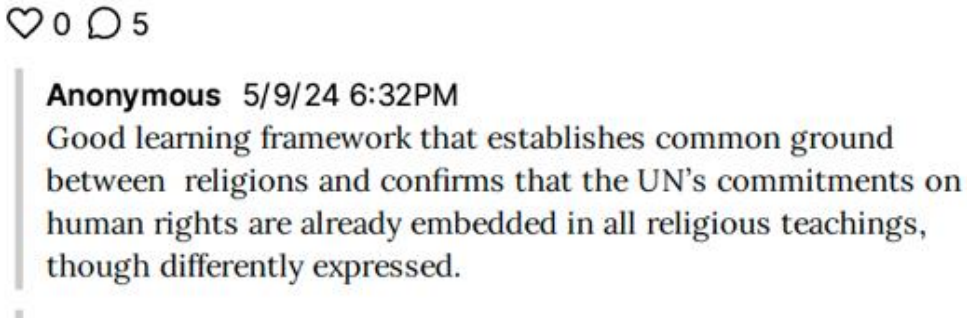
Feedback collated in physical space and analysed subsequently revealed that overall it was felt that both discussion panels were considered to be very useful and important in the present situation. A clear theme which emerged was that concern was raised about challenges to the future for Safe and Inclusive Communities in the UK with the increasing destabilisation impacted by the global situation (extremism, discrimination, racism)

Mind Map Key Words/Phrases

Spirituality, Equality, Peace (+ exclamation mark) , Wisdom , Solidarity (+heart) , Be Yourself , Bridging , Justice , Intergenerational , Open , Patient Listening , Prophetic traditions

Padlet Contributions





Overall Email Feedback

Email feedback received subsequently was very positive and reflected a great interest in repeating the event, but on a wider scale for a more open audience. There was an interest in having a more practical emphasis to the day as well as focusing on theory of the Framework in academic contexts. Requests were made for better representation of both gender balance and ethno-cultural/religious diversity as well as with a greater number of youth participants. In general, it was felt this was a good starter event, but areas of greater difficulty needed to be explored within a safe environment.

Overall Media Reporting

This event was reported by university channels here: (please see Appendix 2 for the full press release (https://www.aru.ac.uk/news/un-experts-set-out-importance-of-faith-literacy) but aggregate social media impact of the event across all partners demonstrates the reach and impact. Social Media posts (from all organizers and participants and creatives through a variety of social media such as Instagram, WhatsApp, TikTok, Facebook, X, LinkedIn, Telegram) totaled approximately:

5 posts; 14 reposts;96 positive reactions; 2 comments; significantly over 90,000 views

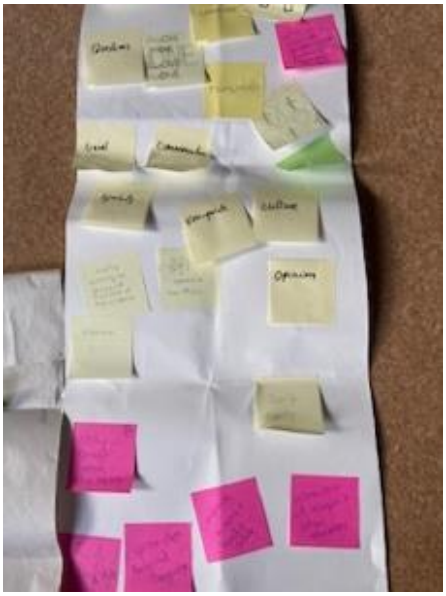
Panel 1 Faith4Rights Framework Specific Feedback

Mind map & Padlet

Comments received with regard to the first Panel provided some interesting insights, but similarly to the discussions in the workshop, it was felt that the toolkit had yet to be proved effective within a university context. It was acknowledged that the university network is still 'a work in progress' for the UN and the next steps were anticipated as potentially evidencing more impact.

Mind Map Key Words

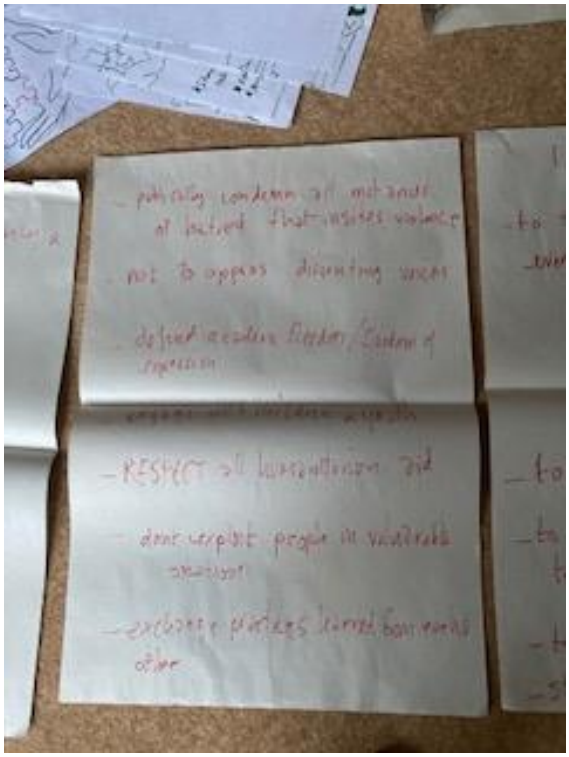
Grassroots level; Polarization <- -> common ground sharing; It is what we do together, from faith to action; People of faith; I'm on journey.
Suggestions- Faith/Belief is liberation



Keith Haring; Theory into practice; Build bridges and fill in gaps; What values do we share? Explore differences with respect; Being here is a contribution to the future. Future Islands divided by faith and culture [What connects us]; Freedom of speech; Social cohesion

18 Commitments (within the Faith 4 Rights framework): to stand up and act for everyone's rights to free choices; Freedom of thought, religion, belief,

to support & promote equal treatment, -to prevent the use of state religion to persecute people , -to ensure non discrimination



Stand up for minority rights -publicly condemn all instances of hatred that incites violence; (and) not to oppose dissenting voices,
Defend academic freedom/freedom of expression
Engage with children & youth -Respect all humanitarian aid, -Don't exploit people in vulnerable situations, -exchange practices learned from each other, -use technology more creatively & consistently

Padlet Contributions

Anonymous 5/9/24 6:41PM
Faith leaders across the world tend to be men. Discussions normally exclude women. This means the experience, perspectives and ideas of half the population are automatically lost.

A very informative panel (if obviously not reflecting a proper gender balance!).

Anonymous 5/9/24 6:42PM
There should be greater focus on action, and engagement with people who have no religious faith.

Anonymous 5/9/24 6:32PM
Good learning framework that establishes common ground between religions and confirms that the UN's commitments on human rights are already embedded in all religious teachings, though differently expressed.

Anonymous 5/9/24 6:52PM
Religious groups can often cooperate on action, provided they steer clear of doctrine.

"At least 50% of the panel should be composed of women."

"International organisations need to listen and engage with young people."

Panel 2 Safe & Inclusive Communities & Faith4Rights Framework Feedback

Padlets & Mind Map

This panel received a significantly more resonant and positive response in terms of feedback. Accordingly the theme of working with communities utilising the framework of Faith 4 Rights was identified as possibly being more impactful within the UK community context than the academic arena and also offers a greater potential for future practical exploration.

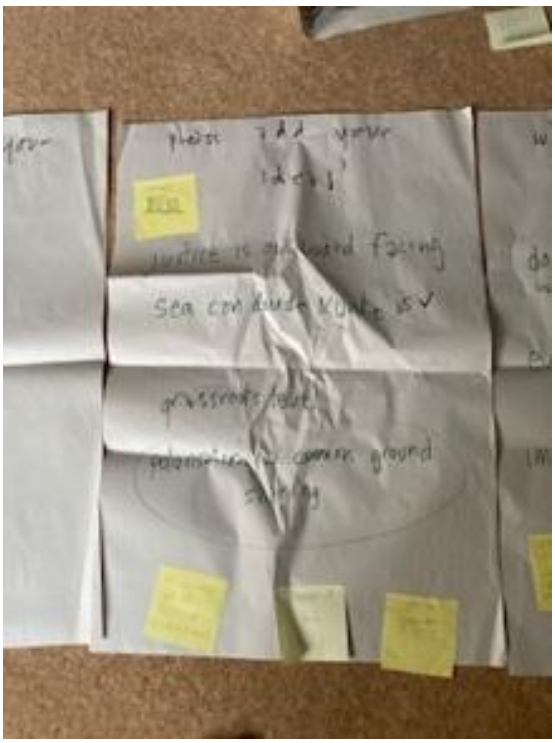
Mind Map Key Words

What Should be on the Table of thought?

1. Matthew 5 “manifesto of personal transformation”

If the Prophets were present today – what would they see? Please add your thoughts…

Know the other, Respect the18 commitments to rights (Faith4Rights framework)



2. What should be included into the on the table of thought? [art installation being painted during the day] :

Do not onto others what you do not want done onto them, Every faith is committed to good, Importance of listening, Support for asylum seekers, Weekly after school drop-in, Get people out of their hotel rooms; Foodbanks to cater for different foods & communities, International conflict affecting local progress and relationships , Long-term relationship building: work together locally in spite of difference

Please add your ideas: Languages (drawing of speech bubbles), Justice is outward facing

Sea can divide + unite us

Padlet Contributions

Community Reps

ANONYMOUS 5/9/24 2:28PM

Brilliant event that offered a much needed dialogues between different faiths and cultures, particularly in light of the current global situation. I hope this event will be the first of many. Thank you to all the organisers and participants for making this thought-provoking event so special. I particularly enjoyed the story telling session and the singing from different faiths. I look forward to the next event. I wish the panellists would dig deeper in answering the questions from the audience.

Faith Reps

ANONYMOUS 5/15/24 5:41PM

A fascinating and inspiring event which introduced me to the excellent F4R project and to a range of faith leaders who are and could be committed to it. Next steps should include further outreach to diverse faith groups, but not only organisations or denominations but groups of interested individuals who might not be constrained by organisational parameters.

Anonymous 5/14/24 4:29PM
This event acted as a reflection of what could take place at an international level between different spiritual cultures. Coming from a Muslim background, I did not feel uncomfortable at all in learning about other beliefs and practices, on the contrary I thought this was very insightful and made me learn more about myself too! Peace seems to rhyme with co-existence and cooperation, and this event illustrates, in my opinion, the possibility of building a safer place for all of us.

> **Anonymous** 5/9/24 6:55PM
> There is no longer a distinction between domestic and international issues. Social media does not respect international boundaries and, for example, young people can get direct insights into the personal experience of people like themselves in Gaza, without intermediation by journalists.

Anonymous 5/9/24 6:47PM
Young people's involvement was very encouraging. As one of the panel members mentioned, they are often ahead of the curve.

Anonymous 5/14/24 4:32PM
Representation fo race and gender should indeed be diverse but it is noticeable that it was strived for (example with second panel which was composed of more women).

All Workshop Feedback

Workshop 1 Art Installation Feedback

The art installation "table of thoughts" received an overwhelmingly positive response from delegates. Illustrations in this report indicate the power of the creation and level of engagement from delegates and those passing through the forum space where the work was taking place Everyone had the opportunity to contribute to the content to be included on the table and chairs and protective sheet underneath. Almost the entire members of the speakers' panels and large numbers of audience participants queued as the event ended to be photographed sitting on the chairs at the table, with particular interest paid to the ritual of 'breaking of bread' and sharing which occurred amongst inter-faith representatives at the conclusion of the day.

Padlet Contributions

Students

ANONYMOUS 5/14/24 4:45PM

Amazing event which was intellectually and spiritually elevating!

Brilliant interventions from UN representatives of the F4R toolkit, casting light on the importance of faith at a policy-making level. The second panel allowed to observe the realities of the toolkit's implementation. The recitations, including poems and chants, added a layer to the event as it allowed to directly experience the safe place concept, promoting the learning and sharing of other faiths.

Photographic capture/ Feedback

The images below illustrate both the process of the development of the 'table of thought' and feedback collected on this element of the day.

Workshop 2 Storytelling Feedback

Responses to this event which took place near the conclusion of the day and before the final unveiling of the 'table of thoughts' and 'breaking of bread' were predominantly verbally reported.

Feedback via Padlet or contemporaneous post it notes, was very positive, and participants stated that they particularly liked building up to the workshop over

the course of the day's discussions, as by then they felt they knew each other a little and could begin to relate openly during the reflective and interactive elements of the story-telling workshop. It was also noted that for those they had not yet engaged with panels or taken part in question and answer discussions it created a very good opportunity to get to know others and enter into reflection and dialogue in a smaller group setting away from the main conference hall.

Mind Map Feedback

Storytelling Feedback: Key WORDS

Only straight men [on the panel] this morning [in contrast to declared identities and characterisations represented in the story-telling workshop]; [the opportunity] of Voice of Youth for Rights ; Connection beyond language ; Complexity, nothing is black and white; Intersections of religion and other identities; 2017 dignity ; Rainbow ; Knots symbolizing the Binding Together of people or objects; Drawing of a flower: Meditation, Inner Wisdom ; Opinions, Culture , Viewpoints , Symbols, Travel , Communication, Respect each other , a Picture of stick people in 'declamation positions' was proffered, Fulfilment; Questions

One: Everyone, Anyone, Each One, No One

Commune, Who is invisible? Genders, bodies, racial hierarchy, neurodiverse etc. Equality, Non-violent communication

Bridges, Collaboration , Representation , Context

Padlet Contributions

What were your responses to the storytelling activity

Was it useful?

Why?

♡ 0 💬 2

Anonymous 5/14/24 4:47PM

I noticed I was very optimistic about the situation, and that we all spoke through the lens of our experiences. There is no right or wrong answer, instead we should listen to the perspectives behind everyone's answer because they are useful.

Anonymous 5/15/24 5:44PM

A great idea with lots of potential for crossing differences through dramatic narrative. Needed more time.

What did you like most?

♡ 0 💬 1

> **Anonymous** 5/14/24 4:46PM
> the parallel with current wars and conflicts (Palestine)

What would have made this better?

♡ 0 💬 1

> **Anonymous** 5/14/24 4:48PM
> a little bit of more time.

Workshop 3 Musical Contributions & Feedback

The audience feedback for the singing sessions was very positive and verbal feedback was offered afterwards, in a manner similar to the feedback for the storytelling. A number of people felt that more sacred singing would have been good to round off the event, as well as requests for longer musical contributions and more of them, from a wider range of different sacred traditions. Comments were made that the "music was a sealant on the event and might calm upset from any difficult discussions in the future". We therefore feel strongly that music belongs in the Faith4Rights toolkit but at present this element has been less refined in terms of how it might operate as a therapeutic means to bring participants together and create a place of calm and reflective contemplation.

The singers themselves were also very enthusiastic about their participation and were keen to contribute again to future events and to remain in contact with each other. All the singers and singing groups were volunteers and meet their own travel expenses as their contribution to an event which they saw was "in a good cause".

Feedback pertaining to the Singing workshop session was mostly reflected via social media comments (see Overall Feedback social media above).

4. Summary of Recommendations for Next Steps

Overall feedback can be organised into the following key points:

- High concern within diverse faith communities about the need for community cohesion and dialogue in the context of wider international conflicts.
- Need to involve more students in planning of events aligned to Faith 4Rights activities,
- Need to involve students in similar conferences but in smaller group settings to facilitate discussion, alongside allocated faith and community leaders
- Create safe spaces to explore areas of greater difficulty and sensitivity than we focused on at this conference: 'Safe Spaces, Difficult Conversations'

- Partnering organisations from event to consider follow on funding applications and events as above.to support Safe and Inclusive Communities in more detail and at wider scope
- Panel 1 follow with faith leaders
- Panel 2 Gap Analysis - communities
- Incorporation of Human Rights articles and toolkit activities from the UN Faith4Rights toolkit into a new university teaching modules
- Collaborate with UN F4R academic networks

With special thanks to all contributors, in particular our volunteers

Volunteering: many BSPC volunteers who were ushers at the event and received no remuneration or travel expenses,

Musical and singing contributions by Dr Vivi Lachs (Birkbeck University) and Dr Alison Kennedy (Christian Chaplain, ARU) and from BSPC courtesy of Safaa Ensemble UK (from the Qadiriya Boutshishiya Tariqa, Birmingham).

Similarly, several ARU arts school lecturers who volunteered to support the development of the artwork installation alongside ARU Masters students, significantly adding to the value of the event and tangible, physical outputs.

And with special acknowledgement

Ms Ellie Benham of the Safe and Inclusive Communities Research, Impact and Innovation Theme,

Ms Sophie Coker Research Assistant/ Administrator, School of Allied Health and Social Care, ARU

Mr AR Eatwel, BSPC Volunteer & Professional photographer and filmmaker: for filming and editing: https://x.com/ar_eatwell/status/923485716830552065

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Press Release

NEWS RELEASE
DATE: 10 MAY 2024
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
ISSUE NUMBER:

UN experts set out importance of 'faith literacy'

ARU hosts discussion event on promoting understanding and respect in times of crisis

During an event in Cambridge, human rights experts from the United Nations (UN) discussed the importance of promoting understanding and respect in times of crisis.

Organized by Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) and Bridging Spiritual Cultures, the "Faith, Rights & Community Building in Times of Crisis" event brought together UN representatives, academics, young

people and charities to take part in panel discussions about building bridges between local communities during a time of rising tensions in the Middle East.

At the heart of the discussion was the UN's Faith for Rights framework, which sets out guidance to Governments, civil society organizations and religious groups on how to allow individual and collective beliefs to flourish through the protection of human rights. It consists of 18 commitments, including standing up for the rights of minorities and publicly denouncing any advocacy of hatred that incites to violence, discrimination or hostility, particularly when it is conducted in the name of religion or belief.

Speakers included Dr Ibrahim Salama, Chief of the Human Rights Treaties Branch at the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), who also leads the UN's Faith for Rights framework. Part of this is through facilitating peer-to-peer learning and enlarging 'faith literacy', which is understanding and respecting other religious or belief perspectives.

Dr Salama said: "I reiterate the High Commissioner Volker Türk's recent call for inclusive faith literacy and a more holistic view of human rights education.
"The Faith for Rights commUNity of practices illustrates many examples that can guide efforts to promote more collaboration between people of different faiths and backgrounds."

Also on the panel was Dr Michael Wiener, who has been working since 2006 at the OHCHR. He was also part of the core team organizing expert workshops that led to the adoption of the Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence. Since 2017, he has been working on the design and implementation of the 18 commitments on Faith for Rights.

Arts-based activities formed part of the day, with professional artists, musicians, photographers and a narrative storyteller working with ARU students, who were supported by their lecturers to contribute to the event through interactive creative sessions. It is hoped the event will unearth new potential research collaborations and inform projects undertaken by ARU and academic partners.

Margaret Greenfields, Professor of Social Policy at Anglia Ruskin University (ARU), said: "We were delighted to welcome expert speakers from the United Nations alongside our network of community, faith and partner academic institutions, as we collaborate to engage with this incredibly important subject.

"Inter-faith conflicts resonate across the world, and it is vital that we work to find the most effective ways to promote tolerance and understanding within and across all communities to promote understanding, dialogue and peace here in the UK and internationally."

Dr Siobhan Bygate, who is a founding member of the Bridging Spiritual Cultures charity and has worked in academia and the heritage and community sectors for over 30 years, co-organized the event.

Dr Bygate, who teaches Politics and International Relations at the University of Hertfordshire, said: "In times of crisis and global insecurity, we need to work hard to maintain and indeed improve our safe and inclusive communities at home. This initiative was all about creating and maintaining the space for challenging conversations within a safe space, ensuring people of all different faiths and no faith, of different ethnicities and diverse affiliations are heard and understood within a mutually kind and caring environment. It is all about building the sinews of peace for the future."

Ends

Notes to Editors

Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) transforms lives through innovative, inclusive and entrepreneurial education and research. ARU is the UK University of the Year (Times Higher Education Awards 2023), holds a gold award for the quality of its education, awarded through the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), and has been named University of the Year at the UK Social Mobility Awards. ARU's research institutes and four faculties bridge scientific, technical and creative fields, delivering impactful research which tackles pressing issues and makes a real difference to our communities. Our academic excellence has been recognized by the UK's Higher Education funding bodies, with 16 of our research areas assessed as world leading.

With main campuses in Cambridge, Chelmsford, Peterborough and Writtle, we are the largest provider in the East of England of undergraduates employed in the health and social work sector, and one of the UK's leading universities for degree apprenticeship provision, working with hundreds of employers across the country.

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Appendix 2 Please see also the attached programme for the event

Appendix 3: Panel 1 Outline: Chaired by Prof Norval

Participants: (Prof Greenfields (ARU); Rabbi Goldberg (Uni Surrey), Dr Thiago Alves Pinto (Oxford Uni), Dr Roula Talhouk, Beirut (St Joseph's Uni Beirut: online), Cambridge Uni Prof Tim Winter, UN (Dr Ibrahim Salama;)

1. Introductions, institutions and areas of professional interest
2. Reflections on Q1. Resonance of UN Faith for HR and how does it assist in present day practices from perspective of universities working on existing university network group.
3. Reflections by panel members not yet on the UN University network (Prof Margaret Greenfields and Prof Tim Winter): for reflections from Anglia Ruskin University & Cambridge University on how other universities might benefit.
4. Reflections by entire panel: Future challenges in HE in this area? Reflections from all of panel
5. UN comment from Dr Ibrahim Salama
6. Discussion: Pros/cons/shortcomings and advantages; where worked well and what might be improved)
7. Q&A with audience (12.45)

Appendix 4: Panel 2 Outline: Chaired by Dr Siobhan Bygate

Participants: Tamara Joseph (Citizens UK), Shaheeda Rahman (Karim Foundation), Dr Jonathan Chaplain

1. Introductions & Experience working with communities in the UK, with a view to exploring Safe and Inclusive Communities with a view to Social Justice and impacts of International Events
2. Reflections on the gap in meeting the challenges you now feel communities are facing in both the above responses (in your respective experiences)
3. Comments on the Faith for Rights Framework as both a representation of the articles raised by the Rabat and Beirut accords and as a pedagogical tool for universities and how useful they may be or not for communities and community working on the ground.
4. Discussion: what can the F4R framework and tool offer us and not offer us in your respective roles professionally or voluntary etc.
5. Discussion: where do you think the gaps still are in ensuring Safe and Inclusive communities in the UK in times of issues of social justice and international events. What Next?
6. Q & A with the audience