

*Organizer:* **UNITED NATIONS ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS  
PAX ROMANA**

**UN ECOSOC Chamber • November 13, 2014 • 3:00-5:30 pm**

**Symposium on the Protection of**

**Religious Minorities**

**Worldwide**

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The concept of non-discrimination lies at the heart of human rights.

There exists a whole range of rights-based international treaties adopted under the auspices of the United Nations that affirm the right to equality and non-discrimination.

The international community now recognizes that it is not sufficient merely to ensure there is no discrimination against minorities. Special measures are essential to protect and promote the rights of minorities, particularly those pertinent to preserving minorities identity and culture. As such, the international community adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National, Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (Minorities Declaration) in 1992 and the subsequent creation of the UN Sub-Commission Working Group on Minorities.

Yet, despite these efforts, discrimination is still rampant. Violence perpetrated against religious minorities is escalating in many parts of the world.

Minorities in many regions of the world continue to face serious threats, discrimination and racism and are frequently excluded from taking part fully in the economic, social, political and cultural life in the countries where they live. Achieving effective participation of minorities and ending their exclusion requires that we embrace diversity through promotion and implementation of international human rights and standards.

Moreover, recent dramatic events involving atrocities committed against religious minorities from Iraq and Nigeria to Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Myanmar have further aggravated the situation. In many places, religious minorities have been forced to flee from their homes and witness the destruction of their places of worship and religious patrimony. The significant escalation in tensions between groups of different beliefs or religions, often resulting in violence, are conducive to a possible risk of genocide or crimes against humanity.

In many cases, hate speech and incitement to hatred have contributed to intolerance and violence against minorities.

States have the primary responsibility to protect their populations by preventing atrocities committed against minorities, including their incitement. Likewise, the International Community has a responsibility to assist States in meeting these responsibilities towards their populations.

In that context, religious leaders have an essential role to play in promoting tolerance and preventing incitement and hate speech.

As such, Interfaith Dialogue initiatives launched in recent years are contributing to mutual knowledge, understanding and respect among communities finding ways to build common ground for more harmonious relations between individuals and communities.

This Symposium organized by the United Nations Alliance of Civilization and Pax Romana while affirming religious pluralism and religious freedom as an inherent human right issue, it aims at discussing means of protecting religious minorities and the role of the international community, national governments, faith-based organizations and religious and political leaders towards that end.

*The event is sponsored by the Permanent Mission of Italy , the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See, The Permanent Mission of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, The Permanent Mission of the Philippines and the Knights of Malta.*

***Event is open to the media.***