



U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom Briefing

Silencing Religious Freedom in Africa: The Impact of Speech Restrictions

Panel



Kirsten Lavery is International Legal Specialist at the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. Prior to joining USCIRF, Ms. Lavery worked at the Public International Law & Policy Group and provided legal and policy assistance to civil society representatives in conflict and post-conflict states. Her work focused on transitional justice and human rights documentation, as well as legal and policy reforms to advance human rights protections. Ms. Lavery has also worked on a range of international legal issues at the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, the UN Office of Human Resources Management, and the International Narcotics Control Board. Ms. Lavery previously practiced law in the New York office of Davis Polk & Wardwell

LLP, where she focused on international criminal investigations.

She holds a B.A. in Government and Spanish from Franklin & Marshall College and a J.D. with a specialization in International & Comparative Law from Tulane University Law School.



Ferdaouis Bagga serves as the Policy Analyst for Africa with the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). Prior to joining USCIRF, Ms. Bagga worked with the U.S. Department of State conducting conflict analysis and research on Libya. Earlier, she worked with the U.S. Institute of Peace for four years, where she supported grants programming in Africa and Latin America, rule of law work in Libya, and a Justice and Security Dialogue Program in the Sahel and Maghreb. She has several years of experience designing and facilitating intergroup dialogues as well coaching in dialogue facilitation in the U.S.

Ms. Bagga has an M.A. in International Peace and Conflict Resolution from American University and a B.A. in Political Science and English from the University of Florida.



Mike Jobbins is Associate Vice President for Global Affairs and Partnerships at Search for Common Ground, the world's largest dedicated peacebuilding organization, with offices and staff in 57 cities around the world. For the past 12 years he has designed, developing and managed conflict resolution, violence prevention, and inclusive governance programs. Mike lead's Search's advocacy and partnerships to U.S. and European governments and partner organizations. Mike was Senior Program Manager for Search's Africa Region, where he led the design and development of programs in 22 countries across the continent, including Search's programs amidst state collapse in South Sudan, responding to violent extremism in the Sahel, responding to the civil conflict in the Central African Republic and the Cote d'Ivoire Elections Crisis.

Prior to joining Search, Mike supported training programs for high-level political leaders in the DRC and Burundi, and Africa policy research at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. Mike holds an MA from Georgetown University and an AB from Harvard University. He is fluent in English and French.



Dunia Tegegn joined Amnesty International as Almami Cyllah Africa Fellow at Amnesty International USA after working as a Human Rights Officer at the East Africa Regional Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Prior to this, she worked as a Program Officer on Ending Violence against Women and Girls at U.N. Women. Dunia has also worked with UNICEF Ethiopia and advised on child protection issues including on intercountry adoption, foster care, and sponsorship.

Dunia is a member of the Pan African Lawyers Union (PALU), the Ethiopian Bar Association and the African Working Group on Sustainable Development (AWG). Dunia holds a Master of Laws in National Security from Georgetown University Law Center and a M.A. in Human Rights from Addis Ababa University. Dunia earned a bachelor's degree in law from Bahir Dar University, Ethiopia.

Moderator



Tony Perkins has served as the president of the Family Research Council (FRC), a public policy organization that provides research and advocacy on issues related to religious freedom, since 2003. Before joining FRC, he was a representative in the Louisiana legislature, to which he was elected in 1996. A veteran of the United States Marine Corps, Perkins began his early career in law enforcement before working as a contractor with the U.S. State Department's Anti-Terrorism Assistance Program, where he oversaw the training of foreign police officers in anti-terrorism techniques.

Perkins is an ordained minister and remains active in ministry, speaking in churches of various denominations and associations in the U.S. and abroad. He has testified before the U.S. Congress on international religious freedom and raised religious freedom concerns with foreign leaders, including King Abdullah II of Jordan and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.

Tony Perkins frequently appears on national news programs and talk shows and has been a guest speaker for numerous organizations. He holds a B.S. degree from Liberty University, a Master of Public Administration from Louisiana State University, and was awarded an honorary doctorate of divinity by Liberty University.