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### TRAINING AT THE FOREIGN SERVICE INSTITUTE RELATED TO THE INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM ACT

#### I. Executive Summary

Under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, the Department of State is tasked with training Foreign Service Officers in human rights broadly and religious freedom specifically. The Department of State's Foreign Service Institute (FSI) works closely with the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) to do so. Training in human rights and religious freedom begins when an officer enters the Foreign Service and continues through various levels and career stages.

FSI and DRL continued to offer Promoting Human Rights and Democracy three times a year. This course featured specific modules dealing with aspects of religious freedom. FSI and DRL also continued to offer a Religion and Foreign Policy course twice a year. Throughout the year DRL and FSI also examined the theme of Religion and Foreign Policy through the lens of other FSI-sponsored political training courses, including: a session in the Gender Equality & Foreign Policy course (PP226) on "Women Religious Leaders and Conflict Prevention," a session in the International Terrorism course (PP521) on "Combating Violent Extremism," and a session in the Partnership in Development and Diplomacy course (PE267) on the "Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review, Civil Society, and International Religious Freedom." During FSI language studies, class reading materials and language learning modules also regularly address the topic of religious freedom and tolerance.

#### II. Courses Offered

##### A. Courses on Human Rights and Religious Freedom

###### **Promoting Human Rights and Democracy**

Offered since October 2010, this course provides a broad overview of human rights-related issues and a deeper examination of key current issues. FSI offers this course three times a year to provide entry- and mid-level officers and locally employed overseas staff tools and best practices for promoting human rights and democracy, including religious freedom, in the field. FSI and DRL jointly developed the curriculum, which includes a session specifically devoted to

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religious freedom, along with other sessions that address issues relevant to religious freedom including human rights law, working with nongovernmental organizations, monitoring and reporting human rights abuses, combating anti-Semitism, and outreach to Muslim communities.

### **Religion and Foreign Policy**

First offered in 2011, the course content continues to be a collaborative effort between FSI, DRL, and the Office of Religion and Global Affairs. The course exposes U.S. officials to common themes appropriate for engaging religious and faith-based communities in the field and teaches best practices for incorporating religious community outreach into broader U.S. foreign policy objectives.

Through a focus on tradecraft skills, the course trains entry- and mid-level officers who will serve in embassies and consulates overseas to use the annual International Religious Freedom Report and other tools to expand outreach to, and strengthen relationships with, members of religious communities. Course topics include: tools for interfaith outreach and dialogue, the relationship between religion and foreign policy, the promotion of religious freedom, religion and national security, engaging religious actors, addressing anti-Semitism and promoting tolerance, vulnerable religious minorities, the role of women in religious communities, U.S. initiatives to prevent and counter violent extremism, and outreach to Muslim communities.

### **B. Additional Training on Human Rights and Religious Freedom at FSI**

DRL works closely with FSI to integrate material on human rights and religious freedom into training at all levels. Officers receive training starting when they enter the Foreign Service and when they prepare for their first consular, political, economic, or public diplomacy tours. Annual FSI training courses for locally employed staff serving in political and combined political/economic sections overseas also include modules on human rights and religious freedom.

DRL and FSI cooperate closely to incorporate information about human rights and religious freedom into geographical area studies courses. DRL officers participate in presenting topics such as international human rights law, including the right to freedom of religion; theological beliefs of different religious groups; state actions against members of religious groups and violations and abuses of religious freedom; involvement of members of religious groups in politics; diplomatic tools used by the United States to promote respect for religious freedom; means of protection for those who have fled religious persecution; and the relationships among religious freedom, democracy, and national security.

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FSI also offers a specific course for those who work or will work with Muslim communities: Islam: Formation, Institutions, Modernity, and Reform. Among other topics, this course addresses inclusion as a way of moderating religiously based political movements. The various area studies courses, which are normally a complement to language training, cover the role of religion, specifics of religious practice, religious sensitivities in various countries, differing ways of thinking about religious identity, the relationship of religion to broader questions of citizenship and enfranchisement, and the link between human rights broadly and religious freedom.

### III. Background Material on Religious Freedom Provided to Students at FSI

DRL continually updates information on the [humanrights.gov](http://www.humanrights.gov) website and material distributed at FSI courses. It also has revamped or created intranet sites containing background materials on religious freedom or highlighting best practices for protecting and promoting religious freedom.

DRL intranet sites, which are available only to Department of State and embassy personnel, provide background on human rights and religious freedom issues, including country-specific information on religious freedom issues, information on the designation of Countries of Particular Concern, and general information on the Office of International Religious Freedom.

The following background materials related to religious freedom are made available to FSI students:

- [www.humanrights.gov](http://www.humanrights.gov) (internet website also available to the public)
- Annual Reports on International Religious Freedom from 1999 through the present
- Department statements on religious freedom, specific to various countries
- Policy statements of the Secretary of State and other U.S. government officials on religious freedom
- Diplopedia, an intranet wiki, that contains an online compendium of posts' engagement with religious entities as a source for best practices in promoting religious freedom
- Highlights from Key International Documents: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (article 18) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (articles 18, 26, & 27).