

# European Parliament Working Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief

**4<sup>th</sup> Newsletter**  
**25<sup>th</sup> November 2013**

## **1. About the EPWG on FoRB**

European Parliament Working Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief (EPWG on FoRB) was founded by a group of like-minded MEPs to promote and protect FoRB in the EU's external actions.

The EPWG has a Bureau made up of two Co-Presidents (Dennis De Jong and Peter Van Dalen) and five other MEPs: László Surján, Gianni Pittella, Pat the Cope Gallagher, Hannu Takkula, Margrete Auken and a secretariat (Alfiaz Vaiya and Marina Zaitsava).

## **2. EPWG on FoRB news**

**EPWG on FoRB report:** The EPWG on FoRB is currently preparing its first report which will focus on freedom of religion or belief in third countries and include recommendations for recommendations for the EU-institutions and Member States on promoting and protecting FoRB. The report will be presented at a conference hosted by the EPWG on FoRB in the European Parliament in February 2014.

**European Parliament annual human rights report:** The European Parliament's annual report on human rights has been recently drafted. The EPWG on FoRB in consultation with various civil society organisations (inter alia, Christian Solidarity Worldwide) tabled numerous amendments to the report which resulted in a detailed section on freedom of religion or belief that highlighted country and thematic concerns. (Amendments are attached to this newsletter). The amendments will be voted on in the relevant European Parliament committees in the coming weeks and then the report should be adopted during the Parliament's plenary session in Strasbourg in December.

**EPWG on FoRB press releases on attacks on Churches in Pakistan and Egypt:** The EPWG on FoRB issued two press releases condemning attacks against Churches in Pakistan and Egypt which left many worshipers dead and injured. The EPWG on FoRB called upon the respective governments to ensure that Christians were protected and be able to practise their faith openly. The press releases can be viewed online:

<http://www.religiousfreedom.eu/parliamentary-work/press-release/>

**EPWG on FoRB Parliamentary questions to VP/HR Catherine Ashton:** EPWG on FoRB Co-President Dennis De Jong tabled parliamentary questions regarding the situation of two Ahmadi Muslims imprisoned in Saudi Arabia and the treatment of minority communities in the Pakistan elections. The Parliamentary questions can be viewed at:

<http://www.religiousfreedom.eu/parliamentary-work/parliamentary-questions-and-resolutions/>

**Meeting with USCIRF:** On 13<sup>th</sup> November 2013, EPWG on FoRB Co-President Dennis de Jong met with a delegation from the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) to discuss current FoRB issues and possibilities of cooperation on promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief.

**Meeting with the Shura Council Members:** On 13<sup>th</sup> November, the EPWG on FoRB hosted an informal meeting with former Christian members of the Shura Council (the upper house of the Egyptian Parliament) in the European Parliament. The visit of the delegation was organised by the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches and the Conference of the European Churches (CEC)



#### **4. Contact us**

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