

# **Advocacy and Human Rights in Mission and Development Work**

Some people argue that working for Christian freedom of religious belief for all and involvement in Christian mission are mutually contradictory errands. This is not true. Securing the right of others does not exclude, but rather presupposes, the right of exercising one's own rights. The question, however, is how do we find the right balance between our own rights and the rights of others. Terror and violence escalate in our contemporary world. Two-thirds of the world's population is experiencing limitations on religious freedom. What is the contribution of the Christian church and Christians in society with regard to this challenge? How is this challenge related to global evangelism?

**Hans A Gravaas** serves as General Secretary of the Stefanus Alliance International in Oslo. This is a Christian missions and human rights organization, with a special focus on freedom of belief and religion as expressed in §18 of the UN Human Rights Declaration. The motto of the organisation is "Together for the persecuted". It provides support, care, and practical help for churches and individuals who are persecuted or oppressed because of their religious beliefs. Gravaas has a PhD in intercultural studies from Trinity International University, and master's degree in theology from Norwegian School of Theology. He has served as a missionary within the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus in Ethiopia, pastor of a Norwegian congregation in Chicago, mission secretary of the Norwegian Lutheran Mission, and president of two different university colleges in Norway: The Gimlekollen School of Journalism and Communication (GSJC) and Fjellhaug International University College (FIUC).

## **I. Introduction**

### **A. How are these connected?**

- **Freedom of Religion or Belief**
- **Christian Mission & Diaconia**
- **Persecution**

### **B. Suffering and Persecution – a part of Christian Discipleship?**

## **II. Persecution and Suffering**

### A. Examples of Restrictions on Religious Freedom

### B. Acceptable and unacceptable resistance

### C. Statistics

### D. Key factors behind persecution

### E. The worst cases

## **III. What is Freedom of Religion or Belief?**

A. Definitions

**IV. How do we get involved in supporting and securing religious freedom or belief?**

A. Areas of involvement

B. Freedom - for Christians only?

C. Evangelism, Mission, Diaconia and Development

D. When does the church get political? When does the church go public?

**V. Examples from the global church**

A. Different challenges and different contexts

**VI. Global changes**

A. A rapidly changing world – local, global or “glocal”?

**VII. Changes in World Christianity and World Mission**

A. New landscapes and new maps?

B. Areas of frustrations and opportunities

**VIII. How social hostilities and government restrictions on religion or belief impact mission strategies**