

Engaging Religious Actors to End Violence Against Women and Girls

Thursday, 22nd October 2026 | 18:00–19:30 CET | English & French with subtitles

Zoom Link: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86479159829?pwd=MEZFTVRiWUxzSkY4Y3hyUE5zZ3JTUT09
Meeting ID: 864 7915 9829 **Password**: 481704

INTRODUCTION:

Violence against women and girls is a profound violation of human dignity and a challenge for every community. Religious and belief actors can help prevent violence when they listen to women, reject interpretations that justify inequality, use their moral authority responsibly, support survivors, and build partnerships with human-rights institutions and civil society. Interreligious and interconvictional dialogue creates a shared space in which harmful norms can be challenged and practical commitments to safety, equality and justice can be strengthened.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- How can religious and belief actors challenge teachings and practices that are used to legitimise violence or discrimination?
- How can feminist and gender-just readings of sacred texts support prevention and social change?
- Which forms of dialogue and partnership can help communities protect women and girls and support survivors?

OPENING AND MODERATION

Gabriele Frey, co-chair of the IRIC Dialogue-Committee, representative of the European Buddhist Union (EBU) and Moderator **Dr. Thea Mohr** (EBU) and trainer in intercultural communication.

- Gabriele Frey and Dr Thea Mohr, members of Sakyadhita the International Association of Buddhist Women and their branches in Germany and France. Sakyadhita's stated aims include supporting Buddhist nuns and laywomen, and promoting gender equality in the areas of education, training, institutional structures and ordination; these are complemented by compassionate social engagement and dialogue with other faiths.
- Building on these principles, they ask how religious communities can make the transition from intention to responsible action, strengthen women's leadership roles, and collaborate across traditions and religions to prevent violence.
- As part of this, they present the work of Sakyadhita Australia in the context of the Australian state of Victoria, which established the 'Royal Commission into Family Violence'. In 2019, the Buddhist Council of Victoria received funding to develop training materials for faith leaders and faith communities.

Coprésidentes : Gabriele Frey | European Buddhist Union | gabriela.frey@free.fr
Lilia Bensedrine | GERFEC | lilia.bensedrine@wanadoo.fr



SPEAKERS:

Dr. Susan Kerr: Head of the Human Rights Department at the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). She has more than twenty years of experience in European public affairs and human rights, including as ODIHR Senior Adviser on Freedom of Religion or Belief. Her work spans dialogue, democracy, religious freedom and international partnerships.
Contribution: Engaging religious and belief actors in dialogue and partnerships, drawing on experience with ODIHR, EPRID and international human rights initiatives.

Rev. Rita Famos: President of the Evangelical Reformed Church of Switzerland since 2021, the first woman to hold this office; President of the Swiss Council of Religions; and, since 2024, Executive President of the Communion of Protestant Churches in Europe. Her work emphasises ecumenical learning, interreligious dialogue, inclusion, peace and social justice.
Contribution: The Council of the CPCE (GEKE) is committed to contributing to the implementation of Council of Europe Resolution 2533 on combating child abuse in European institutions. Rita Famos will outline the key elements of protection strategies and the methods of cooperation between the Protestant churches of Europe in this regard.

Prof. Juan José Tamayo: Professor of Theology and Religious Studies and Director of the Ignacio Ellacuría Chair of Theology and Religious Studies at Carlos III University of Madrid. He founded the progressive John XXIII Association of Theologians and is the author of more than fifty books.

Contribution: Interreligious Dialogue as a Response to Gender-Based Violence. He will address feminist interpretations of sacred texts as a means to dismantle discrimination, challenge practices that may legitimise violence, and foster an egalitarian society.

- *His presentation will be read and commented by Lilia Bensedrine Thabet, co-chair of the IRIC-Dialogue-Committee.*

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