

UNIT IV: THE 1981 UN DECLARATION ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

LESSON 11: EXPLORING THE 1981 UN DECLARATION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF INTOLERANCE AND OF DISCRIMINATION BASED ON RELIGION OR BELIEF

OBJECTIVES:

- To introduce the 1981 UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief (DROB).
- To raise questions about the source of rights linked to freedom of religion or belief.
- To relate the DROB to the human rights framework.

TIME: 50 minutes.

MATERIALS: Copies of Handout 11: Thought, Conscience, Religion and Belief; copies of the DROB.

I. ACTIVITY: DO THEY HAVE THE RIGHT? (20 minutes)

Step 1:

Explain that this activity will survey student attitudes and opinions on the topic of freedom of religion or belief.

- Explain that students will be a “human barometer” of opinion. Designate one corner at the front of the room as the “Completely Agree” point and the opposite as the “Completely Disagree” point.
- Explain that stronger and weaker opinions are anywhere midway between these two poles.
- Indicate that the exact middle point between these two corners indicates “Don’t Know.”
- Explain that when you read about certain opinions and beliefs, everyone should take a position in the room according to whether they think that people have a right to think or act in this way. Students should not speak during this process.
- Clarify that this activity is not about whether they agree with the statement but whether they think people have a right to that belief.

Step 2:

Read a few relevant statements from Handout 11: Thought, Conscience, Religion and Belief, and allow time for students to take a position without speaking. Ask students to observe where classmates are along this spectrum. Then ask individuals at different points in the spectrum to explain their positions. When a

number of different opinions have been heard, allow any students who wish to change positions. Ask a few who changed to explain their change.

Step 3:

When you have read five or six statements, ask students to be seated to discuss this activity.

To the Teacher:

- *Some students will become confused about the meaning of their response to the statement. Reiterate that they are taking a position on whether they think the person has the right to that opinion, NOT on whether they agree with the statement.*
- *Emphasize that there should be no discussion while students take positions.*

II. PRESENTATION: THE 1981 DECLARATION (30 minutes)

Step 1:

Introduce the 1981 UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief (DROB).

- Define a **declaration** and its relation to the body of international human rights law.

To the Teacher: See Appendix A, Part 1, "History and Development of Human Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights", pp. 93-97 for background information on human rights.

Declaration	<i>A document stating agreed upon standards or principles. It is not legally binding. The UN General Assembly often issues influential but legally nonbinding declarations.</i>
--------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

- Explain the relation of international human rights law to regional and national rights documents, (i.e. the human rights framework).

To the Teacher: See Appendix A, Part 2, "An Introduction to Freedom of Religion or Belief", pp. 98-103 for background information on the DROB.

Step 2:

Give students a copy of the Declaration and review its contents.

- Explain that this Declaration contains 8 articles that set out in detail the rights and responsibilities related to freedom of religion or belief:
 - Article 1: Guarantees freedom of religion and belief and prohibits discrimination based on religion or belief.
 - Article 2: Discrimination is defined as "any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on religion or belief."
 - Article 3: This kind of discrimination is described as an "affront to human dignity and a disavowal of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations" as well as a violation of human rights.

- Article 4: Governments have the responsibility to prevent and eliminate discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief, including changing any discriminatory laws.
- Article 5: Parents have the right to “organize the life within the family and educate their children in accordance with their religion or belief.”
- Article 6: Details specific freedoms included in the Declaration:
 - To worship or assemble and to establish places for this purpose.
 - To establish charitable or humanitarian institutions.
 - To make and use articles and materials related to rites or customs.
 - To write and disseminate publications.
 - To teach religion or belief.
 - To train and choose leaders.
 - To observe holidays and ceremonies.
 - To communicate with others nationally or internationally.
- Article 7: Asserts that the rights in the Declaration should be reflected in national laws.
- Article 8: Nothing in the Declaration should be understood as restricting or negating any rights in the Universal Declaration or the international covenants on human rights.

Step 3:

Explain that the next five lessons will closely examine Article 1 of the 1981 UN Declaration and how it relates to their lives and their roles as citizens. Show Article 1 on a poster or the blackboard and read it aloud.

1. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have a religion or whatever belief of his [or her] choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his [or her] religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.

2. No one shall be subject to coercion, which would impair his [or her] freedom to have a religion or belief of his [or her] choice.

3. Freedom to manifest one's religion or belief may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

*Article 1
1981 UN Declaration (DROB)*

To the Teacher:

- *The degree of detail used in this introduction should be determined by the experience and information of the class.*
- *This lesson might be followed up by assigning as homework one of the community surveys found in Lesson 17, “Assessing Freedom of Religion or Belief in Your Community”, pp.64-70.*

HANDOUT 11

THOUGHT, CONSCIENCE, RELIGION, AND BELIEF

To the Teacher: *Select a few of these statements or create others like them for students to respond to.*

1. I never eat the flesh of animals. I think they have souls just like human beings. I think butcher shops should be forbidden. My friends and I take every opportunity to threaten butchers and vandalize slaughterhouses and butcher shops, hoping to put them out of business. We've even burned down a few.
2. I don't believe in any kind of god. I think this life is all there is: we are born, we die, and that's it.
3. Very few people recognize this fact, but aliens from another world are systematically infiltrating the earth. They look like us and act like us, but they are secretly part of a plot to enslave the human race and invade our planet.
4. My religion worships the only true god. Those who do not recognize this truth will ultimately be damned to hell. I don't want to have anything to do with such people and avoid them whenever possible.
5. My parents are very conservative and raised me very strictly in their religious beliefs. However, I no longer believe as they do and have recently joined a group that practices a wonderful new religion. Although my parents are furious and the whole community has rejected me, I am fifteen and old enough to choose my own religion.
6. Frankly I worship the devil. You can't have good without evil.
7. I am opposed to violence and oppose all forms of war. I would never serve in the military, no matter what.
8. More than 90% of the people in my community belong to the same religion. When a teacher was appointed to our school who did not share our religion, we protested. We didn't want somebody who didn't share our values teaching our children. We finally got her fired.
9. Back in my old country, everybody understood that you sacrifice certain animals on certain occasions. However, here people think it's weird that we slaughter chickens and goats in our backyard. Last month a neighbor called the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, saying we were murdering innocent chickens. How do they think their chickens get to their

dinner tables? The only difference is we offer ours to the gods before we eat them.

10. When I joined the commune, the guru asked me to sign over ownership of my house and car. I did so willingly as proof of my faith and obedience. The commune takes care of all my material needs anyway.
11. Private property is one of the main sources of suffering in the world, with the rich trying to get more at the expense of the poor. And government is simply the tool of the wealthy. The less government, the better. I believe the only source for real order is anarchy. I refuse to vote or pay taxes.
12. Smoking this herb is an ancient rite in our religion. Yes, you become intoxicated, but not for recreation. The drug helps you to open yourself to the gods. Members of our religion should be allowed to use this drug in our rituals.
13. We know the Holy Book is the word of God. I don't want my children to be taught things that contradict the Holy Book or to read books that portray behaviors that violate my values. And I don't want the TV or radio to bring immoral images and language into my home. There ought to be much stronger control of these things: God-fearing people shouldn't have to be exposed to such offensive material.

UNIT IV: THE 1981 UN DECLARATION ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

LESSON 12: HUMAN RIGHTS DEFINITIONS AND INTERDEPENDENCE

OBJECTIVES:

- To clarify the meanings of **thought, conscience, religion, and belief**.
- To show the **interdependence** between freedom of religion or belief and other human rights.

TIME: 50 minutes.

MATERIALS: Handout 12: The Interdependence of Human Rights; copies of the UDHR.

I. INTRODUCTION (2 minutes)

Step 1:

Explain that this lesson will help to clarify the language used in the 1981 UN Declaration (DROB) and think more clearly about how freedom of religion or belief relates to other human rights.

Step 2:

Show the class a poster with DROB Article 1, Paragraph 1 or write it on the board. Read it aloud to the class.

Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have a religion or whatever belief of his [or her] choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his [or her] religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.

Article 1.1
1981 UN Declaration (DROB)

II. ACTIVITY: DEFINING TERMS (5 minutes)

Step 1:

Ask students to brainstorm definitions for the words **thought, conscience, religion, and belief**.

- After each suggested definition, ask for an illustrative example. You may wish to include dictionary definitions of these terms.
- Record responses on a chart like that below.

THOUGHT	CONSCIENCE	RELIGION	BELIEF

Step 2:

Ask students to consolidate the suggestions into a working definition of the words **thought**, **conscience**, **religion**, and **belief** to be used throughout this unit.

- Record these definitions on chart paper and post in the classroom.

Step 3:

Encourage reflection on the significant differences between these terms.

- Ask why the drafters of the Declaration chose to use all these terms rather than any single one of them.
- What important areas would have been omitted if only one of these terms had been used?

To the Teacher:

- *Where appropriate, lead the discussion to the relationship between conscientiously held belief and action based on those beliefs.*
- *You may wish to challenge students' definitions by asking them to put the terms **thought**, **conscience**, **religion**, and **belief** in the context of terms such as ethics, values, culture, cult, etc.*

III. PRESENTATION: GETTING THE WORDS RIGHT (3 minutes)

Step 1:

Point out that the terms **thought** and **conscience** refer to internal activities that could be unspoken, although one might take action on the basis of thought or conscience. However, **religion** and **belief** refer to activities that are usually expressed and might result in such actions as observance, practice, teaching, or assembly.

Step 2:

Reiterate the explanation that in the context of freedom of religion or belief, "belief" includes **theistic**, **atheistic**, **non-theistic**, and **agnostic** beliefs. Correct the chart generated in the activity Defining Terms if other beliefs were listed there.

IV. ACTIVITY: THE INTERDEPENDENCE OF HUMAN RIGHTS (30 minutes)

To the Teacher:

- *You may wish to assign each related right to a small group, which then reports to the whole class on its discussion.*
- *This activity could also be assigned as homework, with individual students writing out their opinions.*

Step 1:

Explain that all human rights are **interdependent, indivisible, and inalienable**, defining and giving examples of these terms.

Interdependent Refers to the complementary framework of human rights law. For example, your ability to participate in your government is directly affected by your right to express yourself, to get an education, and even to obtain the necessities of life.

Indivisible Refers to the equal importance of each human rights law. A person cannot be denied a law because someone decides it is "less important" or "non-essential."

Inalienable Refers to rights that belong to every person and cannot be taken from a person under any circumstances.

Step 2:

Give out copies of Handout 12: The Interdependence of Human Rights. Ask students to consider how the concept of freedom of thought, conscience, religion, and belief is linked to other rights and freedoms.

Step 3:

Ask students to report their ideas about the interdependence of the right to religion or belief to other human rights.

Alternative Method: Omit the documents listed after each right in Handout 12. Instead ask students to locate the relevant article in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

V. DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

Conclude the lesson with a discussion of the principle of the interdependence of rights.

- Ask students to explain in their own words how rights are interdependent.
- What would happen if a government could decide that some rights were more important than others or eliminate those rights it found "inconvenient"?

HANDOUT 12

THE INTERDEPENDENCE OF HUMAN RIGHTS

How is freedom of religion or belief related to these other human rights?

1. To the right to form and express opinions?
(e.g., the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** (UDHR) Article 19, the **Convention on the Rights of the Child** (CRC) Article 12).
 - Do people have the right to express everything they think? Why or why not?
 - What about **hate speech** or other acts that violate the rights of others?
2. To the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds?
(e.g., CRC Articles 19 & 13).
3. To the right to education?
(e.g., UDHR Article 26, CRC Articles 28 & 29).
4. To the right to privacy, implying that people cannot be forced to reveal their thoughts?
(e.g., UDHR Article 12, CRC Article 16).
5. To the right to assembly and association?
(e.g., UDHR Article 20, CRC Article 15).

UNIT IV: THE 1981 UN DECLARATION ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

**LESSON 13:
WORSHIP, OBSERVANCE, PRACTICE, AND TEACHING**

OBJECTIVE:

- To understand the importance of manifestations of religion or belief.

TIME: 50 minutes.

MATERIALS: Chart paper and markers or blackboard and chalk.

I. INTRODUCTION (5 minutes)

Remind students of the final sentence of Article 1, Paragraph 1, of the 1981 UN Declaration by reading it aloud (perhaps reshaping the chart with the whole article or writing it on the board).

This right shall include freedom... either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his [or her] religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.

Article 1.1

1981 UN Declaration on Freedom of Religion or Belief

II. ACTIVITY: WORSHIP, OBSERVANCE, PRACTICE AND TEACHING (30 minutes)

Step 1:
Ask students to define the words *worship*, *observance*, *practice*, and *teaching* as they relate to religion or belief. Help them differentiate between these terms.

Step 2:
Ask for some illustrative examples from their community of each word. List responses on a chart like that below. This step might be done with the whole class or with students working in small groups.

WORSHIP	OBSERVANCE	PRACTICE	TEACHING

Step 3:
Discuss the different examples of how people manifest their religion or belief, (i.e. worship, observance, practice, and teaching).

- How is each of these manifestations relevant to their respective religions and beliefs?

- Are the manifestations mentioned equally acceptable to the local community?
- Are there ways of manifesting religion or belief that are or might be unpopular or unacceptable to their community?
- Are there ways of manifesting religion or belief that are in conflict with other human rights? How are these conflicts usually resolved? Are there other or better ways to resolve them?

III. DISCUSSION: THE IMPORTANCE OF MANIFESTING RELIGION OR BELIEF (15 minutes)

Step 1:

Discuss why the right to *manifest ... religion or belief in worship, observance, practice, and teaching* is important to the freedom of religion and belief.

Step 2:

Remind students of the indivisibility and interdependence of rights examined in Lesson 11, “Exploring the 1981 UN Declaration (DROB)”, pp. 41-45. How is manifesting religion or belief also interrelated to other rights:

- To the right to form and express opinions?
- To the freedom to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas of all kinds?
- To the right to education?
- To the right to privacy, implying that people cannot be forced to reveal their thoughts?
- To the right to assembly and association?

Step 3:

Remind students of the content of Article 6 of the 1981 UN Declaration (See Appendix E, Part 2, “1981 UN Declaration on the Elimination of all Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief – Full Text”, pp. 127-128), which although not featured in any other lesson, enumerates rights directly related to manifesting religion or belief:

- To worship or assemble and to establish places for this purpose.
- To establish charitable or humanitarian institutions.
- To make and use articles and materials related to rites or customs.
- To write and disseminate publications.
- To teach about religion or belief.
- To train and choose leaders.
- To observe holidays and ceremonies.
- To communicate with others nationally or internationally.

How are these actions related to worship, observance, practice, or teaching?

Step 4:

Worship does not apply to non-religious belief systems. How do **atheists** or **agnostics** observe, practice, and teach their belief?

UNIT IV: THE 1981 UN DECLARATION ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

LESSON 14: CONFLICTS REGARDING WORSHIP, OBSERVANCE, PRACTICE, AND TEACHING

OBJECTIVES:

- To explore conflicting rights related to religion or belief.
- To review the international human rights framework and/or the UDHR.

TIME: 50 minutes.**MATERIALS:** Handout 14: Conflicts Between Religious Practice and Civil Law and Local Customs.

I. INTRODUCTION (10 minutes)

Step 1:

Remind students of the examples of worship, observance, practice, and teaching from Lesson 13, “Worship, Observance, Practice, and Teaching”, p. 50, (possibly reintroduce the chart created of local examples).

Step 2:

Discuss how worship, observance, practice, and teaching can sometimes conflict with local laws or customs.

- Ask students if any of the examples they offered conflict with local law or customs.
- Ask for examples of worship, observance, practice, and teaching from other communities and countries that would conflict with local laws or customs.

Step 3:

Remind students of Lesson 11, “Exploring the 1981 UN Declaration”, pp. 41-45, where they had to decide whether people had a right to certain practices.

Step 4:

Explain that this lesson concerns such conflicts and ways the 1981 Declaration might be used to resolve them.

II. ACTIVITY: STUDY EXERCISE (25 minutes)

Step 1:

Divide class into small groups and give each a case study. Groups should consider the following questions:

- In what way does worship, observance, practice, and teaching conflict with local laws or customs?
- What human rights are involved in the case on both sides?
- How does Article 1 of the 1981 Declaration (DROB) help to understand the rights involved in the case?

- How would this group resolve the conflict between Article 1 of the 1981 Declaration (DROB) and other laws and customs?

Step 2:

Ask a reporter from each group to describe their case and report on the group's conclusions.

III. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION: THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS (15 minutes)

To the Teacher: See Appendix A, Part 1: "History and Development of Human Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights", pp. 93-97, for more background information.

Step 1:

Ask students what these case studies reveal about the kinds of issues that cause conflict over religion or belief.

Step 2:

Explain that the international human rights framework offers agreed-upon rules for resolving conflicts over religion or belief. For example:

- Human rights conventions like the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)** and the **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)** forbid discrimination based on religion or belief. Many conventions provide a means for countries and/or individuals to bring complaints of violations before the commissions that oversee how countries comply with the obligations of treaties they have ratified.
- Of particular importance to young people, the **Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)** grants the child freedom of thought, conscience, and belief (Article 14) and the right to an education that respects the child's values and those of others and prepares him or her to live with understanding and tolerance toward all religious groups (Article 29).
- The UN sometimes appoints a **Special Rapporteur** to investigate, gather information, and report on certain human rights issues. The Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief has the responsibility to study and report on important violations to the **UN Commission on Human Rights**

Step 3:

Discuss the importance of international standards for dealing with freedom of religion and belief issues.

- Why do such cases arouse such strong emotion? Ask for some examples from recent events.
- How can international law help to defuse religious conflict?
- Why does the increasing contemporary movement and mixing of diverse populations in the world make the 1981 Declaration more important?

HANDOUT 14

CONFLICTS BETWEEN RELIGIOUS PRACTICES AND CIVIL LAWS AND LOCAL CUSTOMS

The following case studies have been adapted from real situations. For further cases see these websites:

<http://www.iarf.net/GlobalIssues/Updates/updateshome.htm>

<http://www.hrwf.net/>

<http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/ENGASA410012001>

COUNTRY A: Crowds Protest New Law Limiting Religious Organizations

Island Z is an autonomous territory off the mainland of Country A, which has a “protectorate” over it, dominates events there, and ultimately hopes to absorb it as part of the country.

Recently some half a million people on Island Z took to the streets to protest against a proposed new law that would have, among other effects, threatened the territory's freedom of religion, as well as freedom of speech, press, and assembly. The new law would allow the government of Island Z to bar or close down any organizations on the island that are banned by the government of Country A. This provision would have negatively affected organizations like “non-approved” churches and spiritual movements and, overall, would have “set the clock back” on religious freedoms.

Furthermore protestors believe the new law undermines Island Z’s autonomy by ensuring that its laws conform to the tougher measures of Country A. As a result of the protests, passage of the law was delayed in parliament for “further study.”

The UN Commission on International Religious Freedom found particularly troubling the draft bill's provision that would give the government the right to approve or disapprove religious organizations on grounds of national security.

COUNTRY B: Crucifixes Banned in Public Schools

After a judge ruled that a school should remove crosses from its walls, government ministers and religious leaders of Country B lined up last Sunday to defend the presence of crucifixes in the country's classrooms. Acting on a complaint from Mr. S, a Muslim activist who did not want his two children to see crucifixes at their primary school, a court in the capital city said the symbols had to go. The judge wrote that the crucifixes "show the state's unequivocal will to place Catholicism at the center of the universe... in public schools, without the slightest regard for the role of other religions in human development."

The ruling caused fury among religious authorities and many politicians in a country that has officially split church from state but remains deeply attached to its Roman Catholic roots. "This is an outrageous decision that should be overturned as quickly as possible. It is unacceptable that one judge should cancel out millennia of history," said Labor Minister Mr. M. Justice Minister Mrs. T said she would order an inquiry into whether the decision conformed with the law of Country B, threatening sanctions if it did not. Two laws stating that schools must display crucifixes date from the 1920s, when Country B was a monarchy, and are still technically in effect. But since 1984, when Roman Catholicism ceased being state religion, the laws have not been strictly enforced. Some teachers have removed crucifixes from school walls while many others have left them.

"How can anyone order the removal from classrooms of a symbol of the basic values of our country?" said Cardinal E. Mr. S, whose complaint about crucifixes launched the court case, defended the ruling. "I have no fight with the crucifix... I have simply been granted a constitutional right that religious symbols should not be on display in the classroom where my children study." Some left-leaning union leaders voiced support, saying the removal of crucifixes from schools would help integrate children of other faiths and fight discrimination. "It is a brave and modern decision," said Mr. Q, a powerful union leader.

It is not the first time the issue of crucifixes in schools has caused controversy. Last year, Education Minister Mr. W proposed that it should be obligatory to display crucifixes in classrooms, public offices and train stations. Jewish and Muslim leaders expressed horror at the proposals, which have not been approved.

COUNTRY C: Five Buddhists Sentenced

Amnesty International is concerned by the recent arrest and detention of members of the Sanga Buddhist Temple for the peaceful expression of their religious beliefs. This report provides details concerning the trial and imprisonment of five temple members in September 2000 as well as information on other Sanga Buddhists believed to be in detention. Their convictions illustrate the continuing repression of non-official religious groups in Country C and are in flagrant contradiction to the government of Country C 's assertion of freedom of religion. As a state party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Country C has the responsibility to uphold freedom of religious belief and worship as enshrined in Article 18, as well as guarantees for freedom of expression contained in Country C's Constitution.

Five members of the Sanga Buddhist temple were given prison sentences on 26 September 2000. In a trial that only lasted one day and was not open to the public, each member was sentenced to 1-3 year's imprisonment. It is reported that clashes occurred between police and other Sanga followers as court proceedings began, with unconfirmed reports of further arrests made at the time. Those on trial were accused of "defaming the government and abusing democracy" according to a Foreign Ministry spokesperson. Four of the five detained had previously denounced the provincial authorities and called for an investigation into allegations of abuses of State power in a letter that they co-signed addressed to the Central Government.

Amnesty International believes that the defendants have been accused under vaguely worded articles of the penal code of Country C, which may be used to impose severe penalties and criminalize peaceful religious activity. Amnesty International's findings concur with the recent report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief who concluded that "these extremely vague provisions make it possible to punish manifestations of freedom of religion or belief that are in conformity with international law".

Amnesty International believes that those arrested are prisoners of conscience, detained solely for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and religion, and is calling for their immediate and unconditional release.

COUNTRY D: "Mob" Banned from Worshipping

In the latest incident in a spate of moves against unregistered churches across Country D, police lieutenant K banned members of an unregistered church in the town of N from meeting for worship. The ban came after Lt. K confiscated religious books being distributed by church member Mr. N at a mobile street library in the town. Lt. K - an officer of the anti-terrorism department of the Internal Affairs administration - failed to draw up any record of the confiscation of the books, church members complained. He also threatened to bring a criminal prosecution against Mr. N.

Lt. K said the church members' account was "only partly" true. "This is not a church at all, just a religious mob," he said. "Under the laws of Country D a church is not allowed to operate without registration, but these people refuse to register." The Council of Independent Churches, to which the congregation belongs, believes that registration is unacceptable because it leads to unwarranted state interference in the life of the church.

When church leaders pointed out that Country D is a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which guarantees the right to meet freely for religious worship, and that according to Article 2 of the country's law on religion "if rules are set out in an international agreement signed by Country D which differ from those contained in the national law, then the rules of the international agreement will take precedence." Lt. K responded that this was a problem for the Internal Affairs Ministry, not for rank-and-file officers: "You will agree that it would be simply ridiculous for police officials to start checking whether articles of the criminal and administrative codes contradicted international agreements to which Country D is a signatory," Lt. K also denied that he had confiscated the books from Mr. N. "He said he was giving them away for free, so I simply took them away to read them," Lt. K claimed. "I'm very interested in these books."

Congregations of the Council of Independent Churches split from the National Council of Churches in 1961, when further state-sponsored controls were introduced by the leadership. It has refused state registration ever since. According to a spokesperson, it has 3,705 congregations throughout the country. Country D has recently seen a spate of attempts to close down unregistered churches.

In a recent report the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief condemned the growing use of laws making registration compulsory to restrict the right of believers to meet freely for worship.

COUNTRY E: Church Attacked for Disturbing Neighbors

Tensions within a neighborhood in the capital city of Country E, have eased in the wake of two recent attacks on a religious congregation after some residents raised angry complaints that music and praise during the congregation's late night programs kept them awake.

According to congregation leader, Mr. G, the first signs of difficulty surfaced during a monthly prayer vigil held from 10 PM. to 6 AM. About 60 members of the congregation meet on the first Friday of each month, starting their vigil with singing outside the building where it is cooler. After midnight they move inside. A woman living in an adjacent house came and said they were preventing the neighborhood from sleeping. According to Mr. G, she said she would raise the issue with the community and threatened to burn down the meeting house. At the next prayer vigil two weeks later, she returned to the church and, calling the believers "undisciplined," repeated her threat to set the building ablaze. She then started to enlist neighborhood backing with a petition against the congregation, which was eventually signed by 54 families.

The first violent attack on the church took place two days later, during the first of a series of weekend praise concerts during the month of August held from 5 to 8 PM. At about 7:30 as a band was playing just outside the meeting house, a group of about 50 young people started throwing stones at members of the congregation, Mr. G said. Two women aged 16 and 45 were hurt. When the violence started, Mr. G went to the nearby police station, but he was told there were no available officers to send.

The next day Mr. G lodged an official complaint against the woman as the "main instigator" of the attack. At the next praise concert the following weekend, a group of young men burst into the church grounds around 7:30 PM, tearing down part of a fence. Sticks and stones rained down from adjacent buildings, smashing a windowpane and sending people running for cover. An 11-year-old boy was hit with a stone on the forehead, went into a coma for about 30 minutes and was hospitalized for three days. Congregation members retained medical certificates as proof of the injuries. After Mr. G again went to the police station, a police van arrived at the scene and identified some of the young people involved in the attack. Two of them were arrested and spent the night in jail.

Sources close to the congregation pointed out that these incidents were not the result of religious tensions in this historically tolerant society, but rather an issue of sound systems, drums and neighbors who thought the praise music was simply too loud. "If they would come to us and tell us that our program of prayer vigils prevents them from sleeping, we would find a solution. We are here for peace. But it is necessary that the people ... recognize the right of worship and the Constitution of Country E which guarantees freedom of religion," Mr. G said.

Many religious organizations in Country E have expressed their support for the congregation. Some 60 percent of those attending the church, which has been in the neighborhood for several years, are immigrants from other countries. "It's a problem of cohabitation," said Bishop F, national president of the Council of Churches in Country E. "For the moment it is important to calm the spirits within the community and continue to look to reconcile and find solutions." He noted that relations with many community members involved in the incidents have already improved, and that the congregation has temporarily suspended its monthly all-night prayer meetings.

Over 90 percent of the population of Country E is estimated to belong to the state religion; nevertheless, the small minority or other religions enjoys religious liberty as guaranteed by Country E's constitution. In reporting the August 17 incident, the local newspaper noted: "Religious minorities have never been the object of a sentiment of hate. Being in the majority does not mean denying others the right to exist and to express themselves."

UNIT IV: THE 1981 UN DECLARATION ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

LESSON 15: COERCION IN RELIGION OR BELIEF

OBJECTIVE:

- To understand how coercion affects freedom of religion or belief.

TIME: 50 minutes - variable, depending on number of participants and time allowed for preparation of plays.

MATERIALS: Chart paper and markers or blackboard and chalk.

I. INTRODUCTION (2 minutes)

Remind students of Article 1, Paragraph 2 of the 1981 Declaration (DROB) by reading it aloud (perhaps reshoving the chart with the whole article or writing it on the board).

No one shall be subject to coercion, which would impair his [or her] freedom to have a religion or belief of his [or her] choice.

Article 1.2

1981 UN Declaration on Freedom of Religion or Belief

II. DISCUSSION: UNDERSTANDING COERCION (10 minutes)

Step 1:

Ask students to give some examples of “*coercion, which would impair one’s freedom to have a religion or belief of one’s choice.*”

- From the national government.
- From community institutions (e.g., schools, religious institutions, political parties).
- From family and friends.

Step 2:

Ask students to give some examples from history, either national or international, of such coercion.

Step 3:

What is the difference between **coercion** and **influence**?

Step 4:

What are some forms that “coercion” can take? Which are more obvious (e.g., physical persecution, imprisonment, fines, and exclusion)? Which are most

subtle (e.g., financial and other benefits, political participation, discrimination in housing, education, employment, cultural and social situations)? How could members of a majority religion or belief use coercion in some of these ways against members of a minority religion or belief?

Step 5:

Ask students what the word “**proselytizing**” means to them. Ask them for examples of religious proselytizing. Are there kinds of “aggressive proselytizing” that could seem to be “coercion”?

III. ACTIVITY: DRAMATIZING COERCION (variable time)

Step 1:

Divide students into small groups. Give each group these instructions.

1. Choose an example of coercion that impairs freedom of religion or belief. This could be historical or contemporary, real or imaginary.
2. Develop a short play that illustrates this coercion. Try to show how the coercion limits freedom of religion or belief.

Step 2:

Ask each group in turn to present their short play. Stop the action at critical moments and ask some of the actors questions that reveal their motivation or point of view. For example:

- “How would your character be feeling at this moment?”
- “Why do you think she/he feels so strongly?”
- “What does your character think of the other characters?”

Step 3:

After each group presents its play, ask small groups to go back and revise the play. This time, someone in the play should oppose the coercion on the grounds that everyone has a right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. The spokesperson could be someone in the original play or a new character.

Step 4:

Ask a few groups to show their revised plays.

IV. DISCUSSION: RESPONDING TO COERCION (13 minutes)

Ask the class what can be done about religious coercion.

- Is it different from religious persecution?
- Do people have a responsibility to take action when they see someone else being coerced?
- What kinds of actions are possible? Reasonable? Effective?

UNIT IV: THE 1981 UN DECLARATION ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

**LESSON 16:
LIMITS TO FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF**

OBJECTIVES:

- To understand the limitations to freedom of religion or belief.
- To become aware of the difficulties in defining limitations and their possible misuse.

TIME: 50 minutes.

MATERIALS: Handout 11, originally used in Lesson 11, “Exploring the 1981 UN Declaration on the Elimination of all Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief”, pp. 44-45.

I. INTRODUCTION (3 minutes)

Remind students of the final section of Article 1, Paragraph 3 of the 1981 Declaration (DROB) by reading it aloud (perhaps reshowing the chart with the whole article or writing it on the board).

Freedom to manifest one's religion or belief may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

*Article 1.3
1981 UN Declaration (DROB)*

II. DISCUSSION: UNDERSTANDING LIMITATIONS (15 minutes)

To the Teacher: You may wish to return to this topic and chart of limitations in Unit V where freedom of religion or belief in the home community is assessed.

Step 1:
Review the specific limitations mentioned in Paragraph 3 (i.e., to protect public safety, order, health or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others). Ask for examples of what might be included by these phrases and why. Record examples on a chart like that below.

Prescribed by Law	Necessary to Protect Public Safety	Necessary to Protect Health	Necessary to Protect Morals	Necessary to Protect Rights of Others

Step 2:

Ask students if any such limitations exist in their community. Star these suggestions on the chart.

Step 3:

Discuss:

- Do these limitations seem justified?
- Could these limitations be used by a state to limit freedom of religion or belief? How?
- Can you think of other rights that have to be limited for similar reasons?
- How can conflict of rights be resolved?

**II. ACTIVITY: LIMITING FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF
(20 minutes)****Step 1:**

Divide class into small groups. Give each group a copy of Handout 11: Thought, Conscience, Religion, and Belief (originally used in Lesson 11, "Exploring the 1981 UN Declaration on the Elimination of all Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief", pp. 44-45). Ask each group to review the belief statements on Handout 11 and decide if this religion or belief might be limited under Paragraph 3.

Step 2:

Take each statement in turn and ask for a show of hands: how many would limit this religion or belief and how many would not? Ask for justification of each position.

IV. PRESENTATION: RIGHTS IN CONFLICT (12 minutes)

Conclude the lesson by pointing out the difference of opinion that has occurred in this class. Point out that rights are often in conflict and the human rights framework does not provide guidelines for how to resolve them.

- What are some ways that conflicts about rights can be resolved?