

2026 YOUNG SCHOLARS FELLOWSHIP ON RELIGION AND THE RULE OF LAW

Sponsored by the International Center for Law and Religion Studies,
J. Reuben Clark Law School, Brigham Young University

Held at Christ Church | University of Oxford | 13 - 31 July 2026



Mohammed Dejen Assen is an assistant professor in the College of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities, Addis Ababa University. Among his research interests are the interaction between law and religion/secularism, freedom of religion and human rights, federalism, minority rights, politics and governance in Africa, ethnicity and identity politics in Ethiopia, and youth unemployment and youth-government interactions in Ethiopia and Africa. Assen holds a PhD from Addis Ababa University. He has been a guest researcher at the University of Leiden's African Studies Center (the Netherlands 2012, 2018), has published journal articles and book chapters on diverse issues, and has served as a consultant for government and nongovernmental organizations in Ethiopia.

Bholenath is a lecturer of public international law, international humanitarian law, and international human rights law at the American University of Central Asia's Faculty of Law (Kyrgyzstan). He holds an advanced master's degree in public international law from Leiden University (the Netherlands) and a postgraduate diploma in international humanitarian law from NALSAR University of Law (India). His research focuses on the intersection of religion and international law, exploring theological challenges to international human rights frameworks and examining the normative authority of international laws over religious laws. Alongside his teaching and research responsibilities, he has extensive experience coaching teams for international law moot court competitions, such as Jessup and Telders.



Sara Cury serves as coordinator of the Legal Advisory Office at the Brazilian Center of Studies in Law and Religion (CEDIRE), where she contributes to the provision of legal guidance on freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) and institutional rights. Since joining CEDIRE in 2019, her work has focused on advancing the practical implementation of FoRB in Brazil through capacity-building programs, academic publications, and collaborative projects with international partners, particularly through training initiatives and the development of educational and normative materials for legal professionals, policymakers, and broader civil society. She is also associated with the Lusophone Alliance for Freedom of Religion or Belief (ALLIR). Cury is a final-year master's student in law at the Federal University of Uberlândia (UFU) and holds a postgraduate degree from PUC/RS. Her research focuses on FoRB, particularly its legal limits in domestic and comparative law.

Florian Kim P. Dayag is a member of the Philippine Bar and currently serves as chief of staff and law clerk to Associate Justice Apolinario D. Bruselas, Jr., at the Court of Appeals of the Philippines. Parallel to his judicial work, he is a senior lecturer at the University of the Philippines, holding dual appointments in the College of Law and the Virata School of Business. He is also a faculty member at the Philippine Law School and the University of Negros Occidental-Recoletos. A professional fellow of the US Department of State's Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative, his research focuses on constitutional law, with emphasis on the judiciary as an institution and on human rights law, specifically regarding the intersection of religious freedom and secular regulation.





Odserjmaa Dorjgotov currently serves as a legal coordinator for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and Deseret International Charities in Mongolia, supporting legal matters and community initiatives. She holds a Master of Laws (LLM) from Ikh Zasag International University, a Master of Public Administration (MPA) certificate from the Marriott School of Business, Brigham Young University, and degrees from Brigham Young University–Hawaii and Ikh Zasag International University. Her work focuses on leading and supporting collaborative and sustainable projects in interfaith dialogue, healthcare, education, environmental protection, and humanitarian development.

Fadi R. Hachem is an international human rights lawyer, researcher, and peacebuilding specialist focusing on freedom of religion or belief, human rights law, conflict mediation, and religion in public life across the SWANA region. He currently serves as senior advisor on human rights and FoRB at Adyan Foundation and as a member of the council of experts under the Article 18 Alliance (IRFBA). Additionally, his work includes consulting and leading programs for local and international organizations, UN agencies, international bodies, and government structures on human rights policy. Hachem is founder and current expert member of Lebanon's National Working Group on FoRB in Lebanon. He is also a lecturer at the Lebanese American University and Université Saint-Joseph on international law and human rights. He researches the interplay of religion, law, and human rights, focusing in his PhD work on issues such as universality and religious relativism of human rights.



Hassan Mustafa Hussein teaches EU law at the British International University and comparative constitutional law at Soran University in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. He holds a PhD in public law, specializing in political philosophy of the constitution, and pursued a portion of his doctoral studies in law and politics at Sciences Po Grenoble (France). He is an advocate of democratic constitutionalism and human dignity in the Kurdistan Region. His research focuses on the philosophy of law, constitutionalism, comparative constitutional law, human dignity, rule of law, and related fields. His several academic and institutional roles include associate editor of the *Constitutional Studies Journal* (USA), constitutional scholar advisor at the International Constitution Center (Switzerland), and executive board member of the Kurdistan Center for International Law (KCIL).

Sania Ismailee is an assistant professor at the School of Law, BML Munjal University, teaching philosophy and social sciences. Her research is at the intersection of political philosophy, law, and religion. Ismailee earned a PhD from Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, focusing on India's Uniform Civil Code (UCC) debate. She has a master's in philosophy from Jawaharlal Nehru University and a bachelor's (Hons.) in philosophy from Hindu College, University of Delhi. She was a Fulbright Nehru doctoral researcher at Columbia University and a Commonwealth split-site fellow at the University of Oxford. Ismailee received the inaugural Best Paper Prize by the Methods of Normative Political Theory Group, European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR 2025), for her work on contextualism in Indian political theory. Among her publications are a comparison of Ambedkar and Savarkar on Muslims, and several book reviews on religion and political theory across reputed journals and blogs.



Andreea Beatrice Popa is a judge at the Braşov Tribunal, with more than 10 years of judicial experience. Since 2025, she has been a PhD candidate at the Complutense University of Madrid, where her research focuses on freedom of conscience and religion from a comparative perspective. She holds a master's degree in communication and public relations, a background that shapes her interest in framing, public discourse, and the role of courts in shaping societal narratives. She earned a Bachelor of Laws (LLB) from the University of Bucharest and received judicial training from the Institutul National al Magistraturii (Romania). Her academic work is motivated by and connected to defending her own right to religious freedom and is influenced by historic restrictions and constraints that marked Romania's communist period.

Misbah Reshi is a DPhil candidate in law at the University of Oxford, supervised by Professor Nazila Ghanea and supported by the Rhodes Scholarship. Her research sits at the intersection of constitutional law, human rights, and gender, focusing on religious freedom and equality, particularly the rights of Muslim women in India. She previously completed a Master of Studies (MSt) in women's, gender, and sexuality studies at University of Oxford. Alongside her academic work, she has engaged in research and advocacy on minority rights, digital rights, and gender justice. Reshi has also worked on projects addressing Islamophobia and freedom of religion or belief at international forums.



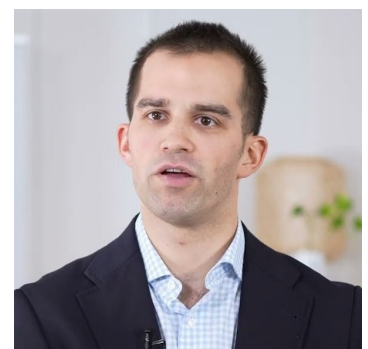
Ronald Serwanga is a qualified advocate and legal researcher who combines academic inquiry with practical experience in access to justice and legal reform across Africa. He serves on the Research and Publication Committee of the East African Law Society (EALS) and works as programme assistant (consultant) at Rwanda Bridges to Justice and senior legal consultant at Fountain Advocates. He has also held consultancy roles with the International Development Law Organisation and International Bridges to Justice and previously served on the EALS Rule of Law Committee. Serwanga holds a Master of Laws (LLM) in business law from the University of Rwanda, an LLM in rule of law for development from Loyola University Chicago, a postgraduate diploma in legal practice, and a Bachelor of Laws (LLB) from Makerere University. He has published and presented at conferences hosted by institutions including Harvard University, Trinity College Dublin, University of Helsinki, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, and Stellenbosch University.

Eriola Sovali is an assistant lecturer at the University of New York Tirana, where she teaches law, politics and religion. Her academic profile is situated at the intersection of law, religion, human rights, and governance, with particular focus on questions of freedom of religion or belief, secularism, minority protection, and the role of law in pluralist societies. She earned her PhD in law magna cum laude at Saarland University (Germany), focusing on the protection of human rights in arbitration. She holds Master of Laws (LLM) from the Europa-Institut of Saarland University in European and international law, specializing in European human rights protection and international dispute resolution. A qualified lawyer in Albania, Sovali has extensive experience in both the public and private sectors and has been affiliated with the Max Planck Institute Luxembourg for Procedural Law.



Amila Svraka-Imamović is an assistant professor in the Faculty of Law, University of Sarajevo. She earned her PhD in 2021, with the dissertation *The Status of the Individual in Civil, Anglo-American, and Middle Eastern Law: A Comparative Study*. Her primary research interests include Sharia law, comparative law, and the protection of the right to freedom of religion or belief, particularly in the European public sphere. She has developed a distinctive scholarly profile focused on the legal status of Muslims in Europe, with particular attention to issues such as religious expression, discrimination, and the accommodation of religious diversity in secular legal systems. Svraka-Imamović is a member of the Commission for Religious Freedoms of the Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Léopold Vanbellingen is a postdoctoral researcher specializing in law and religion and bioethics. His work focuses on freedom of conscience and religion in contemporary Western societies, particularly conscientious objection and the autonomy of religious organizations, at the crossroads of fundamental rights and pluralism. His master's thesis on reasonable accommodation received the Ullens Prize (King Baudouin Foundation). His doctoral research on corporate religious neutrality under European law (UCLouvain 2021) was awarded the 2022 Thesis Prize of the French *Défenseur des droits* and the 2025 Juan Luis Vives Prize. Vanbellingen cofounded the *Nuit des religions* at UCLouvain in 2021 and is actively involved in the European Institute of Bioethics, a Brussels-based think tank.





Yuyun Wahyuningrum is a PhD researcher at the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS), Erasmus University Rotterdam. She obtained her MA in human rights from Mahidol University (Thailand). Currently, she is a senior fellow for atrocity prevention and Southeast Asia at the Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, University of Queensland. She served as executive director at the ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR 2024–2025) and completed two consecutive terms as Indonesia’s Representative to the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR 2019–2024), chairing the Commission in 2023. She has more than 29 years of professional experience working in NGOs and lecturing at universities in Southeast Asian countries on ASEAN regionalism, human rights, and civil society. Her op-eds appear regularly in *The Jakarta Post*, *The Interpreter*, *Bangkok Post*, and *South China Morning Post*.

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