

Oxford Roundtable Explores Religion and Foreign Policy

On September 17, 2026, the Centre for Law and Religion at Regent's Park College, University of Oxford, convened a roundtable on **Religion and Foreign Policy** at the University of Oxford. The event took place during the visit of His All-Holiness Bartholomew I, Archbishop of Constantinople – the New Rome – and Ecumenical Patriarch, and brought together academics, lawyers, and faith leaders to explore the evolving role of religion in international affairs.

Organized with the support of the **Stirling Foundation, G20 Interfaith Forum, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Fondazione per le Scienze Religiose of Bologna, Windsor Dialogues, and the Emory Center for Law and Religion**, the roundtable provided an opportunity for participants to examine how faith actors can engage more effectively with public policy and international affairs.

The discussion focused on identifying common approaches to policy engagement through **international litigation, political dialogue, bilateral and multilateral engagement, and ecumenical and interfaith dialogue**. Participants considered both current approaches and opportunities for strengthening future engagement, including how to identify successful strategies, learn from approaches that have not achieved their intended objectives, and address gaps in existing policy conversations.

Three key areas guided the discussion:

- **Strategic religious freedom and cultural heritage litigation** at national and international levels
- **Protection of religious minorities** at national and international levels
- **Challenges facing Christianity in the Middle East**

The roundtable was chaired by **Prof. Peter Petkoff**, Director of the Centre for Law and Religion at Regent's Park College. The program included an opening address by His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and contributions from faith leaders and scholars representing institutions across Europe, the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, and beyond. **His Eminence Archbishop Angaelos**, Coptic Orthodox Archbishop of London, also participated in the roundtable.

Representatives of the **G20 Interfaith Forum**, including **Whitney Clayton and Prof. Cole Durham**, joined scholars, legal experts, and faith leaders for the conversation. Their participation reflected IF20's ongoing interest in bringing faith perspectives into policy discussions and exploring practical avenues for religious communities to contribute to international dialogue.

The Oxford roundtable is intended to serve as the beginning of a broader series of conversations examining **religion, foreign policy, and diplomacy**. Future discussions are

expected to explore policy recommendations and publications focused on effective strategies for faith actors engaging through both litigation and political dialogue.

The gathering provided a space for participants from different religious, academic, and professional backgrounds to consider how faith communities can contribute constructively to international policy conversations and help address challenges affecting religious freedom, minority communities, cultural heritage, and peace.