

ForB – Why is it important?

All human beings, religious and non-religious alike, have some form of overarching worldview that shape their perception of the world, their sense of meaning, and their relation to their neighbours. Freedom of Religion or Belief grants every citizen the right to adhere to such a worldview.

Although there definitely is a social element to most worldviews, Freedom of Religion or Belief does not protect religions or philosophies of life per se. It does not protect your religion or belief against critical questions or denigrating comments.

Freedom of Religion or Belief acknowledges every human being as an individual in his or her own right. It creates a space for men's relationship to the divine and allows to reflect some manifestations in the public realm.

Freedom of thought, conscience and religion is a cornerstone of any democracy. Without the individual right to form your own thoughts and opinions about life, its origin and meaning, and subsequent morals, it is impossible to establish a government of your choice. At the same time, the collective element of Freedom of Religion or Belief provides for a system of mutual responsibility and altruism without a society cannot survive.

Freedom of Religion or Belief also provides parents a safe environment in which they can bring up the next generation introducing children into the religious and moral system of their choice, respecting the evolving capacities of the child that is. There is no such thing as a neutral upbringing that would guarantee any individual to eventually make a free choice on the free market of religions and ideas. All upbringing and education is based on some religion or belief system, whether religious or non-religious.

Some argue that the right to Freedom of Religion or Belief is redundant as we already have the right to freedom of thought and conscience, and the right to peaceful assembly. Together they would cover both the private and the collective element of Freedom of Religion or Belief. A religion or belief, however, is not just another thought and religious rituals and ceremonies, including religious holidays and festivals are not just another meeting. In a similar vein, for most religions, houses of worship are more than just private property or assembly halls.