

# The president's advisor



**ROLE-PLAY**

The following 15 scenarios are designed for use with the exercise '[The president's advisor](#)' on page 81. They vary in style from being brief requests for legislative change to fuller scenarios including background information. Choose which requests or scenarios to use depending on their relevance to participants' contexts. When choosing, please remember to take into account any risks associated in discussing specific issues in your context.

You can find handouts with the scenarios to print out at [www.forb-learning.org/exercises/presidents-advisor-handouts](http://www.forb-learning.org/exercises/presidents-advisor-handouts).

## Brief requests

- A request has been made to the president to amend the law, unifying the rules and regulations governing the building of places of worship place so that all religions are treated equally.
- A request has been made to the president to reform family and personal identity law in order to enable people to enter into civil marriages governed by civil laws.
- A request has been made to the president to issue a law that removes the religion statement from state ID cards in order to prevent discrimination in daily life.
- A request has been made to the president to amend the law on contempt of religions, in order to protect public morals by rendering the positive portrayal of LGBTQ+ lifestyles in any public forum or media illegal.
- A request has been made to the president to replace the current law that criminalizes contempt of religions with a law that punishes incitement to hatred, discrimination or violence.
- A request has been made to the president to initiate a transparent investigation into the killing of members of the minority community in village X. The investigations are to be run by a specially formed committee that consists only of civilians from the judiciary and HR organizations.
- A request has been made to the president to change legislation to enable the approval of a building permit for a Baha'i temple.
- A request has been made to the president to change legislation to enable Jehovah's Witnesses to be a legally recognized faith community.
- A request has been made to the president to reform personal law legislation to enable Baha'i marriage to be recognised as a legal marriage with all its benefits.
- A request has been made to the president to issue a law that reserves a certain percentage of positions in the cabinet, military, and other key positions to religious minorities (quota).



## Fuller scenarios

### **Scenario: Building permit for minority place of worship**

A minority religious community has applied for a building permit for a place of worship in a town where they have no access to a place of worship. There are no legislative hindrances for the construction of minority places of worship. Nonetheless, the provincial governor has turned down the application because of substantial fears that allowing the building might lead to riots by radical groups within the majority community. The governor is also worried that he might lose office in next year's election, losing it to more radical candidates.

The community are now appealing to the president to ensure that their right to build a place of worship is respected.

### **Scenario: Nationalist tensions**

Amid rising religious-nationalist sentiment, a village council has held a public meeting at which the community voted to introduce a 'minority free zone'. The council has set up signs at entrances to the village declaring that minority traders may not enter and that residents may not marry members of the religious minority. Two minority families resident in the village are afraid and have complained to the Minorities Commissioner. The Commissioner tells you that similar events have taken place in around 20 villages across the country.

The president would like to know what action the State could or should take. What legislation (existing or new) could support State action on the issue?

### **Scenario: Teacher refuses to participate in prayer**

Most of the children and teachers at School A in town X belong to the majority religion. Majority religion prayers and passages from the majority religions holy texts are read every morning as part of the school's obligatory values teaching. The headteacher has received reports that one of the teachers does not fold or lift his hands in prayers. The teacher is in all matters respected and liked by parents and students. When asked about this, the teacher responded that as he does not believe in any God, it goes against his conscience to raise or fold his hands in prayer.

The school's leadership is concerned that if a teacher does not join in the traditional prayers, it will undermine respect for national culture and tradition that the school, in line with the government's education policy, tries to convey to the students. Community leaders have been consulted and want the teacher to have his wages cut or be fired if he continues to refuse to join in with the prayer.

The head teacher doesn't know what to do, but as she is a distant relative of the president, her husband suggested that she should ask him for advice on how to manage the situation. The president has passed her question on to you.



## **Scenario: Parents object to prayer in school**

A Christian school in a village in the northern state of Y was founded by missionaries but has been run by a local committee consisting of Christians from a minority ethnic group for several years. The school is perceived as being the best school for many miles, so some parents from the majority ethnic group, who adhere to the majority religion, also send their children to the school.

The school has a tradition of holding Christian morning assembly at which staff and children say the Lord's prayer, psalms are sung, and a short passage is read from the Bible as well as singing the national anthem. Recently some parents to children from the majority community have complained that their children are obliged to participate in Christian prayers and no alternative activity is offered.

During the last couple of weeks, the situation in the whole state has been tense following the introduction of new laws about maintaining the culture and identity of the state's indigenous majority population. Some say that tensions run along ethnic and religious conflict lines. There have been lethal attacks on people belonging to some minority ethnic groups which are primarily Christian. A few days ago, a curfew was imposed in the state in an attempt to curb further violence.

Encouraged by community leaders, parents from the majority ethnic community are appealing to the President to stop their children from being forced to participate in Christian prayers. Considering the tense situation in the state it is important that the President provides a swift response to both the parents and the school about how to best deal with the situation.

## **Scenario: Victims of communal violence**

A group of young Muslim women who survived recent religiously motivated communal violence in city X are complaining to the President about continuing violations to their freedom of religion and conscience. Violence targeted at the Muslim minority community has forced the women to flee to relief camps.

The camps are very crowded and both rights groups and people living in the camps have accused the provincial government of failing to provide the necessary humanitarian assistance to the survivors of the violence. Food resources have been scarce, the camps are on marshland causing problems for both construction and hygiene during recent heavy rainfalls. Residents of the relief camps live in deplorable conditions and the perpetrators of the violence largely remain unpunished.

The women have complained to the President that the provincial government handed over the running of the camps to a conservative Muslim NGO. The NGO has introduced restrictions on women's freedom of movement in the camp and a conservative dress code. Against the will of the women concerned, marriages have been arranged to men from villages outside the city. The NGO says the marriages were arranged in an attempt to lessen the burden on the camps and safeguard the women's honour. According to the women, the marriages took place with the knowledge and indirect support of the provincial government.

The women want the government to take over the running of the camp and their marriages to be annulled so that they may return to their studies in the city.

### **Sources**

Bassem Maher, Katherine Cash, Kristina Patring