

The president's advisors

55 min – 1 h 35 min



RECOGNISING AND ANALYSING VIOLATIONS

ROLE-PLAY
GROUP EXERCISE

About the exercise

TARGET AUDIENCE

Best suited to civil society organisations, human rights defenders, faith leaders, and others involved in lobbying or advocacy work.

PURPOSE

- To help participants explore their attitudes towards rights for others in their own context, revealing and working with any resistance towards rights for all.
- To enable participants to apply knowledge they have learned about FORB and develop problem-solving skills.

DESCRIPTION

In this role-play exercise, the participants have just been appointed as the President's Religious Affairs Advisors and have to work together to make recommendations to the President on how the State should handle specific situations relating to freedom of religion or belief. This exercise requires a basic understanding of FORB among participants and should follow a knowledge input on understanding violations of FORB. (A ready-made knowledge input on this topic is available as part of Session 4 of the Local Changemakers Course: www.forb-learning.org/changemakers-course-materials.)

NOTE

This exercise requires careful and thoughtful facilitation, as it can uncover prejudices participants have in relation to who should have what rights, as well as misunderstandings of rights. Opposing views on concrete and controversial issues in the local context may well arise and create tensions. It is important to create a trusting environment so that participants feel comfortable sharing what they really think, instead of saying what they think the facilitator or others in the group want to hear.



TIP! Build your confidence as a facilitator by reviewing the 'Tips for facilitators' section on [page 282](#) and 'Responding to tricky questions' on [page 286](#).

Instructions

RESOURCES AND ADVANCE PREPARATION

- Choose which [scenarios](#) you will use with your participants. Adapt them to your context and your audience if necessary.
- Create handouts with your chosen scenarios and print out enough copies for each group to have one copy of their scenario(s).

Find the [scenarios](#) on page 237 and at www.forb-learning.org/exercises/presidents-advisors-scenarios.

HOW TO INTRODUCE THE EXERCISE 5 MIN

Welcome the participants and inform them that they have been appointed as the Religious Affairs Advisors to the President (or Prime Minister as appropriate), an important and sensitive position! Police, courts and faith communities all come to them for advice on what should happen in relation to the different situations. Tell them that the President trusts them completely and will probably follow their recommendations. In fact, the President is willing to commit extensive financial and staff resources to implement what they recommend. Emphasize again how important this role is.

HOW TO RUN THE EXERCISE 40-80 MIN

• **SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION** (15 MIN)

Divide the participants into groups of three or four and give each group a handout containing the scenario they are to work on. Instruct them to come up with just ONE recommendation to the President for the case. They will present the scenario and their recommendation without any explanation. The group should decide who will be their spokesperson. (If groups seem ready after a shorter amount of time move to the next step sooner).

• **PLENARY DISCUSSION & FEEDBACK** (25 MIN)

Ask each group to present their presidential recommendation. Invite the other groups to comment on the recommendation – do they agree with it or not, and why? (Note this timing is for five groups, increase the time allowed for additional groups.)



• **(OPTIONAL) REPEAT THE PROCESS** (40 MIN)

Hand each group a new, more challenging scenario and repeat the groupwork, presentation and feedback process.

HOW TO CONCLUDE THE EXERCISE 10 MIN

Sum up your reflections from the session, particularly on the significance of the choices the groups of presidential advisors made. Conclude by saying something along the following lines:

- It can be easy to believe in freedom of religion or belief in theory. When we focus on concrete situations in our own context, our fears and prejudices can easily get in the way of accepting rights for all. It is not easy to solve problems relating to freedom of religion or belief.
- Of course, few societies change overnight from having few rights to having full rights for all. Usually, the process of change is progressive over a long period of time. But is it important to know where we want to get to in order to identify the small steps that might be possible to take to get us there.



ALTERNATIVE METHODOLOGIES

Depending on time available you can skip the second round of the exercise. Depending on the groups' level of knowledge and acceptance of the right you can also choose to run the exercise just once with cases that you think will challenge them. However, this is more difficult to facilitate and doesn't give the participants the same opportunity to develop their thinking and apply their learning in the second round.

TIP! During the group discussion, emphasise the importance of listening to each other and testing out thoughts and ideas together so that they can develop. It is ok to recommend something, hear feedback then change your mind about it being a good idea!

Source

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