

# What is Freedom of Belief?

## Drama

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As the film begins, we see Layla, 16, gazing out the car window at her new country as she passes a synagogue, church, and mosque. Her Uber stops before an apartment complex and she and her older brother, Amir, get out. As her father and mother retrieve their belongings from the trunk, a teenage neighbor, Mia, reacts to the new immigrant family with disdain. Nate, Mia's older brother, sees Layla's hurt and reprimands his sister. Later in the film, Layla unpacks her suitcase and looks at a picture of the friends she has left behind. She kneels by her bed in prayer.

## Discussion Questions:

Ed Brown, Secretary General of Stefanus Alliance International, shares that because of globalization, "The world is both smaller and larger at the same time". Additionally, international lawyer, Jacqueline Isaac states, "Given the polarizing trends in our world, we have to find ways to agree to disagree with a neighbor that doesn't act, look, or pray like we do."



**How are the concepts of globalization and polarization evident in the drama?**

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**What are the ramifications of globalization on your life, your community and workplace? On having the freedom to express your conscience and beliefs?**

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*The reason we have human rights is to honor a person's dignity. Religious freedom or belief ensures that people, regardless of what they believe or not believe, have equal rights and also the equal right to be heard."*

**- Mariya Goodbrake, Non-Profit Director**

*"Freedom of belief is a right that we're all born with. It's a fundamental right because it goes to the core of who we are, how we live, and how we speak."*

*"Sometimes religion can be used as a weapon to oppress and control, especially women. But freedom of belief does not mean imposing your views on others."*

**- Nada Higuera, Constitutional Attorney**

*"Freedom of belief doesn't mean universalism or relativism or that there is no moral truth. You can be firmly committed to your beliefs; you just don't use violence or coercion in matters of religion."*

**- Hussein Aboubakr, Educator/Advocate**

**\* Describe your feelings about the quotes above? What questions spring to mind when you hear/read the above quotes?**

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**\* Do you believe freedom of belief is a right we are all born with? If not, why? If so, what are the implications of that in your community and workplace?**

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**\* How do you feel about countries that have a state religion? What about secular states?**

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In 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was unanimously adopted by all member states of the United Nations. Article 18 states:

***"Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance."***

**\* What words in the declaration are most meaningful for you? What are most challenging?**

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**\* How can this declaration best be implemented in your community? In your workplace?**

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**\* How does the declaration support women and minorities?**

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## Reflection Time:

Take some time to reflect on your own faith journey, religious beliefs, or non-religious worldview.

*What are your core values and where do they come from? Write out your answers.*

This exercise can give you a deeper understanding and respect for religious freedom and what steps you can take to support it in your community and workplace.

## Glossary:

**Persecution:** Violence or the threat of violence against a person or their family or property because of their religion or belief.

**\*Discrimination:** Unfair treatment of people based on religion, language, ethnicity, gender, etc.

**Coercion:** The use of force or intimidation to make somebody do what you want.

**Blasphemy:** Disrespectful or offensive words or actions about god(s) or sacred things.

**Apostasy:** The rejection or renunciation of a religious or political belief.

## To Explore Further:

**Review the Freedom of Religion and Belief (FoRB) Booklet:**

<https://d3lwycy8zkggea.cloudfront.net/1510921391/forb-booklet-2017-english.pdf>

**Check out the FoRB Learning Platform:** <https://www.forb-learning.org/index.html>

**Watch some short films:** <http://empowerwomen.media/films/>