

2022-2023 Annual Report

PREPARED BY

EMPOWER WOMEN MEDIA



Places of Impact



Pakistan
Afghanistan
Iran
Iraq
Jordan
Saudi Arabia
Lebanon
Turkey
Egypt
Tunisia
Morocco

Who We Are

EQUIPPING WOMEN TO BUILD RELIGIOUS FREEDOM MOVEMENTS

Religious restrictions and violence are on the rise globally. We seek to equip religious freedom advocates to promote peace building, women's rights and pluralism in the MENA region.

Since 2021, we have leveraged four strategies to empower women as religious freedom advocates. It is our hope that we can stand up for religious freedom for everyone everywhere in the following ways:

- **Train** influencers in promoting religious freedom and using digital media tools
- **Produce** compelling content, including TV, short films, social media, print, and podcasts
- **Collaborate** in sharing practical tools to advance religious liberty and women's rights
- **Convene** leaders to build religious freedom movements.

Together, we partner with government, business, academic, media, NGO, and faith leaders to equip religious freedom advocates. Since early 2021, we have equipped over **5,000** people through our digital strategies and in-person events. Our collective efforts contribute to the larger movement of training leaders and keeping the "doors open" for religious liberty worldwide.



PROJECT PLAN

PHASE 1: Live What You Believe e-Course

PHASE 2: Women's Media Fellowship

PHASE 3: Religious Freedom Film Competition

PHASE 4: Religious Freedom Leadership Events

The Impact

Founder and Executive Director, Shirin Taber, writes, "one of the fastest ways for women to shift the culture is through media." In the process of creating media tools, women become more confident in addressing religious restrictions that keep them from reaching their full potential.

Through our **four strategies**, which include an eCourse, media training fellowship, film competition, and in-person leadership events, women are equipped to engage their communities through storytelling and media strategies.

Our women's films have been showcased at top venues like International Religious Freedom Summits, the United Nations, and the State Department, and among parliamentarians, scholars, lawyers, CEOs and faith leaders. As a result, we are seeing a shift in audiences' attitudes to support women's agency and freedom of belief.



WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN NUMBERS

Religious Freedom Leadership Events

1,000

E-Course

5,000

Media Fellowship

60+

Phase 1:

Live What You Believe E-Course



Live What You Believe is an interactive film-based training that explores how freedom of belief contributes to peaceful and stable societies, empowers women, and encourages business innovation. Discussion questions and curriculum accompany the series. Our goal is to educate, empower, and equip participants about the benefits of freedom of belief in our communities.

E-COURSE INCLUDES:

- 4 short films
- Discussion questions
- Reflection activities
- Evaluation quiz
- Certificate of completion

Over **5,000** individuals have completed the course either online or in "live" events. The course has been hosted at university campuses, workplaces and leadership gatherings across Pakistan and among refugees in the US.

Additionally, we will broadcast Live What You Believe to over **100,000** individuals in the Farsi-speaking world via satellite TV.

For more information, visit the [E-course here.](#)

"Cultivating freedom of belief unleashes creativity and innovation which is needed more than ever in our increasingly global world."

- Jacqueline Isaac,
International Attorney



Phase 2:

Media Training Fellowship

EQUIPPING MEDIA ADVOCATES

According to the US State Department, the MENA region is the world's worst religious freedom violator, particularly among women. A growing number of stakeholders want training to counter religious-based conflict in the region. In response to overwhelming requests, we are leading a 6-month media training fellowship to educate, equip and empower religious freedom media advocates.

In this year's fellowship, media trainers guided 30 women influencers from Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan through a 6-month media development fellowship. As a result, participants produced 17 films to share the benefits of religious freedom for their communities. Their stories not only address taboo subjects like forced marriage and genocide, but the benefit of religious freedom to build thriving societies. We believe this training initiative is essential to protect women's rights and religious liberty in the region for the years to come.

For more information, visit the [Media Fellowship Resource page](#).



FELLOWSHIP INCLUDES:

- Synchronous online workshops (2 hrs a month)
 - Homework assignments (10 hrs a month)
 - Development of media goals and plan of action
 - Communication with mentors and trainers
 - Production of a media project by March 1, 2023.
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Phase 3:

Religious Freedom Film Competition

Through the annual film competition, screenings and press releases, thousands have learned about the benefits of religious liberty to build thriving societies. The short films share the importance of freedom of religion in fostering women's rights, peace-building, and strong economies. The short film format has proved to be an effective way to transmit religious freedom messages through social media, education workshops, and leadership events.

The film competition winners are recognized through monetary prizes, press releases, and film screenings to showcase their accomplishments.

The competition creates a platform where women can share their messages among mixed audiences. Many of the participants receive international recognition as new doors are opened to advance their careers.

To review the women's films, visit the [EWM YouTube channel](#).



GRAND PRIZE WINNER
*TOGETHER WE GROW,
TOGETHER WE EMPOWER*
BY FATIMA NAZISH
(PESHAWAR, PAKISTAN)



Together We Grow, Together We Empower tells the true story of Bushra Rahim, a Muslim businesswoman in Peshawar, Pakistan, who welcomes women of different faiths to her center and trains them to become entrepreneurs.

Phase 4:

Religious Freedom Leadership Events

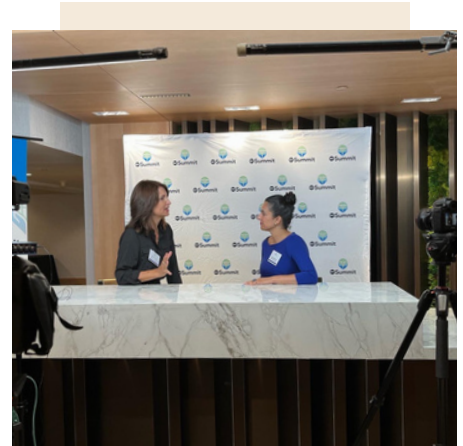
To continue the work of the Abraham Accords and IRF Summits, we host IRF Forums for the MENA region, which include contextualized religious freedom trainings. This year, we are hosting two major leadership events.

Washington, October 27-28, 2022: This event aimed to develop public awareness about the benefits of pluralism, with a special focus on women's inclusion. We encouraged multi-faith collaboration to build social movements in Muslim-majority societies. Government, business, academic, media, NGO and faith leaders were among the 110 participants. To review the agenda and summary video, [click here](#).

Marrakech, June 6-7, 2023: This 2-day leadership and multi-faith forum in Morocco, aims to build an allied network of religious freedom partners in the MENA region specifically.

OBJECTIVES:

- Build trust and relationships
- Explore challenges and opportunities
- Share practical tools and resources
- Identify multi-faith champions
- Foster religious liberty in the MENA region



Meet the Fellows

DILPAK MEGEED

Dilpak is a Yazidi journalist and filmmaker from Kurdistan, Iraq, who promotes Yazidi issues. Her work raises awareness about the atrocities of the last genocide against Yazidis, by producing films, TV reports and documentaries.

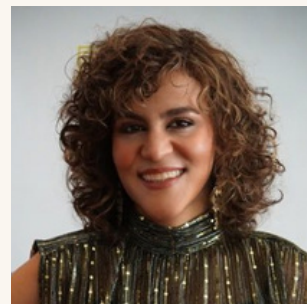


LILY MESCHI

Lily is an advocate for women's rights and religious freedom in Iran. She is currently Director of Partners Relations for Iran Alive Ministries. Lily has been featured in Life Today, iHope Ministries podcast, Mission News Network, and Faith Radio.

AZADEH NIKZADEH

Azadeh is an Iranian-American writer, director and producer. She is the founder of “Burnt Generation Studios”, which develops short films with the mission to tell authentic stories that build grounds for mutual understanding across cultures and faiths.



FATEMA AHMADI

Fatema is a women's rights expert who fled her home in Afghanistan after the nation's fall to the Taliban in 2021. She works to promote religious freedom in the Middle East, which she believes is the key to peace in the region.

Expected Outcomes



- **Train 30 women media fellows** for religious freedom from Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan.
- **Develop 15 original media projects** that advance religious freedom as a result of the women's media fellowship
- **Challenge fellowship participants to share media tools** through their networks and communities.
- **Distribute religious freedom media tools** among government, business, academic, NGO and faith-based leaders
- **Host IRF film festival** to showcase the media projects developed through the media fellowship
- **Offer cash prizes** to award winning film makers (1st, 2nd and 3rd place)
- **Participate in high-impact events** including the IRF Summit, NGO and faith events
- **Broadcast Live What You Believe** to 100,000 individuals in the Farsi-speaking world via satellite TV
- **Impact one million people** through our collaborative efforts and spheres of influence (social media, press, TV broadcasting, etc). This estimate is based on our collective impact and organizational reports.



**Thank you for your
continued partnership and
support.**

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