

 EMPOWER WOMEN MEDIA

Annual Report

2024



Who We Are

Training Leaders to Promote Religious Freedom & Women's Empowerment

Empower Women Media is a leadership network that promotes human rights and religious liberty among the Abrahamic Faiths through media, education & strategic leadership gatherings.

We partner with government, business, academic, media, NGO & faith leaders to build social movements that foster inclusive, peaceful and thriving societies.

Religious persecution and violence are on the rise globally. Antisemitism and islamists attacks are increasing. However, we seek to equip and mobilize advocates to stand up for freedom of faith and foster societies where everyone is free to *live what they believe*.

In 2024, we equipped thousands of new advocates in the Middle East, Pakistan and Nigeria. We leveraged three strategies to equip the public as human rights & religious freedom advocates:

- **Media:** Training influencers to share their critical stories and solutions via digital media strategies
- **Education:** Equipping the public as religious freedom advocates in Muslim majority contexts
- **Leadership Events:** Convening leaders to build religious freedom alliances in the workplace and civil society.

Our collective efforts contribute to the larger movement to support every person's right to freedom of conscience, religion or belief (UDHR Article 18). In the following pages, we share some highlights from the year.

www.empowerwomen.media
[@empowerwomenmedia](https://www.instagram.com/empowerwomenmedia)
[Empower Women Media](https://www.youtube.com/empowerwomenmedia)



PROJECT PLAN

PHASE 1:

Online Courses & Tools

PHASE 2:

Media Fellowships & Film Festivals

PHASE 3:

Strategic Leadership Events

PHASE 4:

Building Social Movements

Places of Impact

**EGYPT
IRAN
IRAQ
ISRAEL
LEBANON
MOROCCO
NIGERIA
PAKISTAN
TUNISIA
UAE**



Abraham Women's Alliance



The [Abraham Women's Alliance](#) seeks to foster peace building, women's empowerment and inter-religious harmony in North Africa & the Middle East.

This strategic division of Empower Women Media was co-founded by Astrid Hajjar and Shirin Taber in response to the October 7 attacks. In the following month, we hosted the first **Abrahamic Panel** on November 7, 2023. The initiative seeks to counter the rise in antisemitism and islamist attacks, highlighting the benefits of peace building and the Abraham Accords. In 2024, we co-hosted 7 AWA events in Los Angeles, NY, Washington DC, Dubai & Abu Dhabi.

Research shows that women-led strategies are key to the peace process. The **Abraham Women's Alliance** connects on a monthly basis through leadership events and digital media strategies.

AWA offers professional multi-faith trainings and certificate programs, with a special focus on sharing women's critical stories and solutions.

ABRAHAM WOMEN'S ALLIANCE

OBJECTIVES

- Build trust and relationships
- Explore challenges and opportunities
- Share practical tools and resources
- Identify multi-faith champions
- Foster pluralism and women's rights in the MENA region.



Abraham Women's Alliance Speakers



**AMBASSADOR
MARCY GROSSMAN**
Former Canadian Ambassador
to the United Arab Emirates



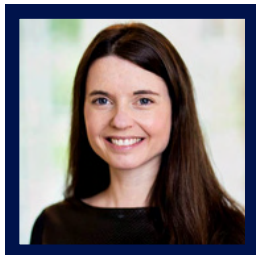
WALID PHARES
Middle East Policy Expert



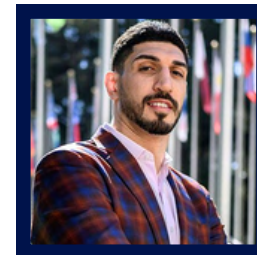
**LOAY AHMED
ALSHAREEF**
Arab Peace Activist



NEZHA ALAOUI
CEO, WOMEN CHOICE



LINDSAY BENSTEAD
Professor of Politics and Global Affairs &
Director, Middle East Studies Center,
Portland State University



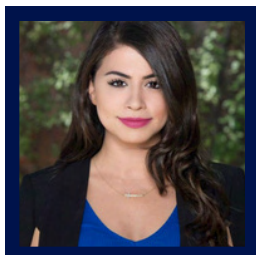
**ENES KANTER
FREEDOM**
American Former NBA Player &
Human Rights Advocate



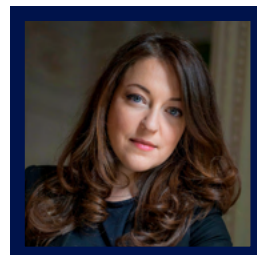
DAVID CURRY
Former USCIRF Commissioner &
CEO, Global Christian Relief



CHRISTINE M. CARLSON
NEA Foreign Affairs Officer IRF-
Strategic Religious Engagement Unit,
US State Department



LOUREEN AYYOUB
Reporter, CBS News San Francisco



GUILA CLARA KESSOUS
UNESCO Artist for Peace

DUBAI FORUM

NOVEMBER 15-16, 2024

Women leaders of the Abrahamic faiths convened the first-ever inter-religious forum in the United Arab Emirates. The [Dubai Forum](#) gathered 65 leaders from over a dozen countries to build public awareness about the benefits of collaboration across cultural and religious lines. Research shows that multi-faith networks and programming can advance women's empowerment in the workplace and civil society.

Seeking to elevate women's voices, the media and panels expressed the importance of coexistence and mutual understanding to build strong economies. This was a historic civil society and inter-faith event in Dubai, showcasing the work of Jewish, Muslim and Christian women influencers and entrepreneurs.



Government, academic, business, media and NGO leaders attended the event, which included an excursion to the Abrahamic Family House, Louvre and Sheik Zayed Grand Mosque. Additionally, the participants were awarded an inter-faith training certificate for the workplace.

"Bringing women together to lead an interfaith initiative in business is critically important. United voices transcend barriers and promote mutual understanding between different faiths, bringing a beacon of hope to an often divided world."

– **Nezha Alaoui**
CEO, WOMEN CHOICE
Global Peace Building Award Recipient

"The Dubai Forum represented a monumental moment for regional peace and collaboration. Bringing together a multi-faith group of visionary women in the UAE to discuss the Abraham Accords was bold, innovative, and hopeful. It underscores the essential role of women in shaping a path to peace and laying the groundwork for a brighter and more inclusive future."

– **Ambassador Marcy Grossman**
Former Canadian Ambassador to the UAE



Live What You Believe Nigeria

(Phase 1 & 2)

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. Four short films, discussion questions and curriculum accompany the series. Our goal is to educate, empower, and equip participants to share the benefits of freedom of belief in the communities where Muslims and Christians experience conflict. In 2024, we saw a record number of Nigerians complete the online trainings and media fellowship, which led to **12 new film productions** and the coordination of **30 events** throughout the country.

Over **5,500 individuals** participated in the LWYB course either online or in live events. The course has been offered at university campuses, workplaces, churches, community centers and at leadership gatherings across Nigeria.



[Take the eCourse Here](#)

ECOURSE INCLUDES

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



Felix Samari, Country Coordinator

Nigeria Media Fellowship & Film Festivals

(Phase 2 & 3)

Empower Women Media trained 30 influencers in Nigeria to share the message of freedom of religion or belief through digital media and short films. During the 6-month media training fellowship, participants received instruction from human rights and media experts to develop short films and social media projects for an international impact. Upon finishing the program, a certificate of completion was awarded. The resulting 12 films were submitted to the [2024 Africa Religious Freedom Film Competition](#) with the chance of the filmmakers winning **\$5,000** in cash prizes and being highlighted in international press releases and [film screening events](#).

The media fellows went on to host 5 film festivals, which included expert speakers, panels, Q&A sessions and discussion groups. The events also boasted TV, radio and news coverage.



Africa Religious Freedom Film Festivals in Jos & Abuja



Taraba State University



Yola



Plateau State Polytechnic Institute



Abuja



Jos



FoRB Teens Connect in Jos



Jos Theological Seminary



Women's Event in Abuja



Adamawa State Polytechnic Institute

Film Competitions

(Phase 2)

Pakistan



The Losing Side

Syeda Kashmala
\$3,000 Prize



I Choose Who I Am

Maria Rahim
\$1,500 Prize



Bridging Faiths

Azra Nafees Yousafzai
\$500 Prize



Nigeria



A Blue Sky

Miriam Kwairanga
\$3,000 Prize



Kill Bibi

Kongs Shamaki
\$1,500 Prize



My Liberty

Dolapo Aderinokun
\$500 Prize



Middle East and Pakistan

(Phase 2)

Equipping Leaders to Share Their Critical Stories & Solutions

According to the US State Department, the Middle East and Pakistan have the world's worst religious freedom violations, particularly among women and minorities. A growing number of stakeholders desire training and tools to counter religious-based conflict. In response to overwhelming requests, we offer media fellowships and workshops to educate the public about the benefits of religiously free societies.

In 2023-2024, we equipped 30 women from the Middle East and Pakistan in a 6-month media fellowship. As a result, [participants produced 18 films](#) to share their critical stories. Many of the women reported that the fellowship gave them newfound confidence and skills to expand their outreach.

The women's films shined a light not only on taboo subjects like forced marriage and sexual violence, but the benefits of religious freedom to promote peace, stability and strong business economies. The winning films were shown in Los Angeles, New York, Washington DC, Pakistan and UAE.

Many of our fellows have gone on to advance their careers, continuing to act as spokeswomen for freedom of religion or belief globally.

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

FELLOWSHIPS INCLUDE:

- Synchronous online workshops (2 hours/month)
 - Homework assignments (10 hours/month)
 - Development of media goals and plan of action
 - Communication with mentors and trainers
 - Production of a media project.
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Outcomes



- **Trained 60 media fellows** as religious freedom advocates from countries like Pakistan, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Iraq, Iran and Nigeria.
- **Produced 28 original short films** that advance religious freedom and women's empowerment
- **Coordinated 7 Abrahamic Panels** via Zoom and in-person events in Los Angeles, NY, DC, Dubai...
- **Invited to host women's events in Israel** in 2025
- **Distributed religious freedom tools and resources** among government, business, academic, NGO and faith-based leaders
- **Hosted 8 film festivals** to showcase the short films developed through the media fellowships
- **Offered cash prizes** to award-winning film makers (1st, 2nd and 3rd place) to continue their outreach
- **Equipped over 6,000** in e-courses, forums, workshops, film festivals & Abrahamic Panels.
- **Broadcast Live What You Believe** initiatives to over 300,000 through TV, news, print and radio reports
- **Engaged over one million** via our collective network of leaders, influencers and partner organizations.





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

SHIRIN TABER | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
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EMPOWERWOMEN.MEDIA

