

 EMPOWER WOMEN MEDIA

Annual Report

2025



Who We Are

Advancing Human Rights & Religious Freedom in the Middle East

Empower Women Media inspires, equips and mobilizes leaders to advance religious freedom in the Middle East. We partner with government, business, academic, media, NGO & faith leaders to foster peaceful and thriving societies where everyone is free to live that they believe.

In 2025, we equipped thousands of new advocates in the Middle East and Pakistan through **media, education and leadership initiatives**. This included new short films, social media, research, newsletters, press releases and convening educational events among high-impact leaders.

Additionally, we expanded our impact by offering **small grants to 12 key partners**. The grants allowed us to coach and challenge emerging religious freedom leaders to increase their impact in the MENA region.

TACTICS

- **Small Grants:** Allocating funds to coordinate new projects across 8 countries
- **Media:** Creating new films and content to expand our visibility, outreach and advocacy initiatives
- **Education:** Equipping religious freedom advocates through a certificate course in Muslim-majority contexts
- **Leadership Events:** Convening leaders to build an allied network to promote positive change in their sectors.

Our collective efforts contribute to the larger movement to support human rights & religious freedom (**UDHR Article 18**). In the following pages, we share some highlights from 2025.

STAY CONNECTED

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



Astrid Hajjar & Shirin Taber

STRATEGIC SECTORS

- 🏛️ Diplomacy
- 📺 Training
- 🎥 Media
- 🔍 Research
- 👤 Women
- 👥 Youth
- 🌐 Grassroots

Places of Impact



EGYPT

IRAN

IRAQ

ISRAEL

LEBANON

MOROCCO

NIGERIA

PAKISTAN

SYRIA

TUNISIA

UAE

UNITED KINGDOM

BELGIUM

Abraham Women's Alliance

Uniting Muslims, Jews and Christians to Foster Peaceful, Multi-Faith Societies

The Abraham Women's Alliance fosters peace building, women's empowerment and inter-faith cooperation in the Middle East & North Africa.

This strategic division of Empower Women Media was co-founded by Astrid Hajjar and Shirin Taber in response to the attacks on October 7, 2023. One month after the attacks, we hosted our first Abrahamic Panel. The initiative seeks to counter the rise in antisemitism and islamist attacks, highlighting the benefits of peace building and the Abraham Accords.

In 2025, we co-hosted 7 AWA events in Los Angeles, New York City, Washington DC, Brussels, London, Cairo, Beirut, and Islamabad.

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.

The 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



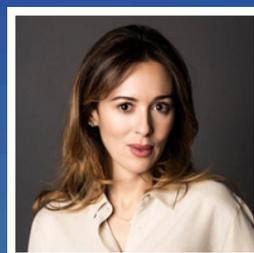
**AMBASSADOR
MARCY GROSSMAN**
Former Canadian
Ambassador to the United
Arab Emirates



SIR LIAM FOX
Chair, UK Abraham
Accords Group & Former
UK Defense Secretary



**LOAY AHMED
ALSHAREEF**
Arab Peace Activist



NEZHA ALAOU
CEO, WOMEN CHOICE



**DR. LINDSAY J.
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



WALID PHARES
Middle East Policy Expert



LOUREEN AYYOUB
Reporter, CBS News
San Francisco



**GUILA CLARA
KESSOUS**
UNESCO Artist for Peace

EU PARLIAMENT FORUM

MARCH 19, 2025



Empower Women Media and the Abraham Women's Alliance hosted a forum at the **European Parliament** in Brussels in collaboration with the European Association for The Defense of Minorities.

Introduced by keynote speaker MEP Giusi Princi and moderated by Deborah Paul and Manel Msalmi, more than 60 human rights advocates attended the forum, representing NGOs, academia, media, and business sectors. The event included the screening of 4 films, and 3 panels led by women from conflict zones in Iran, Syria, Sudan, Israel, Morocco, India, Yemen, Pakistan, Burma, and Ukraine.

CAIRO FORUM

MAY 16-18, 2025



The Cairo Forum provided leadership training for 90 women through the **Live What You Believe** certificate course, a curriculum that promotes women's empowerment, inter-religious harmony and peaceful, thriving societies.

Participants were equipped with a tool kit of resources, including shorts films, reflection worksheets, articles and reports. This training was targeted toward participants who are actively involved in outreach, including education, social work, medicine.



LEBANON FORUM

AUGUST 5, 2025



Led by Astrid Hajjar, 90 courageous women and men attended our film screening and inter-faith conference in Beirut. Participants engaged in panels discussions, short films, and Q&A sessions.

The conference took place on the morning of August 5th, **the same day that the Lebanese Cabinet was scheduled to decide on disarming Hezbollah.** Additionally, female students from the Beirut Medical School volunteered to help the team with registration and event management.



ISRAEL FORUM

SEPTEMBER 16-18, 2025



In a time of deepening political and religious divides, 30 influential women from across the Middle East and North Africa came together in Tel Aviv to mark the **5th anniversary of the Abraham Accords.**

Representing civil society, media, business and sports, they launched Women's Champions for Change (WCC) — a bold initiative dedicated to cross-border collaboration and advancing peace through women's leadership.

LONDON FORUM

SEPTEMBER 22, 2025



We convened 45 leaders in London for an event uniquely focused on the power of storytelling and media in human rights advocacy.

Hosted in an Anglican church, the media forum included films and discussions with journalists, media producers, theologians, counselors, foreign policy experts, and religious freedom champions. The event highlighted best practices in peace building and multi-faith initiatives across the MENA region.

FORB TOOL KIT



EWM produces free digital resources promoting Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) in partnership with multiple religious freedom and human rights organizations. Together we offer education, media and strategic leadership initiatives.

This digital tool kit is comprised of **free booklets, courses, films, articles and research on the topic of Freedom of Religion or Belief.** To receive our monthly newsletter on upcoming projects, contact: shirin@empowerwomen.media

TIRF Small Grants

The Initiative for Religious Freedom (TIRF): Equipping and Mobilizing TIRF Advocates Middle East & North Africa

The vision of TIRF is to equip and mobilize leaders to support the human right of religious freedom through education, diplomacy, media, grassroots and leadership initiatives.

Our mission is to inspire influencers to stand up for freedom of faith so that everyone is free to *live what they believe*.

Eligibility:

- Must complete the online application
- Must attend introduction Zoom meeting
- Must attend a TIRF event (on Zoom or in person)
- Must submit a progress report
- Must submit invoices or receipts if requested
- Must send summary report and photos.

Grant Range:

\$2,500, \$5,000, or \$10,000

Grant Use:

Online course, workshop, forum, fellowship, short film, televised program, research, legal, women's initiatives and grassroots projects.

Required Attachments:

- CV or Resume
- Photo
- Website (if available)
- Curricula
- Social Media
- 2 References
- Budget (with line items)

Contact

For more details, please contact Shirin Taber: shirin@empowerwomen.media or visit our [Grants page](#).



STRATEGIC SECTORS

-  Diplomacy
-  Training
-  Media
-  Research
-  Women
-  Youth
-  Grassroots

Small Grants Projects



Kasra El Dobara Training

Cairo, Egypt
Training & Education
Project Leader: Odette Wadi



Religious Freedom Parliamentarians Caucus

Pakistan
Diplomacy & Training
Project Leader: Asiya Nasir



Diversity Treasures

Cairo, Egypt
Media & Technology
Project Leader:
Cherry Ramsis



Resurrection Church Short Film Training

Lebanon | Training & Media
Project Leader: Markus
Kashouh



Local Changemaker Course

Egypt & Lebanon
FoRB Learning Platform
Training
Project Leader: Gunilla
Ikponmwo



Working Group to Advance Inter-Religious Reconciliation

Syria
Diplomacy & Research
Project Leader: Loujain Kiki



TIRF Research Project

MENA Region
Research
Project Leader: Dr. Lindsay
J. Benstead



Faith Without Fear

Pakistan
Media
Project Leader: Wagma Feroz



MENA Online Network

Online
Research & Training
Project Leader: Dr. Salah Ali



Empowering Youth for Religious Freedom

Pakistan
Training
Project Leader: Jamaima Afridi

New Film Projects



Who Moved the Jews?

Who Moved the Jews? traces the 4,000-year history of Jewish life in the Middle East, detailing how Jews have remained resilient in the land despite repeated conflict and persecution. Through expert commentary, this short film explores a recurring cycle of exile and adaptation, inviting viewers to reflect on the importance of fostering multi-faith societies in the region. This film has reached nearly 20,000 views via our network and YouTube channel.



Egyptians are Egyptians—No Matter their Faith

This short documentary highlights challenges faced by Egyptians whose religious identity does not align with the state. Egypt's national ID card system forces citizens to declare one of only three recognized religions: Islam, Christianity, or Judaism. This restriction disproportionately affects women, youth, and religious minorities, reinforcing social exclusion and denying the freedom of belief.



The Initiative for Religious Freedom

As religious freedom restrictions tighten in the greater MENA region, Empower Women Media's newest initiative employs an action-oriented strategy to protect the fundamental right to freedom of belief. *The Initiative for Religious Freedom* mobilizes leaders through education, diplomacy, media, grassroots and leadership training.

Outcomes



- **Trained over 600 in Pakistan** as religious freedom advocates through the *Live What You Believe* certificate course
- **Coordinated 13 religious freedom forums in 8 countries:** Belgium, United Kingdom, Egypt, Lebanon, UAE, Pakistan, the United States, and Israel
- **Offered small grants to 10 organizations,** ranging from \$2,500 to \$10,000
- **Distributed religious freedom tools and resources to 10,000** including government, business, academic, NGO and faith-based leaders
- **Produced 3 new films:** *Who Moved the Jews?*, *Egyptians are Egyptians—No Matter their Faith* and *The Initiative for Religious Freedom*
- **Conducted research and published reports** about religious freedom and women's empowerment initiatives
- **Created a FoRB Tool Kit** with free films, journals, reports and online courses
- **Engaged over one million** via our collective network through social media, newsletters, press releases and events.





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

SHIRIN TABER | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
SHIRIN@EMPOWERWOMEN.MEDIA
EMPOWERWOMEN.MEDIA

