Snapshot of Peer-learning Points of the 2026 Training Program for Young Faith Actors in Cairo

"*Five days. Powerful voices. One shared purpose.*" This is how Frère Emmanuel Pisani succinctly summarized an unforgettable week of **dialogue, reflection and meaningful encounters in Cairo**. Jointly organized by the Al Azhar Observatory for Combating Extremism, the British University in Egypt and the Dominican Institute for Oriental Studies, this immersive program with over 50 participants from 16 countries was a true celebration of critical thinking, coexistence and mutual respect. It brought together diverse perspectives united by one conviction: dialogue matters. The international experiential program in February 2026 (see a short video) enhanced the participants' capacity to use faith-based approaches to foster inclusion, prevent discrimination and counter hate speech.



Held across academic and faith-based spaces in a 'religious sites and insights' mode, the program **identified complementary perspectives through an innovative format**. Throughout the week, complementarity was explored at every level: among faith traditions; between religion and human rights as complementary foundations of human dignity; between academic and religious actors engaging in open and enriching partnership; and among multi-stakeholders — participants, scholars, practitioners and young faith actors — who moved across roles as learners, trainers, reviewers and presenters.



Participants exchanged perspectives on issues of freedom of belief, countering hate speech, clarifying the ethics of artificial intelligence, and women's rights in both religious and legal interpretations. They emphasized the complementarity between human rights and religious ethics, highlighting the vital role of religious institutions in dismantling extremist discourses that exploit religious texts to justify exclusion or violations of human dignity.

In addition to the learning sessions at the **British University in Egypt**, the program included a visit to the headquarters of the **Al Azhar Observatory for Combating Extremism**, to learn more about the operations of its 13 language units. Participants also visited the **Dominican Institute for Oriental Studies**, aiming to strengthen human connections and a sense of community among the participants, and empower them to become ambassadors of awareness and pluralism in their respective countries.

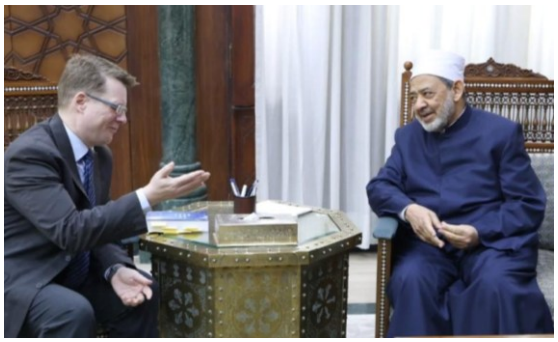


The closing day carried special meaning, as it marked the **launch of the book** 'Faith in United Nations Human Rights Treaties'. In a strong expression of experiential learning, several participants presented selected chapters, engaging critically with the legal and religious commentaries in the book and thus contributing to a broader international human rights conversation. The whole book is available online in open access in English, with Arabic and French translations also being prepared.



A key result of the peer-learning week was the **empowerment of young faith actors** — including female religious guides (*mourchidates* from Mauritania and *Badian Gokh* from Senegal) facilitated by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights — who are now better equipped to promote understanding and lead positive social change within their communities.

Participants warmly appreciated the **interactive presentations and facilitation** by the co-organizers, led by Prof. Ibrahim Salama (British University in Egypt), Dr. Reham Salamah (Al Azhar Observatory for Combating Extremism), Frère Dr. Emmanuel Pisani (Dominican Institute for Oriental Studies), Anne Schouw (European Union), Dr. Charbel Attallah (Vatican Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue) and Dr. Michael Wiener (United Nations Faith for Rights). The co-hosts look forward to building on this engagement at the next edition of the annual 'Human Fraternity Peer-learning for Young Faith Actors'.



On 2 February 2026, a **bilateral meeting with the Grand Imam of Al Azhar, Ahmad Al-Tayyeb**, also marked the International Day of Human Fraternity (pursuant to United Nations General Assembly resolution 75/200), following up to the meeting between the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar and Pope Francis on 4 February 2019, which had resulted in the signing of the landmark document entitled "Human fraternity for world peace and living together".

Feedback from participants of the peer-learning week on their social media channels

Online post by Adham Kroom: "*Some experiences do not just add to what you know. They change how you see. Participating in the peer-to-peer learning program on the Complementarity between Religion and Human Rights, hosted at The British University in Egypt, was one of those rare moments for me. I would not be exaggerating to say that my perspective shifted almost entirely. Questions of freedom of religion and collective moral values, which I had previously approached as points of tension, gradually revealed themselves through honest dialogue and critical engagement as areas of compatibility and strength. I was also exposed to ideas I was encountering for the first time, alongside misconceptions I did not realize I carried. What truly shaped this experience was engaging with the same questions through three interconnected lenses: international law, Islam, and Christianity.*"

Online post by Aya Badr: "*As a political science and peacebuilding researcher, this experience strongly intersected with my specialization and allowed me to share insights on the critical role religion can play in triggering armed conflicts, and how this role can be redefined and mobilized as a driver for peacebuilding. Sessions were led by practitioners directly involved in shaping human rights discourse at the UN level, alongside religious scholars and institutions working on interfaith dialogue and countering extremism. The program was grounded in the Faith for Rights framework developed in Geneva, which translates international human rights standards into faith-sensitive, community-level practice. Grateful for this rich learning experience and the opportunity to engage at the intersection of religion, law, human rights, and peacebuilding.*"

Online post by Kenzy ElHadidy: "*On the closing day of the event, I was selected alongside Nourine Gad to present our review of a chapter of the book that was focused on the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. The chapter highlighted the spiritual harm that many families of the disappeared suffer from and how international law and treaties do not directly address this issue and how it impacts communities.* […] *I am truly thankful for this opportunity, and for his support and confidence in my participation. I look forward to applying the knowledge and insights I gained in this well-organized event.*"