

# REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES FOR THE YEAR TO 31 DECEMBER 2024

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## Report of the Trustees

The Trustees present their report for the year to 31 December 2024.

### Reference and administrative details

**Registered Office:**

Essex Hall, 1-6, Essex Street, London, WC2R 3HY

**Contact details**

The Charity can be contacted through its Executive Secretary, Luke Liniewicz, at [hq@iarf.net](mailto:hq@iarf.net) or +31641744951.

**Trustees**

The following persons served as Trustees throughout the year to 31 December 2024:

- Prof. George Williams, a resident of the USA, who also served as the President,
- Mr. Peter le Poole, a resident of the Netherlands, who also served as the Treasurer,
- Mr. Aayush Soni, a resident of India, who also served as the Vice-President,
- Mr. Robert Ince, a resident of England.

The Trustees have no beneficial interests in the Charity.

**Constitution**

International Association for Religious Freedom is a Charity Incorporated Organisation in England & Wales. The Association was founded in Boston, Massachusetts, USA, 25 May 1900.

The Charity Incorporated Organisation (CIO) is governed by its Constitution, where the Trustees play a pivotal role in its stewardship, bolstered by the guidance of the International Council. Within the Council, the President, Vice President, and Treasurer, who are also Trustees, collaborate with eight other dedicated members. These members bring a wealth of diverse representations from various pivotal regions and affiliations such as North America, Europe and the Middle East, South Asia, East Asia, the RFYN (IARF's youth network), and the IARLW (International Association of Liberal Religious Women, IARF's sister

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organisation). Additionally, a member elected by the General Meeting, representing any region, is also included in the Council.

## Organisation

Following the establishment of new leadership after the 2023 World Congress, the focus in 2024 shifted to strengthening IARF's organisational framework to support its renewed strategy. A key priority was to move from informal customs to clear, documented procedures that ensure transparency and effective governance.

A significant achievement was the development of a comprehensive Governance Policy. This foundational document formally clarifies the distinct roles and responsibilities of the Board of Trustees and the International Council. It defines the Council's vital advisory function in representing the membership, while affirming the Trustees' ultimate legal and financial responsibility under UK charity law. This policy provides a stable and transparent framework for decision-making and collaboration between the IARF's core leadership bodies.

In line with our strategy to increase member participation, 2024 saw the active launch of several volunteer-led working groups. These groups are now the primary vehicles for implementing our mission. A notable example is the revitalised International Engagement Working Group, which, under new volunteer leadership, has successfully expanded our advocacy efforts mainly in Europe.

## Achievements and Performance

In 2024, the International Association for Religious Freedom continued to build on its strategy to serve as the global home for liberal religion. Our work was guided by the ongoing collaborative refinement of our Vision and Identity statement, a foundational document that clarifies our mission across our core activities: education, advocacy, and community celebration.

### **Developing Our Educational Offering: The Free Religion Institute**

The establishment of the Free Religion Institute, our online platform for learning and dialogue, was a central focus. The technical infrastructure was finalised with the implementation of a new e-learning system, and the first courses, focusing on Free Religion

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in the UK and Japan, were launched. Feedback from these initial sessions has provided valuable lessons for future course promotion and delivery.

To ensure the Institute's long-term growth, we have actively pursued new funding. Detailed grant applications were submitted to one member group and a foundation in order to fund the Institute's development over the next three years. This effort is designed to secure the resources needed to expand our curriculum and recruit distinguished academics and partners, ensuring a high standard of scholarship.

**Expanding International Engagement and Advocacy**

Our international advocacy efforts grew in scope and impact. The revitalised International Engagement Working Group has successfully expanded our presence in Europe by re-engaging with the Council of Europe's Committee for Interreligious & Interconvictional Dialogue (IRIC-D). A successful joint webinar in November strengthened this relationship, leading to the Board of Trustees approving funding for a trial membership with the committee. This complements our ongoing work with UN-affiliated platforms like the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations (CoNGO), the NGO Committee on Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB), and the NGO Human Rights Committee in Geneva.

Our focus has also expanded to include supporting indigenous religions, with initial steps taken to explore engagement with communities in the Guianas.

**Strengthening the IARF Community and Building a Sustainable Future**

Fostering a connected and resilient global community remains a core priority. We have initiated a comprehensive review of our membership policies to better serve our groups and strengthen our network. We continue to process new applications, including from the North American Unitarian Association (NAUA), and explore collaborations on UN engagement and youth activities.

Our youth network, RFYN, has broadened its international connections, with its Indian leadership undertaking a successful visit to Europe to meet with partners. Grassroots activities remain vibrant, demonstrated by a youth meet in Courtalam, Tamil Nadu, organised by our India Chapter, which brought together over 60 young adults for interreligious dialogue. These activities are supported by our Community Platform on IARF.net, which serves as a vital tool for collaboration among our global membership.

Recognising our over-reliance on membership income, in late 2024 we began developing a comprehensive fundraising strategy to diversify our funding sources. This includes actively

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seeking support from foundations, corporations, and individuals through grants and donations. This strategic financial planning, alongside repeat corporate donations, aims to secure the resources necessary to support our staff, expand our programmes, and ensure a sustainable future for the organisation.

## Financial Review

The financial performance of the International Association for Religious Freedom in 2024 reflects our continued commitment to fiscal responsibility and strategic growth.

### Income and Expenditure

For 2024, IARF's total income amounted to £20,494, which is consistent with the £20,939 received in 2023. This stability was achieved through a significant increase in membership contributions, which rose to £13,026 from £10,387 in the previous year. We also saw continued good performance from our investments, which generated £6,061 in income. The absence of a World Congress in 2024, which had generated a positive balance in the prior year, explains the slight decrease in overall income.

Total expenditure for the year was £17,964, a significant decrease from £26,029 in 2023. This reduction is primarily due to the cyclical nature of our major expenses, such as the quadrennial Greeley Award and congress-related expenses, which were not incurred this year. Employment costs, at £17,307, remained our largest expense. This expenditure is crucial to the organisation's operations, enabling us to perform many tasks in-house, such as maintaining our website infrastructure, which enhances our ability to serve our members cost-effectively.

The year concluded with an operating surplus of £2,530, a notable improvement from the operating deficit of £5,090 in 2023. From this surplus an amount of £2,265 was set aside as a provision for the Greeley Award 2027.

### Investments and Assets

Our strategic decision to hold our assets in an investment fund focusing on sustainability continues to align with our values and yield positive financial results. Our total investments at the end of 2024 stood at £288,740, an increase from £267,754 at the end of 2023. The organisation's total assets, including cash at bank and investments, amounted to £300,939 at the end of 2024, up from £277,423 in the previous year.

### Governance and Future Planning

In our commitment to enhanced financial oversight, the audit committee established by the

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Trustees continues to review the organisation's finances, accounting, and reporting practices. This ensures greater transparency and efficiency in our financial operations. Looking ahead, we will continue our plans to increase fundraising efforts by boosting income from membership dues as well as private and corporate donations.

**Reserves Policy**

The current level of reserves remains sufficient for our present level of activities and provides a solid foundation for our planned initiatives. The reserves are primarily held in an investment fund, reflecting our global nature and providing a hedge against currency fluctuations.

In conclusion, our financial position strengthened in 2024. The achievement of an operating surplus, combined with strong investment performance and increased assets, positions us well for the future. As we move forward, we remain committed to prudent financial management while investing in initiatives that advance our mission of promoting free and liberal religion worldwide.

## Assessment of Risks

The Trustees reviewed the risks affecting the organisation and have taken steps to address them, particularly in the areas of financial sustainability and inter-group conflicts. To enhance financial stability, efforts have focused on increasing revenue from membership dues and attracting more donations. Potential points of contention between member groups have been identified and are being monitored to mitigate conflicts.

## Statement Of Trustees' Responsibilities

The trustees are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law.

The trustees are required to:

1. select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
2. observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
3. make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
4. state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
5. prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the CIO will continue in operation.

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The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with all regulations. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees,

Robert Ince

7 August 2025



**CHARITY COMMISSION**  
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Charity Name <b>International Association for Religious Freedom</b>	No (if any) <b>1026699</b>
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## Receipts and payments accounts

**CC16a**

For the period from	Period start date 1/1/2024	To	Period end date 31/12/2024
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### Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
<b>A1 Receipts</b>					
Membership fees	13,026	-	-	13,026	10,387
Donations	1,583	-	-	1,583	1,523
Investment income (dividends)	6,061	-	-	6,061	5,892
Exchange Rate Gain/Loss	- 176	-	-	- 176	- 106
Positive Congress Balance	-	-	-	-	2,056
<b>Sub total</b> (Gross income for AR)	20,494	-	-	20,494	19,751
<b>A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).</b>					
Sale of investment shares	-	-	-	-	-
Loans taken	-	-	-	-	1,188
<b>Sub total</b>	-	-	-	-	1,188
<b>Total receipts</b>	20,494	-	-	20,494	20,939

### A3 Payments

Salary and tax for one employee	17,307	-	-	17,307	15,641
Free Religion Institute	136	-	-	136	-
Bank charges	43	-	-	43	41
Tel/Computer	187	-	-	187	183



Print/post	-	-	-	-	-
Governance	291	-	-	291	532
Award	-	-	-	-	4,086
Currency Conversion	-	-	-	-	-
Congress Travel and Accommodation	-	-	-	-	4,362
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>17,964</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>17,964</b>	<b>24,845</b>
<b>A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)</b>					
Repayment of loans		-	-	-	1,184
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,184</b>
<b>Total payments</b>	<b>17,964</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>17,964</b>	<b>26,029</b>
<b>Net of receipts/(payments)</b>	<b>2,530</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,530</b>	<b>- 5,090</b>
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	9,669	-	-	9,669	14,759
<b>Cash funds this year end</b>	<b>12,199</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>12,199</b>	<b>9,669</b>

## Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
<b>B1 Cash funds</b>	Held in GBP, EUR, USD and JPY accounts	12,199	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account (s))	12,199	-	-
		OK	OK	OK

	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
<b>B2 Other monetary assets</b>			
Details			
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-

	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
<b>B3 Investment assets</b>			
Details			
Newton Sustainable Growth and Income Fund for Charities (at BNY Mellon)	Unrestricted	-	236,247
Newton Sustainable Growth and Income Fund for Charities (at BNY Mellon)	Greeley Fund	-	52,493
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-

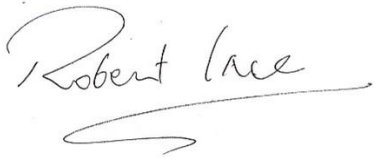
	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
<b>B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use</b>			
Details			
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-

		-	-
		-	-
		-	-

## B5 Liabilities

Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
Provision Greeley Award	Greeley Fund	2,265	2027
		-	
		-	
		-	
		-	

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees

Signature	Print Name	Date of approval
	Robert Ince, Trustee	