

## **Title of the Event**

One-Week Multidisciplinary Workshop on Interfaith and International Humanitarian Law

## **Name of Centre**

Centre for Advanced Studies in International Humanitarian Law (CASH), RGNUL

## **Collaborators**

Department of Political Science, RGNUL

## **Highlight of Guest Speakers from each day**

### **Day 1: Six-day Multidisciplinary Workshop on Interfaith and IHL**

**Guest Speaker: Dr Manoj Kumar Sinha (Professor and Director, Indian Law Institute, New Delhi)**

Dr Manoj Kumar Sinha presents his views on the religious perspective of International Humanitarian Law. He begins with an attempt to study and find out various references and principles of IHL in Hinduism. He cites a huge gap in Indian scholarship on the issues of interfaith and Humanitarian principles and the need to decolonize the field of IHL.

He explores the objectives of the four Geneva Conventions and traces their origin to Hindu scriptures. The main objective of GC were agreed upon in 1859 post the Battle of Solferino. Henry Dunant witnessed casualties, sufferings of the people and inadequate humanitarian assistance which completely transformed him. He quotes Ashoka who had a similar transformation on seeing the sufferings of the injured soldiers after the Battle of Kalinga. He decided to give up war and preach peaceful methods of conflict resolution. He iterates the example of Lord Hanuman, Arjun and the Pandavas who made efforts to stall the war by engaging in bilateral talks. The idea of 'Saam Daan Dandh Bhed 'in Kautilya's Arthshastra finds itself in the UN Charter. The Charter entrusts that all member-states shall first exhaust all peaceful methods of conflict resolution (saam, daan and dandh) before resorting to use of force (bhed).

Dr Sinha cites the three fundamental principles Henry Dunant focused in his writings. First is the need to provide adequate medical assistance in the battlefield for combatants and belligerents. Voluntary societies should be established in each country for providing timely and efficient treatment to the injured in the battlefield. Here, he draws a similarity with Bhai Ghaniya Ji, a disciple of Guru Teg Bahadur Ji who after the battle poured water on all the wounded soldiers irrespective of the party they belonged to. He refers to the Social Contract theory by Rousseau and elaborates “War is no way a relationship of man with man but a relationship between states in which individuals are only enemies by accident. Soldiers may only be fought as long as they are themselves fighting.

Once they lay down their weapons, they become mere human beings” . He brings home the point that principle of *hors de combat* was composed by Rousseau in his work decades before it found place in the Article 41 of the Additional Protocol I. The thirteen edicts of Ashoka lay down the principles of non-violence and expound on the modern day principle of there are no winners in a war. Even the so-called winning side faces loss of human life, environmental and infrastructural damage.

Next, the second principle he refers to is the principle of distinction and the need to protect military hospitals and medical personnel. Weapons causing indiscriminate harm were prohibited . To elaborate on this principle, he cites an example from the Ramayana. Lakshmana, the younger brother of Rama was in possession of a deadly weapon which could wipe out the entire enemy race. Lord Rama forbade the use of such weapons and instructed him to restrict to the military targets. The ancient literature on warfare, much like modern day principles, confined the military targets to combatants and soldiers. Dr Sinha quotes the incident when Ravana intended to kill Hanuman in his court. Vibhishan, Ravana’s brother forbade him to do so since it would violate the principles of Raj Dharma.

He finishes off by citing from the Rig Veda that “It is unjust to strike someone from behind, cowardly to poison the tip of the arrow and heinous to attack the innocent women and children, sick, elderly and disabled” to sum up the four principles of Customary Humanitarian Law – Distinction, Necessity, Proportionality and Humanity.

## **Day 2: Six-day Multidisciplinary Workshop on Interfaith and IHL**

**Guest Speaker: Venerable Geshe Dorji Damdul (Director - Tibet House, New Delhi)**

Venerable Geshe Dorji Damdul presents his views on the religious perspective of International Humanitarian Law (“IHL”). He starts by appreciating the efforts of RGNUL for organizing this workshop for the promotion of IHL, and addresses how the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has affected human life. He further emphasised on the role of the United Nations, the World Health Organization, Sovereign states, International Human Rights law and more specifically IHL, in handling this pandemic.

Venerable Geshe Dorji Damdul then elaborated on the buddhist perspective in handling such humanitarian crises, which states than one should go help in such situations irrespective of their religious idenity and beliefs, instead by the very virtue of being human themselves. He stressed on its importance since the virus doesn’t differentiate between people based on their religious identity, virtues or beliefs. He then highlights that Covid-19 induces suffering in people in a twofold manner; the first being the ones infected by the virus itself, and the second are those who are affected seeing their loved ones infected.

Venerable Geshe Dorji Damdul says that on an individual level, the people who are affected by the virus should be given immediate medical and emotional support, isrspective of their religious identitiy. He further emphasizes on the importance of bodily immunity and how one should strengthen it in order to avoid post Covid-19 complications. To address the issue on a global level he referred to the statement by US Secretary of State in his recent visit to India,

where he said that the US alone cannot end Covid-19. He stressed on this statement by the US Official to highlight the importance of the global community to work as one in order to bring an end to the pandemic.

He then goes on to explain the four cardinal virtues that one should possess in order to do the greatest good on a humanitarian level. Venerable Geshe Dorji Damdul says that *firstly*, the person should be *skillful* in taking care of the individual, and treat them the same way they would treat a loved one. *Secondly*, they should have the passion to work for the greater good in an *altruistic* manner. *Thridly*, the *power* of a good and passionate heart will also inspire others to do good. Finally, having the *discriminatory wisdom* to see the nuances of things and reasonably foresee events before they happen. Venerable Geshe Dorji Damdul further mai tained that *compassion* is the guiding force for all the aforesaid four facets required for someone to effectively work on the discipline of humanitarian law. He maintained that people belonging to the legal fraternity, especially those working in the arena of IHL or Human rights law must essentially possess the virtue of compassion.

He pertinently stressed on the importance of harmonious existence between people belonging to different religions or cultures. He stated that the world must be viewed as a family wherein everyone must follow the concept of universal ethics in their interaction with the outside world. In his opinion, religion, which is an individual's business, must remain confined to the same and must not be allowed to interfere with the secular functioning of society.

Venerable Geshe Dorji Damdul highlighted how the modern education system, which is a legacy of the industrial revolution, promotes materialism and has failed to inculcate the virtues of



humanity and compassion in children. He quoted his Holiness Dalai Llama to state that the education system must be re-evaluated as the current curriculum focuses only on the development of the brain and not the heart. He opined that the discipline of humanitarianism could be strengthened by introducing a curriculum aiming at heart development in the education system. He appreciated the efforts of RGNUL, Punjab for organising this one-week multidisciplinary workshop on interfaith and IHL and hoped that the same would help the young participants understand the relevance of love, affection and humanitarianism.

The participants were immensely inspired by Venerable Geshe Dorji Damdul's address and thanked him for highlighting the importance of compassion and universal ethics. The faculty coordinator Dr Sangeeta Taak expressed her heartfelt gratitude to the eminent speaker for imparting great wisdom in students and teachers alike, through this lecture.

### **Day 3: Six-day Multidisciplinary Workshop on Interfaith and IHL**

#### **Guest Speaker: Prof. (Dr.) M. Afzal Wani**

The third lecture of the six day multidisciplinary workshop on 'Interfaith and challenges of International Humanitarian Law during Covid-19' was delivered by Prof. Dr. M. Afzal Wani who discussed the interrelation between Islam and International Humanitarian Law (IHL).

He began the session by referring to IHL as a programme of mitigating the horrors of war and that for IHL to succeed; he highlighted the importance of strengthening the motivation of actors in the field. He also talked about having a different approach to the studies in faith and in practices, requirements, and purposes of religion. He further placed emphasis upon attaining the objectives of the religion and another psychologically important aspect- giving respect to the heroes of the field. He gave the example of Ram ji and how he as a follower can be respectful towards him.

Faith is the force behind motivating people across different field and organisations such as the ICRC. Degree of faith has the potential to influence commitment to work. An Interfaith aspect is critical to study principles of IHL. As the session progressed, Prof. Wani talked about the importance of faith and inner preparedness and conscience in our life. Faith is the force behind motivating people across different fields and organisations such as the ICRC. The degree of faith has the potential to influence one's commitment to work. Therefore, an interfaith approach is critical to study principles of IHL.

He spoke about treating any person whom he interacts with in a noble manner irrespective of his religion, background, country etc. Thus indicating that one's faith and consciousness are essential for implementing principles of IHL. IHL isn't something that comes into operation on a certain day- it comes into force by the virtue of one's belief system.

He observed that war is a reality and its is inevitable. It is different in intensity but conflict is always there. In light of the same, nations and other relevant organisations should prepare themselves incessantly without any break. They have prepared themselves for the fruits of IHL and implementation of IHL policies. The element of faith is very important because it will keep you consistent and prepared. One won't have to read principles of IHL to implement it. Instead one's own actions, desires and aspirations will determine how they will be impacting our system under IHL and how they will be contributing to IHL and have a negative impact of the implementation of principles of IHL. Therefore, faith will be playing a critical role in the same.

He further noted that people in the civilised world have to look for turning point and there has be continuous IHL advocacy in the world. One faith shouldn't tell another that you have done bad things. Instead, they should tell that they have done good things such as that your faith is philanthropy, kindness, mercy and humanity. That approach is very important.

He raised the question- why not have a secular approach but it has to be an Indian secular approach. All faiths have to be taken into consideration. The importance of an interfaith approach is very critical.

With respect to the same, he noted that 1/4<sup>th</sup> of the population in Muslims and they have been involved in different kinds of conflicts. If we take Islam as faith, Instead of fighting, we have to incorporate the modern principles of IHL in Islamic faith as well.

He continues his lecture and instructs that to have a better understanding of Islam and IHL, it is important to get to the essence of faith, strive for betterment and advancement of good. Without advancing what Prophet has revealed, the inter-faith exercise shall be futile. The problem in modern world is that Muslims believe in the Quran but do not follow what the holy book says. All religions of the world are experiencing a similar problem. There is corruption at every level at the pretext of ‘matter of faith/belief’. He further tells that attack by surprise is prohibited in Islamic law. Anyone who wages such a war finds a place only in hell. Cruelty and indiscriminate use of force are clearly prohibited. Somebody’s unjust behavior should make us unjust. Rather, one should strive for justice for the day of resurrection. Justice is dear to God. Wars should not be carried out for the purpose of subjugation, personal gains or terrorization.

He quotes the example of Prophet’s cousin, Ali. Ali was about to stab a man in the battlefield and meanwhile, the man spat on him and uttered ‘I hate you’. Ali immediately dropped the idea of stabbing him because he felt that act of retaliation would have been due to personal reasons and not for a just cause. Devil will always create reasons and justifications for war and we are put to test (the Arabic interpretation of ‘*fitna*’) by Allah to stick to his guidance. Islam does not justify use of excessive restraint he cites Chapter 2, Verse 190 of the Holy Quran and elaborates do not unnecessarily fight in the name of Allah. Permission for war shall never be given for the purpose of persecution or creating blunders but advancing order, removing disorder, settling disturbances and strengthening peace and humanity. Do not transgress the limits for Allah does not love the transgressors. Attacking the sick, elderly, innocent and disabled is prohibited.

Another thing dearest to Allah is fulfillment of promises, honoring of obligations and agreements. He quotes from the Holy Quran where Allah says ‘*I do not break promises*’. Modern day humanitarian principles are an agreement to honor human dignity, not to commit atrocities on the unequal. Hence, we shall all abide by it. The parting message he shares with all of us is that eliminate transgression, respect all faiths, honor human dignity, let go of feelings of superiority and be kind to one and all. The values he enlisted form the bedrock of modern-day humanitarian law.

### **Day 3: Six-day Multidisciplinary Workshop on Interfaith and IHL**

**Guest Speaker: Dr A.K. Merchant (General Secretary - Temple of Understanding India Foundation)**

Dr A.K. Merchant presents his views on the religious perspective of International Humanitarian Law (“IHL”). He states IHL is not simply concerned with secularism, since a lot of its aspects are concerned with religious teachings. He highlights how there was a dramatic change in the environment within a few months after the lockdown, showing the impact of human activities on the environment in the Anthropocene.

He breaks down the ongoing crises into eight parts, to elaborate on the emergencies that humans are facing as a *family* namely, *climate* emergency, *energy* emergency, *water* emergency, *sustainability* emergency, *poverty* emergency, *financial* emergency, *extinction* emergency and *weapons of mass destruction* emergency. Dr Merchant elaborates on all of the aforementioned, stating that any one of these can have a major impact on human life, and all of these together represent an unequivocal catastrophe.

He then proceeds to explain the Bahá’í perspective, which believes that Earth is but one country and humankind its citizens, and in order to explain the importance of interfaith discourse and compassion, he quotes His Holiness Dalai Lama, Wayne Dyer, Anais Nin and Albert Einstein. All of them emphasized on having an open mind and perspective, and shedding ignorance by broadening our horizons will help us grow as a society.

Dr Merchant then moves onto the role played by civil society and religious/faith-based minorities in developing transformative and constructive resilience. He highlights that not only have these mobilised jointly to prevent discriminatory behaviour in such tough times, but have also showcased mutual support in reporting such behaviour despite the dangers to their own persons due to the communicable virus. He gave the example of the Japanese community, who maintained their calm and discipline during the 2011 Tsunami and Fukushima Daiichi disaster.

He moves on to explaining the role of social media in such times of crisis, and how it should be used to propagate values of inspiration and hope, instead of fake news as was the case with “WhatsApp University”. He stresses on the role of religious and spiritual leaders in such times in calming the masses, so instead of acting impulsively they may act in a manner that benefits humans at large. Their role is also important in respecting differences between faiths, as the primary goal is to uphold truth, peace and justice. He also states that one needs to be aware of

their own religious teachings, as this enhances inclusive narratives and interfaith approach, which in turn strengthens IHL.

Dr A.K Merchant stated that religious institutions have played a significant role in removing the misinformation propagated by unauthentic sources on social media platforms, by disseminating information in accordance with WHO's recommendations. He gave the example of three important religious documents to illustrate the aforementioned point, namely, *Encyclical Fratelli Tutti* (on fraternity and social friendship) by Pope; the message of the Rector of Al Azhar, Cairo; and *the 2020 Naw-Ruz & Ridvan messages* of the Universal House of Justice, Haifa.

He offered some action-oriented recommendations to effectively deal with the ramifications of the pandemic. He stressed on the need for intra-religious as well as inter-religious dialogue in order to sensitize a wider society; joint study of different religious scriptures to discover similarities and help facilitate conversation and eliminate defensive approach of a follower of one faith towards the other; understanding different cultures to help dispel misconceptions and prejudices; making use of influential religious actors in spreading the truth.

Dr A.K Merchant informed the participants that he has recently attended a Virtual Gathering of representatives of religious & social organizations, invited to have an interactive session with the PM to give him suggestions on effectively dealing with the Covid-19 situation. He, in the capacity of the General Secretary of TOU, India Foundation, gave the following recommendations; *digitization of Primary Health Centres and connectivity between them, training to medical practitioners, acknowledgement to religious communities for providing relief to the poor in these unprecedented times, and increased investment on Public Health Infrastructure.*

Dr Merchant also enlisted some action-oriented suggestions in relation to IHL. He stated that religious leaders must not hesitate from discussing their disagreements with each other as the same if done constructively, would promote mutual understanding and help diffuse communal tensions.

Dr Merchant displayed a picture of the Bahá'í World centre located in the city of Haifa, Israel and remarked how the same hosted thousands of visitors per day before the pandemic hit us. He observed that this pandemic has brought to the surface our ill-preparedness to deal with unprecedented global health emergencies. He stated that it is high time that countries cut down on military expenses and reallocate their budgets in favour of social, economic and medical

infrastructure. He reflected upon the importance of following the principles advocated by Article 25 of the UDHR and the supplementary covenants, namely ICCPR AND ICESCR, and stated that countries must come together and work towards the improvement of public health system and the elimination of the “hunger pandemic”. He stated that the damage inflicted by the pandemic upon humankind can only be mended by collective efforts. He presented a picture displaying a group of people walking towards the Bahá’í Lotus Temple, located in Delhi, and used the same as an allegory to his concluding remark that persons belonging to different religious communities must walk together towards the path of humanity.

A vote of thanks, presented by Dr Sangeeta Taak, the faculty coordinator of CASH, marked the end of the third day of the workshop.

#### **Day 4: Six-day Multidisciplinary Workshop on Interfaith and IHL**

##### **Guest Speaker: Andrew Bartles-Smith (ICRC’s Regional Adviser for Humanitarian Affairs in Asia)**

Mr. Andrew Bartles-Smith familiarised the audience with the work of the ICRC, including the nature of work, affiliation, mandate and how it engages all parties in the conflict. He then explained the challenges faced by the organization in getting acceptance by the parties and accessing conflict affected areas. He moved on to the challenges faced by IHL in the current times as it is perceived as “Western”, outdated and ineffective against major powers, including other factors like recalcitrance of governments and the threat of armed forces like Islamic State.

Mr. Andrew then moved on to explaining how the ICRC engages with parties involved in conflict, like providing operational support by treatment of wounded and protection of detainees. The organization also promotes dialogue on IHL, by carrying out interventions and educating the parties on principles and conducts of war. He also explained how the organizations expands its network and reach, which does not simply mean preaching IHL, but rather learning from religions, cultures, values and history in order to understand situations better and promote growth. This is done by reaching out to specific target groups, namely governments, militaries, NSAGS, religious circles, academia, NGOs, FBOs and civil society.

Specifically talking about networking in the Asian region, he mentioned Islamic, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu and Confucian circles. He emphasized on the effectiveness of networking with such circles, and how the experience has always been positive and beneficial since they cover a vast array of aspects that run civil society. He argued that while it is seen the inter religious tensions or identity politics is seen as the primary cause behind conflicts, the same can be true for any ideology, referring to how the theory of evolution was used by the Nazis. Mr Andrew talked about the content of the dialogue while reaching out to religious circles, which is not interfaith since ICRC is not faith based, rather it explores correspondences between faith and IHL, common humanitarian principles while embracing differences. He also emphasized on the use of religious resources for the promotion of discourse and humanitarian principles.

Mr Andrew then explained the basics of IHL, including its inception and the Geneva and Hague conventions. He then talked about the methods adopted by the ICRC, which state that while law is vital to set the standard, it is equally important to emphasize on the values underpinning it. He then moved onto the organization's interaction with Islamic Circles in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Middle East and Africa in the past few years. He then stressed on the recent and increasing interaction with Hindu and Sikh circles, in order to better understand Indian traditions which are extremely rich in terms of rules that regulate warfare. While addressing rich traditions, he moved onto the Chinese culture which too has a detailed set of rules for warfare, all of which can shows how much the East can teach the West. He mentioned Ashoka the Great while discussing the interplay of IHL with various Buddhist codes and principles, and how the religion is even less permissive than IHL.

He proceeded to praise the Buddhist Monastic Code for prescribing rules against *sexual violence*, and for *the protection of property, environment and animals* and pointed out the relevance of the aforementioned rules in the realm of IHL. He stated that Buddhism is not an otherworldly religion that is silent on the issue of conflict; rather it digs deep into the aforesaid issue and highlights not only the causes of conflict but also the ways of regulating the same. He highlighted how *the Pali Canon* and *the jatakas* contain, *inter alia*, examples and stories showcasing appropriate behaviour during an armed conflict with regards to the treatment of prisoners and non-armed persons, protection of places of worship, the concept of proportionality,

etc. He stated that Buddhism does not condone war but at the same time presents a psychological insight and accepts its inevitability.

Coming to the role being played by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs of the ICRC, he stated that the said department, for dialogues on humanitarian issues, engages with a plethora of entities including the faith-based organisations as they have different but relevant conceptions of humanitarian action and interactions. He stated that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs has conducted a host of conferences in collaboration with faith-based organisations and cited the recent examples the *Refreshing Humanitarian Action Conference with HFI & ODI/HPG*, held in Jakarta in 2016; and the 2018 Jakarta conference on *Humanitarian Access and Negotiation with CCHN*, wherein the Department had the chance to discuss the challenges being faced in operating in conflict situations with different religious leaders, military personnel as well as members of the armed groups present in the same room. He also enlisted the upcoming initiatives of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, ICRC on the theme of Religion and IHL. He also asked the participants to visit the ICRC's website to find out resources on the theme of religion vis-à-vis humanitarian principles.

Mr. Andrew then opened the floor for the Q/A round. The round witnessed various participants, students and teachers alike, asking pertinent questions and presenting their take on the relevance of the confluence between interfaith and IHL. Dr A.K Merchant, the General Secretary of Temple of Understanding and our speaker from yesterday, i.e. the third day of the workshop also participated in today's session. He listened intently to Mr. Andrew's and contributed to the dialogue by presenting his thoughtful observations and remarks during the Q/A round. Mr Andrew's highly interactive session proved very informative for the participants and evoked their utmost interest.

The fourth day of the workshop ended with Dr Sangeeta Taak, the faculty coordinator of CASH, offering a vote of thanks.

#### **Day 5: Six-day Multidisciplinary Workshop on Interfaith and IHL**

**Guest Speakers: Fr. Felix Jones (A Catholic Priest serving the Archdiocese of Delhi) , Ms.**

**Richa Kakkar, and Ms. Tahmina**



The first Speaker, Fr. Felix Jones discussed the importance of respecting all faiths. He spoke about a 'Prayer for India' that is organized by his organization every year. This includes prayer for the Constitution and Constitutional Head, Prayer for Judiciary, Election Commission etc. A large number of Christians come together and pray for the nation. He discussed an event organized by them- Gendercide. The program discussed the problem of gendercide due to India social values that prefer the males over females. They urged the government of India to enforce Pre- Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act and ensure that women and girls enjoy equal protection of law. This event was organized in collaboration with Alliance Defending Freedom and interfaith leaders. Just at the beginning of first Covid-19 wave, an interfaith solidarity prayer was organized to pray for those who died due to Covid-19, the migrant laborers, healthcare workers and army men who lost their lives. Father Felix highlighted how the interfaith leaders came together as an interfaith group to pray in solidarity.

The second speaker, Ms. Kakkar discussed the humanitarian relief provided during the pandemic. During the first wave of COVID, more than 8500 families received dry ration kits in resettlement colonies of Delhi and more than 70,000 people and women and children were encouraged to prepare masks and sanitisers. A Digital database in the form of videos was developed on Do's and Don'ts in COVID. In addition, various children were stressed out due to a complete shift in the learning platforms and hence, were counselled from time to time. During the second wave as well, 3325 individuals received dry ration kits, 9854 were served food through community kitchens, 3000 education kits to children, 5000 sanitary napkins to girls/women, 225 medical kits to the needy and 63 families received direct financial assistance to the families who lost their main earning member. Awareness was spread regarding the government schemes introduced during the pandemic. She also shared a video where the beneficiaries have expressed their gratitude to the organization for supporting them in various means during the pandemic.

The third speaker, Ms. Tahmina, discussed targeted violence against minority communities, specifically Christians in India. Two hundred eighty-nine incidents were reported in 2020 and over 300 incidents in 2021, whereas only 47 FIRs were filed reporting against the violence committed. Atrocities afflicted upon the community is because of the dreaded word conversion, where they are often accused of luring people to convert into Christianity. The Anti-Conversion

laws have resulted in Christians being arrested and falsely charged under the law. In the end, she reflected upon the ideas of Dr BR Ambedkar and the need for increasing religious tolerance in the country. Lack of religious freedom impairs the fulfilment of the cherished ideas of liberty and equality and becomes a hindrance to the country's economic growth. Violence (of all kinds) cost the Indian economy approximately 9% of the country's gross domestic product.

### **Day 6: One-week Multidisciplinary Workshop on Interfaith and IHL**

#### **Guest Speaker: Rabbi Ezekiel Isaac Malekar (Head of the Jewish Community in New Delhi and Secretary of the Judah Hyam Synagogue, New Delhi)**

Rabbi Ezekiel Isaac Malekar started off by expressing his regards to RGNUL for organising the interfaith workshop and inviting him to the same. He also took this opportunity to reminisce and appreciate the thoughtful initiative the Centre for Advanced Study in International Humanitarian Law (CASH) had taken last year by organising a webinar on the topic “An interfaith dialogue on the right to dignified disposal of dead bodies”. He stated that the aforesaid webinar inspired him to a great extent and he even wrote an article on the right to dignified disposal.

He stated that it is vital that the principles of International Humanitarian Law are respected, or else, one cannot respond suitably to the medical and health needs of different communities during these unprecedented times. He quoted Swami Vivekananda to state that one must follow one religion but respect all others, meaning thereby that the human rights of every individual must be respected irrespective of their beliefs and faith. He informed the participants that an entire section of his synagogue library is dedicated to inter-faith study wherein holy scriptures of nine religions are catalogued for the perusal of the readers. He said that it is important to observe the similarities and the commonalities of different religions.

Rabbi Ezekiel expressed his disappointment over the decline of moral and ethical values amongst humans and how the same is leading to a rise in violence and killings. He stressed on the need to provide our children with holistic education equipped with instilling the principles of compassion, forgiveness, self-discipline, and tolerance for other religions in the young minds.

Rabbi Ezekiel stressed upon the need for eliminating/ modifying customs and rituals that promote gender disparity. He stated that women are not subordinate to men and, therefore, he

ensures that inherently discriminatory rituals are not abided by in his synagogue. He promotes the visit of non-jews to synagogues too.

He stated that inter-religious cooperation is very important to defeat the banes pervading different societies and owing to the same, there is a need to conduct interfaith dialogues often. He further stated that every religion, though special in its own way, is quite similar to the other in terms of the virtues it promotes. One must make an attempt to understand the principles of all religions and extract their good essence and values.

He quoted an excerpt of Prophet Samuel's poetry on war, "war at the outset is like a beautiful maid with whom everyone wishes to flirt; at the end, it is like a despised thorn, bringing tears and sadness to whoever she meets". He stated that the principles of IHL must be abided by and wars in the name of religion must be prevented.

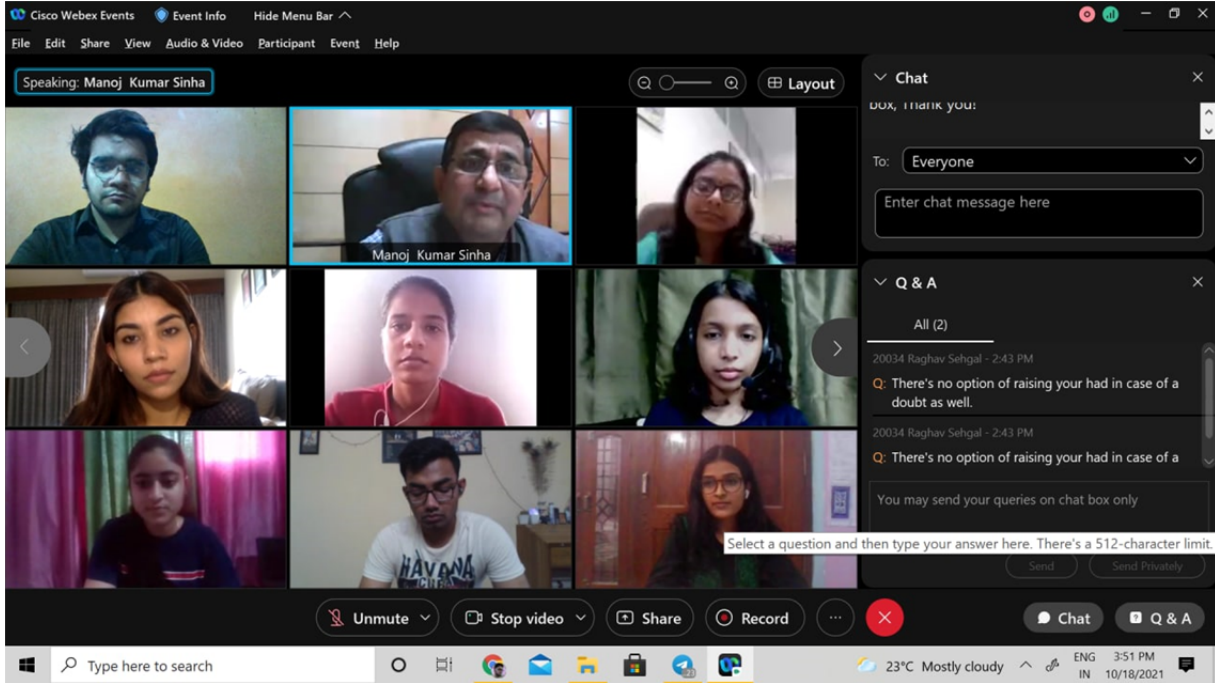
Rabbi Ezekiel then opened the floor for the Q/A round. The round witnessed various participants asking pertinent questions. Faculty members Dr Shveta Dhaliwal, Dr Sukhwinder Virk, and Dr Sangeeta Taak expressed their gratitude to Rabbi Ezekiel Isaac Malekar for his informative and thought-provoking address. Sukhman Sandhu, the student convenor of CASH, offered a vote of thanks. With this, the week-long multidisciplinary workshop on Interfaith and IHL, which saw a large number of participants joining the sessions, came to a successful end.

**Participants: 45**

Name of Event Coordinator: Dr. Sangeeta Tank, Dr. Shveta Dhaliwal, and Dr. Sukhwinder Kaur Virk

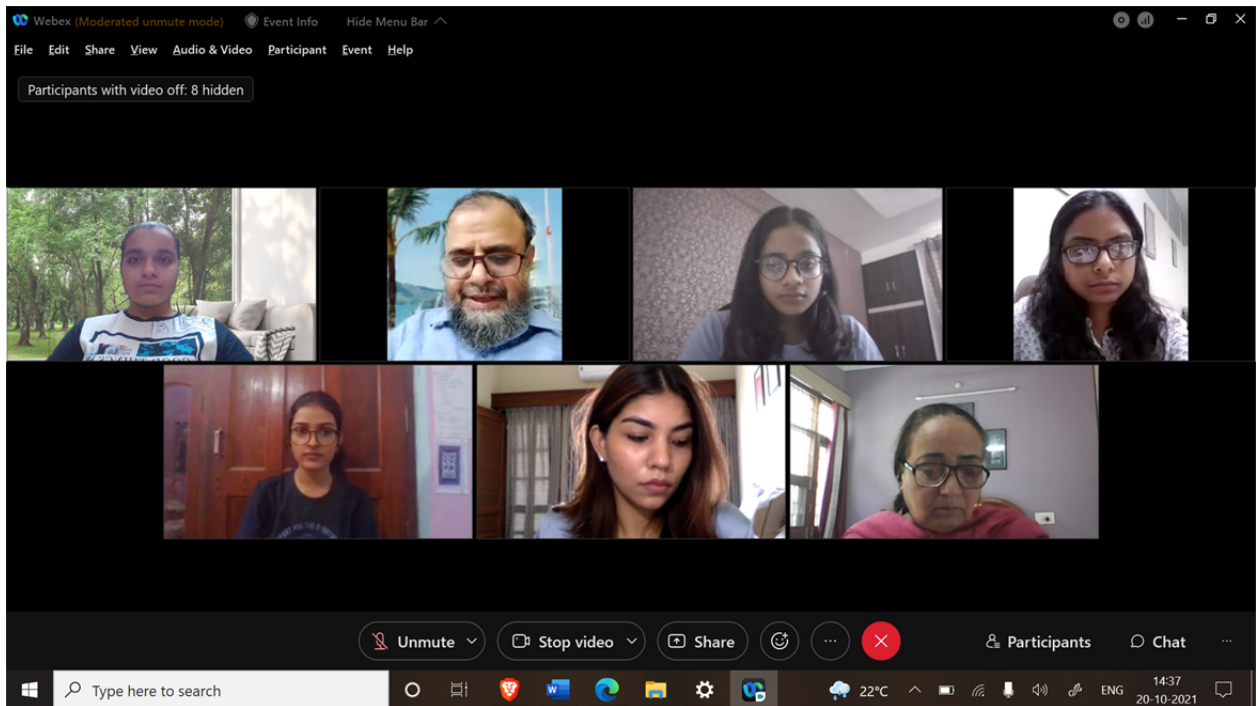
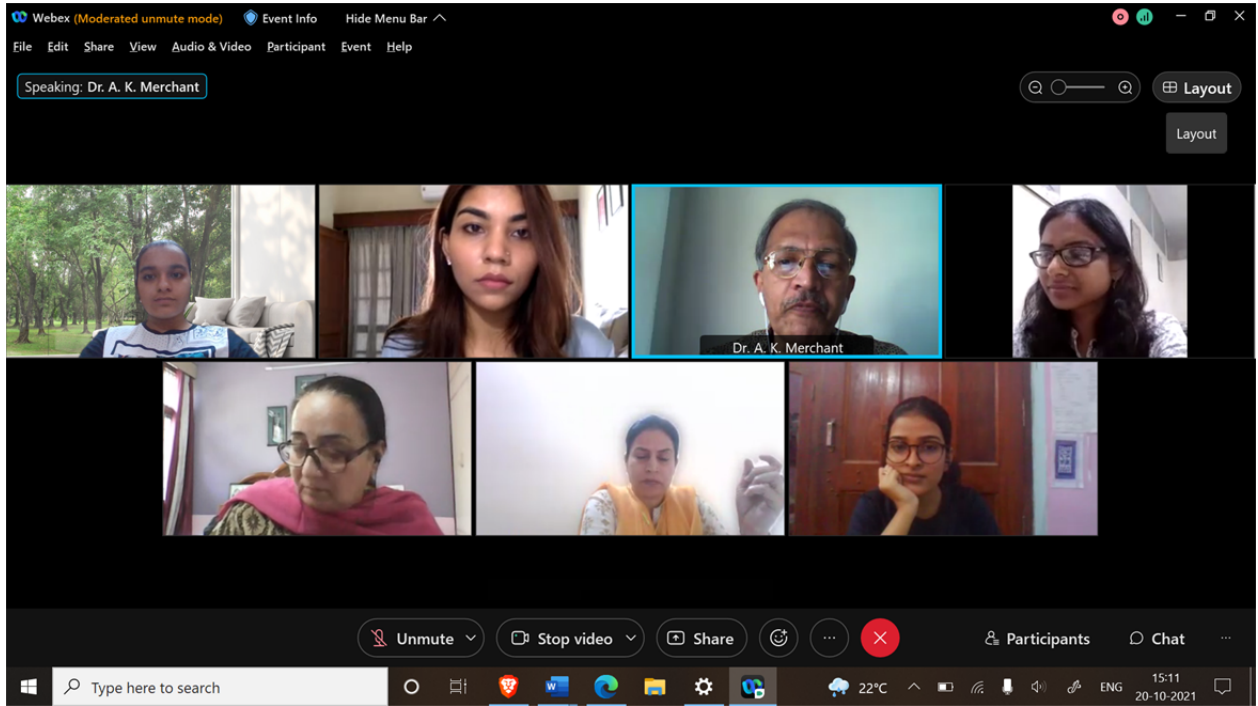


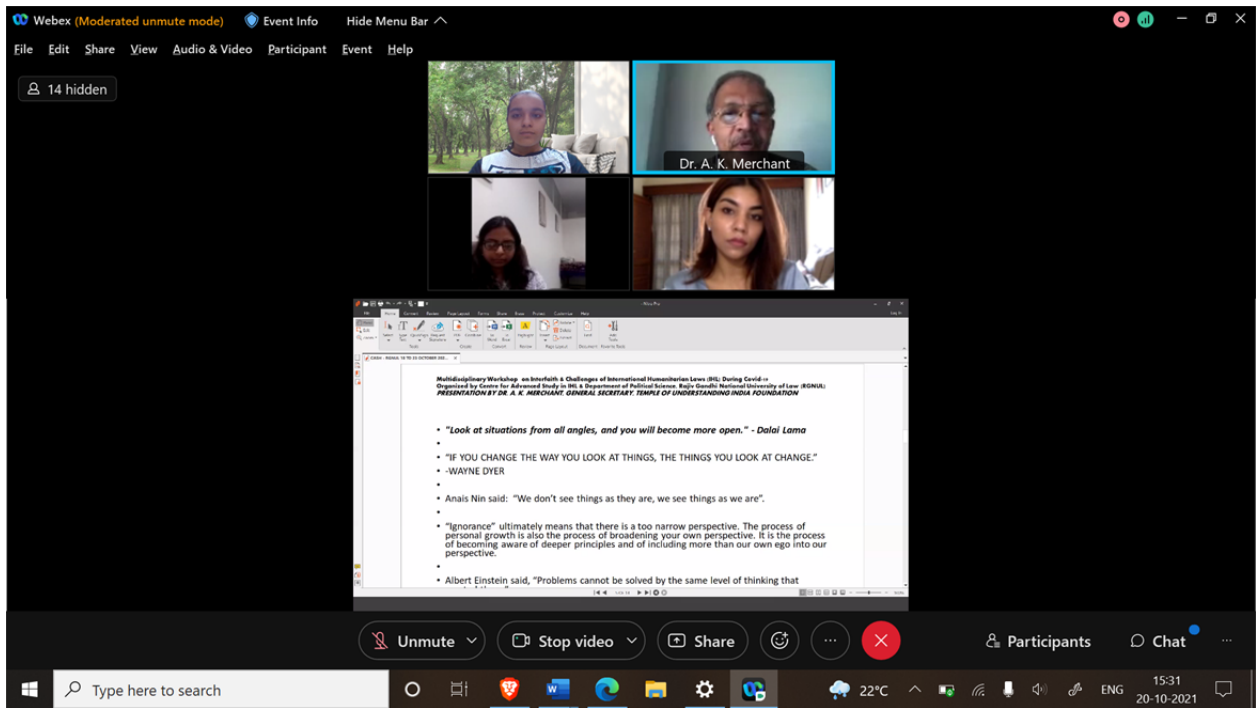
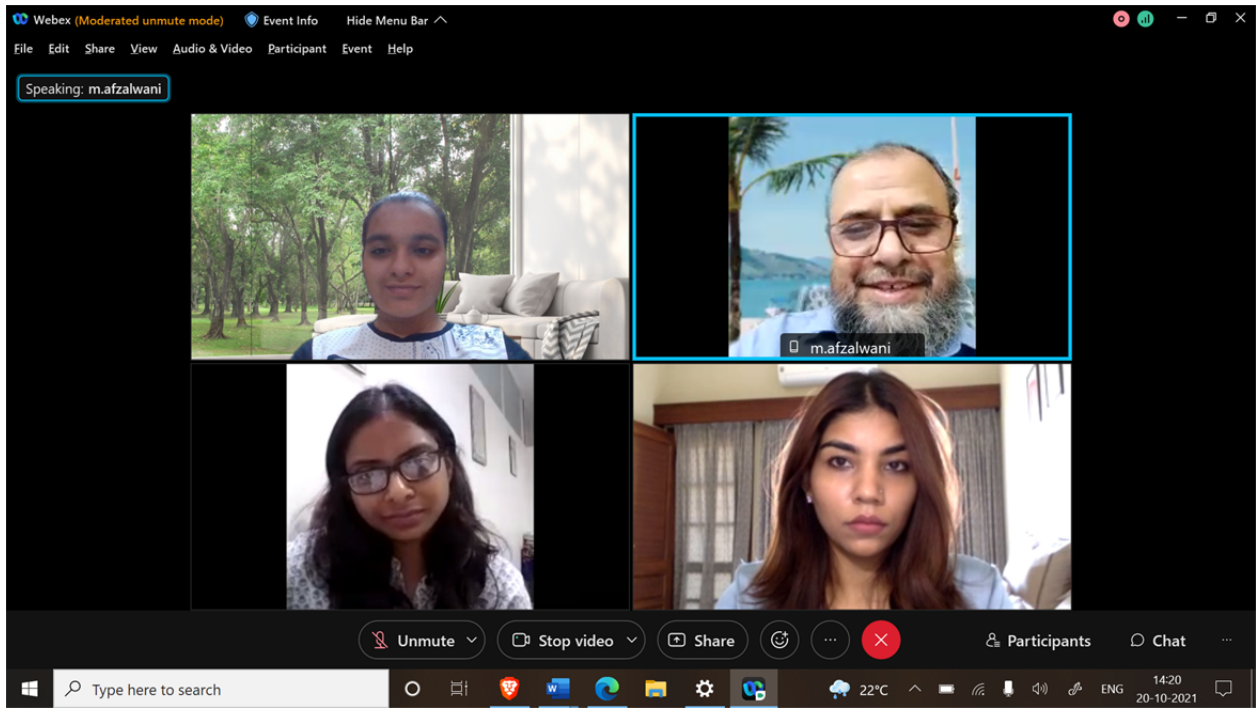
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Andrew Bartles-Smith

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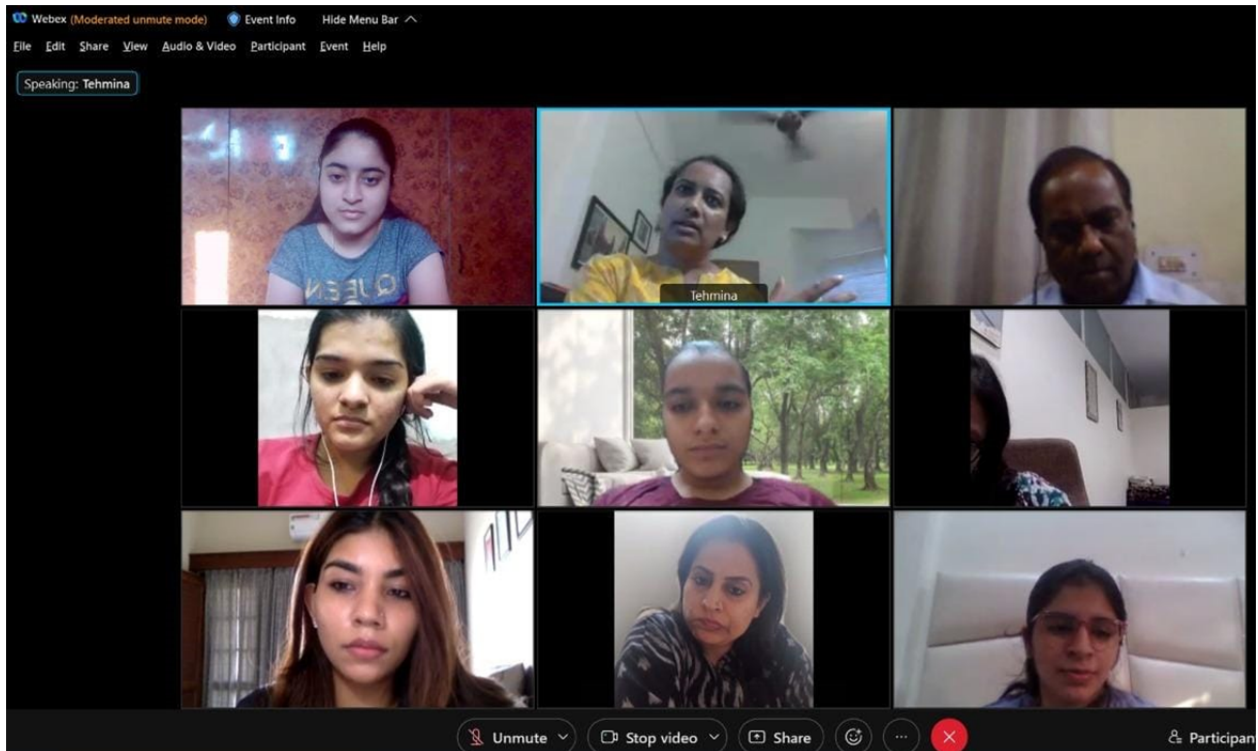
### REGIONAL NETWORKS

- NSAGs
- Islamic circles
- Buddhist circles
- Christian circles
- Hindu, Confucian and other religious circles
- FBO and NGO networks
- Academic networks

Andrew Bartles...

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Speaking: Richa Kakkar, Felix

### Covid Response

#### Second Wave

Category	Count
People received dry ration kit	3325
Meals served through Community Kitchen	9854
Education kits to children	3000
Sanitary napkins to girls/women	5000
Medical kits to the needy	225
Direct financial assistance to the family who lost their main earning member	63

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Christians in my village were beaten and our houses vandalized because of our faith

66  
My family and I had to flee from our home in Kashmir because we are Hindus.

66  
My father was brutally murdered because he was a Muslim.

Responding to Targeted Violence

Tehmina Arora  
ADF India

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Speaking: Richa Kakkar

**Covid Response**

Second Wave

3325 Meals served through Community kitchens

9854 People received dry ration kit

3000 Education kits to children

5000 Sanitary napkins to girls/women

225 Medical kits to the needy

63 Direct financial assistance to the family who lost their main earning member

Richa Kakkar

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