



8TH ICLARS CONFERENCE

***State Neutrality and Cooperation with Religion:
Protecting Freedom of Religion or Belief
without Discrimination***

UNIVERSITY OF PALERMO, 1-3 SEPTEMBER 2026



**Università
degli Studi
di Palermo**

8th ICLARS CONFERENCE – 2026

**University of Palermo
Department of Law**

***State Neutrality and Cooperation with Religion:
Protecting Freedom of Religion or Belief
without Discrimination***

1-3 September 2026

Palermo, Italy

Scientific Committee:

Prof. Javier Martínez-Torrón, Complutense University, Madrid, Spain

Prof. Mark Hill, Notre Dame University London, United Kingdom

Prof. Rodrigo Vitorino Alves, Federal University of Uberlandia, Uberlandia, Brazil

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Prof. Alessandro Ferrari, University of Insubria, Italy

Prof. Amal Idrissi, University of Moulay Ismail, Meknès, Morocco

Prof. Asher Maoz, Peres Academic Center School of Law, Israel

Prof. Brett G. Scharffs, Brigham Young University Law School, United States

Prof. Li-Ann Thio, National University of Singapore, Singapore

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Co-Presidents:

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Prof. Mario Ferrante, University of Palermo

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Dr. Rosangela Micciché, University of Palermo

Dr. Désirée Papalardo, University of Palermo

General programme

All academic sessions will be held at the Rectorate (Palazzo Chiaramonte-Steri), at the Department of Law, and at the Teatro Politeama Garibaldi. The three locations are nearby and transfers between them will be on foot. The room for each session is indicated below, in the detailed programme. The official language of the conference is English. Some parallel sessions will be held in Italian or in Spanish, as indicated in the detailed programme.

Day 1: Tuesday, 1 September 2026

8:30 – Registration and welcome kit

9:30 – **Opening and Welcome Ceremony (live streamed to the Department of Law)**

Institutional greetings:

Prof. Massimo Midiri, Rector of the University of Palermo

Prof. Roberto Lagalla, Mayor of Palermo

Prof. Armando Plaia, Head of the Department of Law, University of Palermo

Prof. Luciana De Grazia, Coordinator of the Law Degree Programme, University of Palermo

Prof. Javier Martínez-Torrón, President of ICLARS, Professor of Law at Complutense University

Prof. Mario Ferrante, Co-President of the Organizing Committee, Professor of Law at University of Palermo

10:00 – **Plenary Session 1: *Cooperation with religion and State neutrality: questions and challenges from a global perspective***

Chair:

Ana María Celis Brunet

Speakers:

Sophie van Bijsterveld

Li-ann Thio

Perry Dane

Jane Norton

11:00 – Coffee Break

11:40 – **Plenary Session 2: *Law and Religion: Promoting Religious Engagement in National and G20 Processes***

Chair:

Pamela Slotte Russo

Speakers:

W. Cole Durham, Jr.

Rodrigo Vitorino Souza Alves

Peter Petkoff

12:40 – Transfer to the Department of Law

13:30 – Working Lunch

14:30 – **Parallel Sessions 1.A**

15:45 – Break

16:00 – **Parallel Sessions 1.B**

17:15 – Break

17:30 – **Parallel Sessions 1.C**

19:30 – **Buffet Dinner and DJ Set**

21:30 – **Concert at the Steri**

Day 2: Wednesday, 2 September 2026

9:00 – **Parallel Sessions 2.A**

10:30 – Break

10:45 – **Plenary Session 3: "Are the rights of religious minorities promoted by a secular state?"**

Chair:

Silvio Ferrari

Speakers:

Louis-Léon Christians

Roberta Medda-Windischer

Marco Ventura

Javier Martínez-Torrón

12:00 – Break

12:15 – **Parallel Sessions 2.B**

13:30 – Working Lunch

15:00 – **Parallel Sessions 2.C**

16:30 – Break

16:45 – **Parallel Sessions 2.D**

20:30 – **Gala Dinner**

Day 3: Thursday, 3 September 2026

8:45 – **Parallel Sessions 3.A**

10:00 – Transfer to the Teatro Politeama

10:30 – **Plenary Session 4: What Comes After Secular Liberalism?**

Chair:

Andrea Pin

Speakers:

Brett Scharffs

Mark Movsesian

Alexis de la Ferrière

Jane Norton

11:30 – Break

11:45 – **Keynote Speech: "The Broader Agenda for ICLARS"**

Prof. W. Cole Durham, Jr., Ex-President of ICLARS, President of the G20 Interfaith Forum

12:15 – **Closing Ceremony**

12:30 – **Concert and Social Event**

13:30 – Working Lunch

15:00 – **ICLARS General Assembly**

Detailed programme

All academic sessions will be held at the Rectorate (Palazzo Chiaramonte-Steri), at the Department of Law, and at the Teatro Politeama Garibaldi. The three locations are nearby and transfers between them will be on foot. The room for each session is indicated below. The official language of the conference is English. Some parallel sessions will be held in Italian or in Spanish, as indicated in the detailed programme.

DAY 1: Tuesday, 1 September 2026

TIME	PROGRAMME	LOCATION
8:30	Registration and welcome kit (two desks)	Steri and Dept. of Law
9:30	Opening and Welcome Ceremony (live streamed to the Department of Law) Institutional greetings: Prof. Massimo Midiri, Rector of the University of Palermo Prof. Roberto Lagalla, Mayor of Palermo Prof. Armando Plaia, Head of the Department of Law, University of Palermo Prof. Luciana De Grazia, Coordinator of the Law Degree Programme, University of Palermo Prof. Javier Martínez-Torrón, President of ICLARS, Professor of Law at Complutense University Prof. Mario Ferrante, Co-President of the Organizing Committee, Professor of Law at University of Palermo	Rectorate (Steri)
10:00	Plenary Session 1 <i>Cooperation with religion and State neutrality: questions and challenges from a global perspective</i> Ana María Celis Brunet, Chair Sophie van Bijsterveld Li-ann Thio Perry Dane Jane Norton	Rectorate (Steri)
11:00	Coffee Break	
11:40	Plenary Session 2 <i>Law and Religion: Promoting Religious Engagement in National and G20 Processes</i> Pamela Slotte Russo, Chair W. Cole Durham, Jr. Rodrigo Vitorino Souza Alves Peter Petkoff	Rectorate (Steri)
12:40	Transfer to the Department of Law	From Rectorate to Dept. of Law
13:30	Working Lunch	Department of Law

TIME	PROGRAMME	LOCATION
14:30	Parallel Sessions 1.A	
	<i>The role of the State in interreligious dialogue: models, challenges and perspectives for a comparative approach (in Italian)</i> Daniela Tarantino, <i>Chair</i> Alessia Baghino Zeynep Naz Oral Raffaella Francesca Mazzei Mara Morelli	Room 1
	<i>Between Protection and Exclusion: Case Law and Religious Non-Discrimination (in Spanish)</i> Alberto Patiño Reyes, <i>Chair</i> Jose Antonio Calvi del Risco Jorge del Pico Marcio Henrique Pereira Ponzilacqua Cristian Badillo	Room 2
	<i>The Place of Religion within faith-based education: contemporary approaches</i> Sylvie Bacquet, <i>Chair</i> Stéphanie Hennette Vauchez Szilvia Köbel Wojciech Brzozowski Weronika Kudła Adelaide Madera Brandon Reece Taylorian	Aula Chiazzese
	<i>Nordic Religions, Inc.</i> Helge Årsheim, <i>Chair</i> Pamela Slotte Russo Niels Valdemar Vinding Linnea Lundgren Sofie Aaltonen	Room 3
	<i>Religious Teaching and Civic Education Between Democratic Citizenship, Militant Liberalism, and Autocratic Appeal</i> Roberta Medda-Windischer, <i>co-Chair</i> Rossella Bottoni, <i>co-Chair</i> Davide Strazzari, <i>co-Chair</i> Ralf Luefter Eugenia Relaño Pastor David Katz Kyriaki Topidi Dorjana Bojanovska Popovska	Aula Santi Romano
	<i>Theories and Critiques of State Neutrality</i> Sophie van Bijsterveld, <i>Chair</i> Andrew DeLoach Bruce J. Clemenger Tadeusz J. Zieliński Perry Dane Noelia Martínez-Doallo	Room 4

TIME	PROGRAMME	LOCATION
	<i>Religion, Pluralism and Global Governance</i> Fábio Carvalho Leite, <i>Chair</i> Eugene K. B. Tan Gregory Mose Nilay Saiya Gabriela Siqueira Ho Laurentiu Tanase	Room 5
15:45	Break	Department of Law
16:00	Parallel Sessions 1.B <i>Education as a Field of Cooperation in the Latin American Context (in Spanish)</i> Ana María Celis Brunet, <i>Chair</i> Carmen Domínguez M. Elena Pimstein Cecilia Palomo Caudillo	Aula Chiazzese
	<i>Cooperative Neutrality: Models of Partnership between State and Religions in Contemporary Europe (in Italian)</i> Anna Sammassimo, <i>Chair</i> Montserrat Gas Aixendri Aurora Dell'Agli	Room 1
	<i>Is State Neutrality Neutral? State 'Neutrality' in Comparative Perspective</i> Barbara A. McGraw, <i>Chair</i> Francesco Alicino Anne Fornerod	Room 2
	<i>Beyond Religious Neutrality: Contesting Majority-Minority Boundaries and Security Governance in Post-Secular Europe</i> Alexandra Budabin, <i>co-Chair</i> Zakaria Sajir, <i>co-Chair</i> Kyriaki Topidi Eugenia Relaño Pastor Adelaide Madera	Aula Santi Romano
	<i>Religious Organisations, Registration and the State</i> Brandon Reece Taylorian, <i>Chair</i> Daniel J. Bator Oliwia Rybczyńska-Gryguc Mukami Wangai	Room 3
	<i>Teaching Law and Religion in an Age of Religious Illiteracy</i> Wojciech Brzozowski, <i>Chair</i> Sylvie Bacquet Francisca Pérez-Madrid	Room 4
17:15	Break	Department of Law

TIME	PROGRAMME	LOCATION
17:30	Parallel Sessions 1.C	
	<i>The Contribution of Faith-Based Organizations in the Latin American Context: Foundations for Their Study (in Spanish)</i> Elena López Ruf, <i>Chair</i> Ana María Celis Brunet Rodrigo Vitorino Souza Alves	Room 1
	<i>The Right to Establish and Maintain Safe Places of Worship as an Aspect of Religious Freedom (in Italian)</i> Mattia F. Ferrero, <i>Chair</i> Andrea Bettetini Alessandro Perego Leonardo Caprara	Room 2
	<i>Reusing religious heritage</i> Anne Fornerod, <i>Chair</i> Davide Dimodugno Jean-François Husson Francis Messner	Room 3
	<i>Freedom of Religion or Belief in the Workplace and Public Service</i> Cristiana Cianitto, <i>Chair</i> Mark Emerton Thalita Angélica Gomes Borges Kacper Szewczyk Fearghas Ó Béara Roxan Laubscher Nicole Deokiram	Aula Santi Romano
	<i>Secularism, neutrality and freedom of religion or belief in the OSCE region: navigating diversity</i> Delia-Luiza Niță, <i>Chair</i> Eugenia Relaño Pastor Fernand de Varennes Ekaterine Chitanava Tamara Vukičević	Aula Chiazzese
	<i>Transatlantic models for religious freedom protection</i> Maksymilian Hau, <i>Chair</i> Edward A. David Nathaniel Hodson	Room 4
19:30	Buffet Dinner and DJ Set	Terrazze Cassaro ai Quattro Canti
21:30	Concert at the Steri	Steri

DAY 2: Wednesday, 2 September 2026

TIME	PROGRAMME	LOCATION
9:00	Parallel Sessions 2.A	
	<i>Religious Pluralism and the Dynamics of Legal Systems. Models and Tensions in the Management of Diversity</i> (in Italian) Maria d'Arienzo, <i>Chair</i> Mario Ferrante Marta Tigano Beatrice Serra Antonio Ingoglia Fabiano Di Prima Nico Tonti Francesco Salvatore Rea Davide Dimodugno Mariangela Galluccio	Aula Santi Romano
	<i>Bilateral Relations between the State and Religious Denominations: Still a Valid Form of Cooperation?</i> (NEUCOPER Project) (in Spanish) Javier Martínez-Torrón, <i>Chair</i> Rafael Palomino Silvia Meseguer Santiago Cañamares Irene Briones Belén Rodrigo Juan Gregorio Navarro Floria	Room 1
	<i>Conscientious Objection to Military Service and State Neutrality in Times of the Conflict</i> Dmytro Vovk, <i>Chair</i> Elizabeth A. Clark Moshe Jaffe Armen Harutyunyan Young-joon Kwon	Room 2
	<i>Aspects of the Freedom of Religion and the Protection of Privacy and Family Life at a Time of Technological Change</i> Iain T. Benson, <i>Chair</i> Piotr Mazurkiewicz Fulvio di Blasi Jane Adolphe	Room 3
	<i>The Neutrality of the State and the Child</i> Renae Barker, <i>Chair</i> Suvarna Variyar Tania Pagotto Jenny Richards Silvia Angeletti	Room 4
10:30	Break	Department of Law

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TIME	PROGRAMME	LOCATION
15:00	Parallel Sessions 2.C <i>Artificial Intelligence and the Religious Factor: Potentials, Risks, Prospects (in Italian)</i> Mario Ferrante, <i>Chair</i> Ignazio Barbetta Davide Calantoni Marieclaire Brigitta Catalano Martina Del Priore Stefano Foglia Salvatore Malluzzo Rosangela Miccichè Desiree Pappalardo Ramatoulaye Sow Marco Spina <i>Legal pluralism and jurisdictional boundaries between State and religion (in Spanish)</i> Zoila Combalía, <i>Chair</i> Ana M. Vega Gutiérrez María del Mar Leal Rafael Valencia Fabio Ferreira Nascimento María Teresa García-Berrio Hernández <i>Religious Freedom Laws in Comparative Perspective: Legislative Approaches to State Neutrality and Cooperation with Religion</i> Elizabeth Bennion, <i>Chair</i> Gary Doxey Rodrigo Vitorino Souza Alves Ana María Celis Brunet Juan Gregorio Navarro Floria <i>Religion under Bureaucracy – the Case of Norway</i> Helge Årsheim, <i>Chair</i> Thale Waaler Eggen Marianne Friisberg Larssen Olav Børreson Fossdal Kristine Tjøtta <i>Models of Separation and Cooperation in Comparative Perspective</i> Li-ann Thio, <i>Chair</i> Myriam Hunter-Henin Guy Baldwin Mark Modak-Truran Renae Barker Keith Thompson	Aula Chiazzese Aula Santi Romano Room 1 Room 2 Room 3

TIME	PROGRAMME	LOCATION
	<i>Islam, Muslim Communities and the State</i> Arif A. Jamal, <i>Chair</i> Mathias Rohe Mohamed Saeed Eltayeb Karolina Racziewicz Ahmed Salisu Garba Sofie Aaltonen	Room 4
	<i>Religion before European Courts: Rights, Speech and Regulation</i> Burkhard J. Berkmann, <i>Chair</i> Alessandra Lazzarini Piotr Szymaniec Vanja-Ivan Savić Adina Portaru	Room 5
16:30	Break	Department of Law
16:45	Parallel Sessions 2.D	
	<i>The Religious Factor, Neutrality and Cooperation: Italian and Comparative Perspectives (in Italian)</i> Monia Ciravegna, <i>Chair</i> Evaldo Xavier Gomes Gerardo Villari Martina Del Priore Marius Venskus Vincenzo Pacillo Valerio La Barbera	Aula Chiazzese
	<i>Responses to Religious Diversity in Education (in Spanish)</i> Miguel Rodríguez Blanco, <i>Chair</i> Marcos González Sánchez Isabel Cano Ruiz Catalina Pons-Estel Tugores José Luis Chapado Martín	Room 1
	<i>State neutrality and collaboration with religion: the (changing?) perspective of Central and Eastern European countries</i> Balázs Schanda, <i>Chair</i> Michaela Moravčíková Paweł Sobczyk Michał Zawiślak Piotr Stanis	Room 2
	<i>Beyond Western Europe: Neutrality, Identity, and Law and Religion in Comparative Legal Traditions</i> Alessandro Negri, <i>co-Chair</i> Victor Moreno Soler, <i>co-Chair</i> Jeremias Brusau Harun Išerić Wan Naim Wan Mansour	Room 3

TIME	PROGRAMME	LOCATION
	<i>Testing the boundaries of legal pluralism: the case of Jehovah's Witnesses</i> Silvio Ferrari, <i>Chair</i> Francesco Alicino Vincente Fortier Gérard Gonzalez Pierre Noël James T. Richardson	Room 4
	<i>Religion in the Global Sports Legal Order: Between Neutrality and the Prohibition of Discrimination</i> Maria d'Arienzo, <i>co-Chair</i> Alessandro Ferrari, <i>co-Chair</i> Fabio Balsamo Alessandro Cupri David Durisotto Caterina Gagliardi Luigi Guzzo Maria Cristina Ivaldi Enrica Martinelli Sofia Osnato Tiziano Rimoldi	Aula Santi Romano
	<i>Places of Worship, Religious Heritage and Local Governance</i> Dimitry Gegenava, <i>Chair</i> Jamlat Gvidiani Inês Granja George Androutsopoulos Romain Mertens Paola Goulart de Souza Spikes Nuran Kızmaz Öztürk	Room 5
20:30	Gala Dinner	Palazzo Asmundo

DAY 3: Thursday, 3 September 2026

TIME	PROGRAMME	LOCATION
8:45	Parallel Sessions 3.A	
	<i>State religious neutrality and freedom not to believe (DiReSoM Panel in partnership with UAAR)</i> Maria Luisa Lo Giacco, <i>Chair</i> Marco Croce Fabio Franceschi Adelaide Madera Federica Marigonda Giuseppina Scala Daniela Tarantino Alessandra Viani	Aula Santi Romano
	<i>Religious Freedom: Sociopolitical Challenges, Potentialities and Limits under the Principles of Social Cohesion and Equality</i> Marcio Henrique Pereira Ponzilacqua, <i>Chair</i> Florence Faberon Caetano Dias Correa Thalita Angélica Gomes Borges Vinicius Gonzaga Ferreira	Room 1
	<i>Freedom of religion in the workplace and in the public service: between the requirement for neutrality and the risk of discrimination</i> Lauren Bakir, <i>Chair</i> Louis-Léon Christians Françoise Curtit Mélanie Schmitt Léopold Vanbellingen	Room 2
	<i>The Margin of Appreciation and Freedom of Religion: European Standards, National Diversity</i> Jessica Giles, <i>Chair</i> Mirjam van Schaik Sien Devriendt Leon van den Broeke Tristan Cummings	Room 3
	<i>Law and Religion in Argentina: New Developments and Challenges (in Spanish)</i> Juan Gregorio Navarro Floria, <i>Chair</i> Alfonso Santiago Octavio Lo Prete Elena López Ruf Mercedes Guadalupe Rubino Marilina Gloria Hotton	Room 4
10:00	Transfer to the Teatro Politeama	Dept. of Law to Politeama

TIME	PROGRAMME	LOCATION
10:30	Plenary Session 4 <i>What Comes After Secular Liberalism?</i> Andrea Pin, <i>Chair</i> Brett Scharffs Mark Movsesian Alexis de la Ferrière Jane Norton	Teatro Politeama Garibaldi
11:30	Break	Politeama
11:45	Keynote Speech <i>"The Broader Agenda for ICLARS"</i> Prof. W. Cole Durham, Jr., Ex-President of ICLARS, President of the G20 Interfaith Forum	Teatro Politeama Garibaldi
12:15	Closing Ceremony	Teatro Politeama
12:30	Concert and Social Event	Politeama
13:30	Working Lunch, buffet	Teatro Politeama
15:00	ICLARS General Assembly	Teatro Politeama