

# United Nations Association

Westminster Branch

Campaigning for a strong, credible and effective UN



## 14<sup>th</sup> Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen International Law Lecture

Brunei Lecture Theatre, SOAS, 14 March 2016

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**Chasing Religious Persecution in Law: Bloodshed,  
Concerted attack or Maintaining Representation?**

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**Dr Nazila Ghanea**

Associate Professor in International Human Rights Law at the University of Oxford

### Overview

Nazila Ghanea's lecture noted the explosion of interest in 'religious persecution' in the media and publications in recent years, but what is meant by this? Is there a threshold? Is there something new about the recent experience of religious persecution? Is it increasingly politicised and, if so, why? What does the human rights law framework – and particularly that of freedom of religion or belief – contribute to questions about religious persecution?

The lecture also noted how this serves as a rallying call for an ever-increasing number of advocates and lobby groups, and how it is gathering the increased attention of states, policy makers and even dedicated funding streams. This increased currency, however, has certainly not sharpened understanding of what 'religious persecution' constitutes.

The purpose of the lecture was to give attention to its scope, meaning and implications particularly in international human rights law.

The conclusion observed that whilst something of a gap between the political and the legal understandings of this term – and particularly the advocacy and public usage – will always remain. However, it suggested that we have a role in encouraging a more considered usage, without downplaying the pressing experience, strength of feeling and emotion that may exist behind the resort to the term.

[See here for further information on Dr Nazila Ghanea](#)