

Cross-Party Group Annual Return

Name of Cross-Party Group

Cross-Party Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief

Date Group Established (the date of establishment is the date in this parliamentary session that the Group held its initial meeting, where the office bearers were elected and not the date that the Group was accorded recognition. All Groups should hold their AGMs on, or before, the anniversary of this date.)

28th October 2021

Date of Most Recent Annual General Meeting (AGM)

25th November 2024

Date Annual Return Submitted

20th December 2024

Date of Preceding AGM [this date is required to aid clerks in verifying that the most recent AGM has taken place within 11 to 13 months of the previous AGM]

25th October 2023

Group Meetings and Activities

Please provide details of each meeting of the Group including the date of the meeting, a brief description of the main subjects discussed and the MSP and non-MSP attendance figures.

Details of any other activities, such as visits undertaken by the Group or papers/report published by the Group should also be provided.

25th October 2023 - 3 MSPs (John Mason, Murdo Fraser, Jeremy Balfour) and 20 non-MSPs. The AGM reviewed the past year's work and re-elected John Mason MSP as Convener. Discussions covered rising hate crimes, workplace discrimination, and struggles of faith-based asylum seekers. Attendees stressed education, interfaith funding, and advocacy on issues like cemeteries legislation and faith literacy, with plans for future actions.

27th March 2024 - 3 MSPs (John Mason, Stephen Kerr, Pam Gosal) and 25 non-MSPs. Professor Nazila Ghanea, UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, presented on religious hatred and freedom of religion as a universal human right. Discussions addressed legal standards, societal challenges, and advocacy opportunities. The meeting emphasised the group's role in knowledge-sharing and advancing interfaith dialogue.

11th November 2024 - 3 MSPs (John Mason, Stephen Kerr, Murdo Fraser) and 14 non-MSPs. John Kinahan from Forum18 detailed violations of religious freedom in Russia and Russian-controlled Ukraine, including persecution, torture, and censorship. The group discussed international human rights mechanisms and geopolitical issues. The meeting concluded with approval of the previous minutes.

25th November 2024 - 4 MSPs (John Mason, Jeremy Balfour, Stephen Kerr, Murdo Fraser) and 2 non-MSPs. The AGM was held to meet the 13-month requirement. Interfaith Scotland announced its retirement as secretariat, with no replacement yet appointed. A review of the year highlighted October's interfaith dialogue, March's presentation by Dr. Nazila Ghanea, and November's talk by John Kinahan. John Mason MSP and Murdo Fraser MSP were re-elected as Convener and Deputy Convener.

MSP Members of The Group

Please provide names and party designation of all MSP members of the Group.

John Mason MSP

Murdo Fraser MSP

Jeremy Balfour MSP

Stephen Kerr MSP

Katy Clark MSP

Clare Adamson MSP

Non-MSP Members of The Group

For organisational members please provide only the name of the organisation, it is not necessary to provide the name(s) of individuals who may represent the organisation at meetings of the Group.

Individuals

Craig Horne, Jamie Spurway, Dr. Maureen Sier (Director of Interfaith Scotland, member of Baha'i Community), Frances Hume (National Development Officer, Interfaith Scotland), Keith Mallard, Rev Gary Dean, Alan Meldrum, Carol Wilde, Chris Ringland, Mridula Chakrabaty, Oliver Lane (Family Federation for World Peace), Richa S, Fiona Brodie, Fraser Sutherland, Patricia Findlay, Ravinder Kaur Nijjar (Sikh Community), Sameer Hussain, Shona Hallam, Stanley Grossman, Stephen Scholes (Researcher and Academic), Ephraim Borowski, Gareth Jones, Ravi L, Michael Veitch, Malcolm MacLeod, Brian Miller, Hajra Ilyas, Oleksii Tyshchenko, Shaw Paterson, Susana McIntyre, Daniel Gilius (MEND and Muslim Community), Kazim Ukka (UK Muslim Community Forum), Magdalen Lambkin (Interfaith Glasgow), Nasim Anwar, Vanessa Stark (Faith and Belief Dundee), Philip Mendelssohn (Jewish Community), John Kinahan (Forum18)

Organisations	Interfaith Scotland, Open Doors (Christian Community), Muslim Council of Scotland, Forum18, MEND (Muslim Community), Family Federation for World Peace, Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees, Faith and Belief Dundee, Interfaith Glasgow, CARE (Christian Advocacy Organisation), Muslim Forum of Scotland, Jewish Community (Various Members), Baha'i Community, Sikh Community, National Development Officer, Interfaith Scotland, National Development Officer, Interfaith Glasgow, Evangelical Alliance, Aid To The Church In Need, Release International.
<p>Group Office Bearers</p> <p>Please provide names for all office bearers. The minimum requirement is that two of the office bearers are MSPs and one of these is Convener – beyond this it is a matter for the Group to decide upon the office bearers it wishes to have. It is permissible to have more than one individual elected to each office, for example, co-conveners or multiple deputy conveners.</p>	
Convener	John Mason MSP
Deputy Convener	Murdo Fraser MSP
Secretary	N/A
Treasurer	N/A

Financial Benefits or Other Benefits

Please provide details of any financial or material benefit(s) the Group anticipates receiving from a single source in a calendar year which has a value, either singly or cumulatively, of more than £500. This includes donations, gifts, hospitality or visits and material assistance such as secretariat support.

N/A

Convener Contact Details

Name	John Mason MSP
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