**IALRW Birmingham Declaration 2014**

We members (and friends) of IALRW met for our World Conference 2014 in Birmingham, England (August 20-23).

We declare the freedom of all to follow their own conscience and practice their faith and religious tradition as they see fit.

We declare that we support religious freedom for those who affirm the worth and dignity of all human beings – women as well as men – and abhor violence. We declare that these are central tenets of all our great religions such as Christianity (including Unitarianism), Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Judaism to which we include all people of good will and moderation including other religions and smaller liberal traditions.

Even in our modern, affluent and democratic societies, let alone in our traditional, developing, or autocratic countries, that freedom can be limited. We call on all to work against: repressive police practices including religious profiling, police/government acquiescence to violence against minority religious institutions, and the restrictions and suppression of religious celebrations in public spaces, festival gatherings, and peaceful demonstrations. But restrictions on religious freedom can be more subtle. We learned of discussion and discrimination in communities against Muslim women wanting to adopt conservative clothing. We heard of discrimination within religious congregations based on gender, sexual identity or difference (including disability).

We call on everyone not to denigrate or patronize women for their customs or religion. At the same time we declare that we will not be apologists for repressive or harmful practices in the name of religion including discrimination based on gender, exploitation, or forced marriage.

We deplore the rise of reactionary and fundamentalist beliefs. We deplore groups that, through misguided understanding of religious scriptures and in the fabricated cause of religion, advocate hate, misogyny, violence, or power and gain for themselves. Such groups arise often because of their own bitter experience. Experiences that may include demeaning exploitation, bewildering modernity and urbanization, war or destabilized/refugee communities, and injustice or poverty exacerbated by environmental changes and pollution. We must all work to ameliorate these causes.

We support initiatives for peace education (including empowerment through critical thinking, conflict resolution skills, and historical analysis and preservation of memories) and reconciliation.

We seek to strengthen and unite (mainly through interfaith communication and mutual support) the moderate and progressive religious voices, especially of women and educators, so that they can convey the true anti-violence and egalitarian messages of their religious traditions and liberal convictions as individuals.

Finally we declare as fundamental prerequisites for the reduction in violence and the expansion of peace in our homes, communities and among nations: (1) the empowerment of women (through education, networking, use of new media technologies, and social/legal change) and (2) the creation of societies where all families in whatever permutations can achieve honest and sustainable livelihoods and so successfully nurture themselves and raise the future generation.