

RIGHTS at RISK Time for Action

Observatory on the Universality of Rights Trends Report 2021



Chapter 5: Anti-Rights Tactics, Strategies, and Impacts

– Naureen Shameem AWID

Institutionalization of Anti-rights Actors in UN Mechanisms

As we have seen, anti-rights movements are increasingly coordinated and wellfunded at the global and regional levels. Given their attacks on human rights standards and norms, as well as their efforts to carve out impunity for states on the basis of "national sovereignty," why are these actors highly active and mobilized in the human rights and multilateral spaces they deeply critique? In a Trojan horse strategy, the aim is to transform global and regional spaces from the inside out to reflect their regressive agendas.

IN A TROJAN HORSE STRATEGY, THE AIM IS TO TRANSFORM GLOBAL AND REGIONAL SPACES FROM THE INSIDE OUT TO REFLECT THEIR REGRESSIVE AGENDAS

Not all anti-rights actors approach the international and regional human rights systems identically. While some seek to infiltrate and shape the system to their aims, others seek to undermine the system, with the aim of rendering it unable to operate.

Ultra-conservative actors are employing the tactic of reactive politicization⁶⁵⁰ – reacting to the gains from feminist and progressive movements over the past few decades, and seeking to mirror their successful strategies at the multilateral level to counter their progressions.⁶⁵¹ Anti-rights movements

aim to enter these spaces as legitimate public actors to boost their power there,652 to "spoil" international norms and law,653 and ultimately undermine the universality of rights.

Anti-rights actors have been guite open about how and why they intend to carry out this tactic in the past. The founder of the World Congress of Families, for example, stated that imperatives for the future included "energetic action within the NGO process," to help advance "friends of the family" within the UN and to place them in positions of current or potential influence there, as well as to build a

Infiltration of the UN by

Anti-Rights Actors

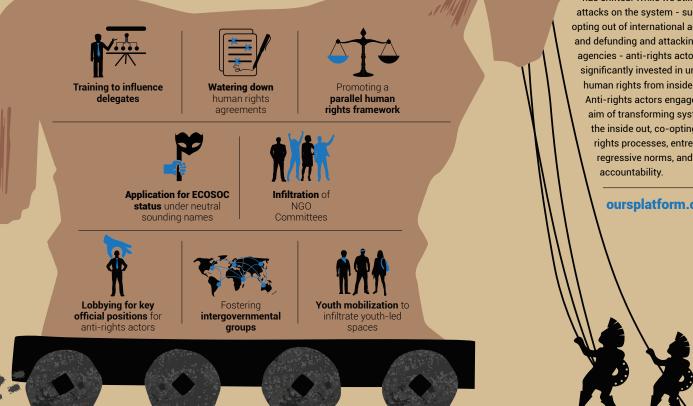
movement that can "influence and eventually shape" policy at the UN.654

Anti-rights Non-state Actors in UN Spaces – ECOSOC Status

A key point of entry for regressive nonstate actors in UN spaces is through NGO special consultative status with ECOSOC.655 Disguising their anti-rights goals - and in some cases, applying for ECOSOC status under a modified and neutral-sounding name, or the name of an affiliated organization⁶⁵⁶ – these actors seek to exploit the UN's mechanisms intended to

> The Observatory on the Universality of Rights

In recent years, anti-rights actors' approach to human rights spaces has shifted. While we still see outright attacks on the system - such as opting out of international agreements, and defunding and attacking UN agencies - anti-rights actors are now significantly invested in undermining human rights from inside the system. Anti-rights actors engage with the aim of transforming systems from the inside out, co-opting human rights processes, entrenching regressive norms, and undermining accountability. oursplatform.org



foster civil society engagement in human rights processes.⁶⁵⁷

Once granted, ECOSOC status allows nonstate groups access to attend UN meetings, host side events, attend and seek to influence resolutions and other agreements, and to meet, network with, and lobby state delegates and officials at the UN. Amongst anti-rights actors, CitizenGo has ECOSOC consultative status,⁶⁵⁸ as does ADF International,⁶⁵⁹ Family Watch International,⁶⁶⁰ C-Fam,⁶⁶¹ and the World Youth Alliance.⁶⁶²

In recent years, a number of non-state antirights actors have also entered regional spaces like the OAS and the Council of Europe through similar NGO status mechanisms. Unveiling of these actors' anti-rights activities and agendas has had an impact in some cases, however. In 2019, CitizenGo lost its formal NGO registration (through HazteOir) in Spain,⁶⁶³ and ADF was removed from NGO participatory status at the Council of Europe in 2020 following its extensive campaigning against the Istanbul Convention on genderbased violence.⁶⁶⁴

Anti-rights Non-state Actors in State Delegations

Joining state delegations at key UN meetings is another way in which regressive non-state actors embed themselves in UN systems. This tactic is particularly common at the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). At the CSW in 2017, for instance, the US asked anti-rights actors like C-Fam and the Heritage Foundation – who work actively and openly to undermine rights related to gender, reproduction and sexuality – to join the country's official delegation to the event.⁶⁶⁵ The Heritage Foundation delegate is the author of *In Bed with Radical Feminists: The U.N.'s Misguided Women's Agenda.*⁶⁶⁶

FEMINIST AND PROGRESSIVE ACTIVISTS ARE SITTING OUTSIDE THE NEGOTIATING ROOM WHILE GROUPS LIKE C-FAM ARE INSIDE TAKING PART

What this means is that in many cases feminist and progressive activists are sitting outside of the negotiating room, while groups like C-Fam are inside taking part in negotiations with delegate badges. Feminist activists active at the CSW have flagged this trend, describing non-state antirights actors' level of access and influence in these spaces. Importantly, this is a tactic that feminists have used for years. With progressive governments, it has been possible to ensure the presence of feminists in the official delegation – the same tactic now mimicked by anti-rights actors.

Infiltration of UN NGO Committees

Another way in which ultra-conservative non-states actors are increasingly being institutionalized at the UN is by their involvement in official NGO Committees. There are now several NGO Committees on different thematic areas based at the UN in Geneva and New York – including the NGO Committees on Freedom of Religion and Belief and the NGO Committee on the Family.

These civil society-led bodies at the UN exist to promote and defend international agreements protecting their relevant thematic area and have the capacity to coordinate and host NGO activities there. They also work with the relevant UN Special Procedures, if applicable, and communicate with the OHCHR and other relevant UN offices. The committee can thus create a hub of coordinated activity around its subject matter, and can hold a special relationship to key UN officials.

In recent years, a number of anti-rights actors have become active in New York and – to a lesser extent – in the Geneva NGO Committees on Freedom of Religion. Indeed, the New York NGO Committee has been chaired by ADF since 2018.⁶⁶⁷

The NGO Committee on the Family based in New York is also a focus point for antirights actors. This committee seeks to advocate for the inclusion of "the family" in resolutions and policies at the UN, as well as to educate the public on international issues and policies affecting "the family." It also works to ensure member states "commit to the betterment of families...with respect for the sovereignty of nations," and maintains relationships with the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the UN focal point on the family, and other UN bodies.668 At present, the NGO Committee on the Family includes representatives from the anti-rights World Youth Alliance,669 LDS Charities, a department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,⁶⁷⁰ and a member of the Universal Peace Federation who authored a chapter in "Family Capital and the SDGs" by the World Congress of Families and United Families International.671

THROUGH THEIR INVOLVEMENT AND LEADERSHIP IN NGO COMMITTEES, ANTI-RIGHTS ACTORS ARE MORE DEEPLY EMBEDDED IN THE UN SYSTEM

Through their involvement and leadership in NGO Committees, another tactic feminists have employed, anti-rights actors are more deeply embedded in the UN system. They have a greater platform to spread their discourses and agendas internally and can play a deeper role in shaping the way in which the UN addresses its theme.

Lobbying to Place Anti-rights Actors in Key Official Positions

Anti-rights actors seek to deepen their influence in regional and global systems by lobbying for allies to be appointed or elected to key positions in these bodies, or for new mechanisms to espouse and institutionalize their misleading discourses. At the European Parliament, for instance, CitizenGo and its allies successfully campaigned for a new special rapporteur for religious freedom, describing this position as "how the EU will protect Christians."⁶⁷²

Intergovernmental Groups Built Around an Anti-rights Agenda

Developing and fostering intergovernmental coalitions that work closely with regressive civil society is another means by which anti-rights actors seek to institutionalize their agendas. One example is the Group on Friends of the Family (GoFF), a bloc launched by Belarus in 2015. The bloc also includes Egypt, the Holy See, Russia, Pakistan, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia, amongst other member states.⁶⁷³

GoFF has sought to negotiate in antirights language employing the "protection of the family" discourse⁶⁷⁴ in the SDGs and subsequent UN development and human rights processes. It argues that the "traditional family as the foundation of human civilization" should be a key focus for governments in multilateral systems.⁶⁷⁵ It also organizes highlevel events at the UN together with non-state anti-rights actors.

FOSTERING INTERGOVERNMENTAL COALITIONS THAT WORK CLOSELY WITH REGRESSIVE CIVIL SOCIETY IS ANOTHER MEANS BY WHICH ANTI-RIGHTS ACTORS INSTITUTIONALIZE THEIR AGENDAS

In May 2019, GoFF organized a UN event entitled "It Takes a Family," co-sponsored by anti-rights non-state actors C-Fam, Family Watch International,⁶⁷⁶ the International Organization for the Family,⁶⁷⁷ the Family Research Council and United Families International,⁶⁷⁸ and with speakers from Belarus, Egypt, Russia, Qatar, Bangladesh, and Saudi Arabia. Promoting anti-rights narratives around "the family," the representative from Russia at the event stated that: "both the natural family and fundamental rights of parents are restricted in many countries around the world." The representative from the Holy See described different forms of families as "various forms of the family that by their very nature...are in no way capable of expressing the meaning of and ensuring the good of the family."679

Opting-out and Delegitimization

n many ways, anti-rights movements now implement a double strategy in relation to multilateral spaces. To further their agendas in global and regional systems, ultra-conservative actors take an insideoutside approach.

TO FURTHER THEIR AGENDAS IN GLOBAL AND REGIONAL SYSTEMS, ULTRACONSERVATIVE ACTORS TAKE AN INSIDE-OUTSIDE APPROACH

In what has been described as a "nationalist international," a number of regressive state and non-state actors seek to work within multilateral spaces like the UN, OAS and EU to co-opt their processes and standards. The goal is to thereby limit state accountability and increase state impunity, and to develop and embed new ultra-conservative norms and policies within these systems. This is another example of the aforementioned trend, where anti-rights actors have adapted their tactics from those of feminist and progressive movements advocating in intergovernmental spaces.

The second part of this dual move is from the outside: to undermine, weaken and hollow out multilateral systems – particularly those where feminist progress has been made – through attacks and pressure. This often manifests itself as anti-rights actors opting out or threatening to opt out of these processes, various approaches

with delegitimization as their aim, and by withholding or withdrawing funds.

Withdrawal from Human Rights Bodies and Conventions

Ultra-conservative strategies of opting out and delegitimization have had growing prominence and impact in recent years in global and regional spaces. A key example at the regional level is the wave of states looking to opt out of the Istanbul Convention, the 2014 Council of Europe treaty on violence against women and domestic violence.⁶⁸⁰

In July 2020, Poland announced its intention to withdraw from the convention, which it ratified in 2015. Justice Minister Zbigniew Ziobro dubbed the convention "gender gibberish"681 and claimed that it was "harmful" because it required schools to teach children about gender.682 The Istanbul Convention states that the state must promote equality between women and men and prevent violence against women by encouraging mutual respect or non-violent conflict resolution and questioning gender stereotypes - including through teaching materials in schools.683 Ziobro also claimed the convention violated the "rights of parents" and contained "elements of an ideological nature."684 In August 2020, Poland wrote to the government in Slovenia, inviting the country to withdraw from the treaty.685

Previously, in May 2020, Hungary rejected ratification of the Istanbul Convention, issuing a government declaration that the convention

promotes "destructive gender ideologies" and "illegal migration."686 Ratification of the treaty has also stalled in several other European countries, including Latvia, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia.687 Moldova, which signed the convention in 2017, has thus far delayed ratifying it,688 and in 2018 Bulgaria withdrew a governmental bill to ratify the treaty and requested that its Constitutional Court review the constitutionality of its ratification.689 Echoing elements of the "gender ideology" discourse promoted by anti-rights movements, the Court declared the treaty unconstitutional later that year. A backlash against the Istanbul Convention also emerged in Turkey in August 2020,690 and the government went on to withdraw from the treaty in March 2021.691

The Istanbul Convention has been the target of a number of ultra-conservative national and transnational campaigns over the past three years, focusing in large part on anti-sexual rights and "gender ideology" discourses. Along with allies, ADF International has strongly advocated against the convention,⁶⁹² and as such its 2018 application for NGO participatory status at the Council of Europe was rejected.⁶⁹³

Also at the regional level, in 2019 **the United States cut funding to the Organization of American States (OAS)** as part of its global anti-abortion policies.⁶⁹⁴ Specifically, the funding was cut from the human rights bodies, not the political bodies that tend to be aligned with the US. The US accused the Inter-American Commission of Women and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights of "aggressively lobbying in favour of abortion."

In 2018, the United States withdrew from the UN Human Rights Council,⁶⁹⁵ accusing the body of "chronic bias against Israel" – although US representatives remain active at the UN General Assembly, the Security Council, and the Commission on the Status of Women, among other spaces. After the HRC voted on a resolution to investigate extrajudicial killings in the country's "war on drugs," **the Philippines also threatened to** withdraw from the Council – describing Iceland, the drafters of the resolution, as "a nation of women beaters and eugenicists" – but ultimately chose to remain.⁶⁹⁶

RESERVATIONS AIM TO UNDERMINE CONSENSUS ON HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS

Reservations and Dissociation from Agreements

Several states and religious bodies like the Holy See also increasingly attempt to issue reservations or statements of disassociation to UN documents and agreements that are not formal treaties.⁶⁹⁷ While these reservations have minimal legal effect, the goals are political and symbolic. Ultimately the aim is to undermine consensus on human rights standards, create a freezing effect on the progressive interpretation of human rights language, and to mark out a space as a persistent objector to an emerging human rights norm so as not to be held accountable under it.

> Read more about **the tactic of state reservations** in the first edition of this report

For instance, at the 2019 CSW, when after contentious negotiations a final compromise draft of the Agreed Conclusions had been shared with states, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain registered a refusal to join the consensus. They cited their objection to language on sexual and reproductive health and rights, sexuality education, and multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. They also objected to what was missing from the text, namely: "the role of the family in protecting women and girls", "parental rights" language, and language on national sovereignty. These statements were delivered too late in the process - past the point at which the chair called for objections - so the Agreed Conclusions were formally adopted. Saudi Arabia and Bahrain walked out of the final meeting⁶⁹⁸ and said in a statement signed by 18 member states that they failed to recognize the outcome.⁶⁹⁹ Subsequently the Holy See, Family Watch International and C-Fam attempted to discredit the entire process, claiming that the negotiation process was forced.700

In another recent example, at the 73rd World Health Assembly in 2020, the United States attempted to disassociate from several paragraphs of the resolution on COVID-19 response, including those referencing sexual and reproductive health, stating that the US "believes in legal protections for the unborn, and rejects any interpretation of international human rights...to require any State Party to provide access to abortion."⁷⁰¹

Attacks on Special Procedures and Treaty Monitoring Bodies

As discussed in the first OURs human rights trends report, a widespread tactic amongst anti-rights actors is to attempt to delegitimize and block the work of the UN expert mechanisms like the UN Special Procedures and treaty monitoring bodies – as they are less successful in lobbying these mechanisms – as well as the UN's operative bodies (UN agencies).⁷⁰²

WITH RESPECT TO UN AGENCIES, THE ANTI-RIGHTS APPROACH IS GENERALLY TO ARGUE THAT THEY ARE OVERSTEPPING THEIR MANDATES, AS WELL AS TO TARGET THEIR FUNDING

With respect to UN agencies, the anti-rights approach is generally to argue that they are overstepping their mandates, as well as to target their funding. With treaty monitoring bodies (TMBs), anti-rights actors inaccurately suggest that such bodies have no authority to interpret their respective treaties. Anti-rights actors attempt to undermine Special Procedures by describing them as partisan and advocating for sharp limitations of their independence and purview. They do this by describing the work of Special Procedures as *ultra vires* (going beyond their authority) or duplicative of the work of other UN bodies, and by pushing against the renewal of their mandates.

In recent years, both non-state and state actors have systematically attempted to delegitimize the work of Special Procedures as a whole, as well as specifically targeting Special Procedures like the Working Group on Discrimination Against Women and Girls, the Special Rapporteur on Health, and the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion.

Signaling an escalation in attacks, several states drafted a Human Rights Council resolution targeting Special Procedures in two HRC sessions in 2019. The first draft resolution was introduced before the June-July 2019 session by Pakistan and the UAE and was ultimately dropped as it did not receive enough support from expected allies - some of whom, like Russia and Egypt, felt the text did not go far enough in curtailing UN mechanisms as a whole. The draft resolution then re-emerged at the September session - on the same day that Special Procedures issued a press release on human rights violations in Hong Kong – and China said it would lead this resolution initiative. This draft was also ultimately dropped.

The aims of these draft resolutions appeared to be to attack the UN Special Procedures as a whole and to set up processes to curtail their work and independence going forward. In particular, the aim was to undermine their capacity to issue statements, press releases, end of visit statements, or other media or social media statements. Another target appeared to be the terms of reference for Special Procedures country visits, as mandate holders hold member states accountable for human rights violations in their country reports. The second draft further suggested the goal of creating an ongoing Intergovernmental Working Group focused on "reform" of the Special Procedures. While an HRC resolution targeting this UN mechanism has not been finalized thus far, this is indicative of deepening anti-rights attacks on Special Procedures. States are also attempting to pressure mandate holders via discussions on their Code of Conduct in the Coordination Committee.

Organizations like C-Fam, Family Watch International, CitizenGo, and ADF also attempt to delegitimize particular UN mandate holders, particularly those who work to support rights related to gender, reproduction and sexuality. In a submission to the Working Group on Discrimination Against Women in 2020, for instance, ADF International expressed "serious doubts as to the Working Group's impartial and objective discharge of its mandate" simply on the basis of the subject matter of the upcoming report.⁷⁰³ In the same year, C-Fam wrote critically about the new Special Rapporteur on Health, claiming she was "likely to exceed her mandate" because of her background

advocating for sexual and reproductive health and rights,⁷⁰⁴ and CitizenGo launched a petition with allies like United Families International to target the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion for his report on freedom of religion and belief and gender equality.⁷⁰⁵ In September 2020, Family Watch International launched an online campaign against the Special Rapporteur's report entitled: A call to protect religious freedoms *worldwide.*⁷⁰⁶ The campaign includes a citizen petition to call on member states to instruct their ambassadors to reject the report and a sign-on for religious leaders. In the same month, FWI also hosted a webinar that attacked the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child for alleged ultra vires acts.707

As noted above, defunding is also a common strategy for anti-rights actors. The US has withheld funds from UNFPA on multiple occasions due to their work on sexual and reproductive rights and health, and with reduced funding to the UN as a whole, the Secretary-General issued warnings both in 2018 and in 2019 that the entity ran the risk of bankruptcy.⁷⁰⁸ In 2019, due to budget cuts at the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights, treaty monitoring bodies narrowly avoided having sessions postponed. Actors like ADF International explicitly call for states to withhold funds from the OHCHR and Special Procedures⁷⁰⁹ in order to pressure them into compliance with their views.

Lowering Human Rights Standards

"Conservatives cannot afford to abandon the institutions of power...the best solution is to stay in the fight."⁷¹⁰

A nti-rights movements work to undermine and lower the human rights norms and standards of multilateral systems from the inside. This taps into one of the core tactics of reactive politicization and strategic secularism highlighted earlier. **Regressive actors make** a strategic shift to coordinate and work within policy institutions, and to reframe their discourses into apparently "secular" language in an effort to push back against both feminist and progressive gains and their own accountability for human rights violations.

REGRESSIVE ACTORS MAKE A STRATEGIC SHIFT TO WORK WITHIN POLICY INSTITUTIONS, AND TO REFRAME THEIR DISCOURSES INTO APPARENTLY "SECULAR" LANGUAGE

These internal efforts to lower standards and accountability are a key way in which anti-rights actors have had an impact at the global and regional level. It can be described as a multi-step process of "norm spoiling" – by which anti-rights actors directly challenge existing human rights norms with the aim of weakening their influence.⁷¹¹ Ultra-conservative actors deploy several interlinked tactics that aim to block and reverse human rights norms and standards in regional and global spaces, including: misleading rhetoric around "agreed language" and "new rights," pushing for deletions and changes in intergovernmental resolutions, and pressuring human rights mechanisms to narrow their focus.

"Agreed Language"

At the UN, anti-rights actors seek to undermine human rights by first forum-shopping to find language that is regressive or weaker than existing human rights standards, and then advocating for this weaker language in other fora. The goal is to water down intergovernmental agreements by replacing stronger human rights language with selectively chosen weaker language in an attempted race to the bottom.

THE GOAL IS TO WATER DOWN INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENTS BY REPLACING STRONGER HUMAN RIGHTS LANGUAGE WITH WEAKER LANGUAGE

Anti-rights actors selectively describe such weaker language as "agreed language," trying to suggest that such language carries greater weight than the stronger human rights standards of other agreements, fora or UN mechanisms that they seek to replace or delete. Relatedly, anti-rights actors will frequently argue against previous UN language that upholds rights related to gender and sexuality, claiming it is "not agreed language," because it came from a resolution that was voted on, rather than being reached by consensus. In fact, generally international agreements can be finalized by either vote or consensus.⁷¹²

For instance, at a recent CSW, in a tradeoff, the final Agreed Conclusions included a reference to "the family" rather than "various forms of families."⁷¹³ This reference was then cited by the resolution sponsors as persuasive "agreed language" in the regressive Protection of the Family resolution later that year at the Human Rights Council.

Similarly, during resolution negotiations at the HRC, a common tactic used by some states - such as Egypt or the Russian Federation – to undermine standards on gender, reproduction or sexuality is to seek to replace the language in the original text with weaker language pulled from the more contested Agreed Conclusions of the CSW, or from development mechanisms (such as the SDG process) which are weaker than existing human rights standards. In addition, anti-rights actors have also targeted spaces like the UN General Assembly and Security Council,⁷¹⁴ where there is less feminist activist engagement, in an attempt to seed regressive language that can then be pushed elsewhere.

In many UN spaces, such as the Human Rights Council, this tactic manifests as strong pressure on resolution sponsors to have a consensus – rather than a voted – resolution. The aim is to water down language on gender, sexuality and reproduction. Antirights actors at the HRC also argue against the inclusion of strong standards from UN Special Procedures and Treaty Monitoring Bodies in intergovernmental agreements on the grounds of "agreed language."

"New rights"

In another attempt to weaken human rights standards from the inside, anti-rights actors also misleadingly describe various standards on rights related to gender and sexuality as "new rights."⁷¹⁵ In this way they attempt to invalidate the application of long-standing human rights norms and law on the subject.

ANTI-RIGHTS ACTORS MISLEADINGLY DESCRIBE RIGHTS RELATED TO GENDER AND SEXUALITY AS "NEW RIGHTS" TO INVALIDATE LONG-STANDING HUMAN RIGHTS NORMS AND LAW

For instance, ADF argues that rights relating to comprehensive sexuality education, sexual orientation, gender identity, and abortion – and the entire category of sexual and reproductive rights⁷¹⁶ – are "new conceptions of rights."⁷¹⁷ To erode these standards, they have called on member states to carry out several strategies at the UN in recent years. For example, to assert that international law does not guarantee these controversial "rights" and to assert that "states have national sovereignty in these areas."⁷¹⁸

Narrowing the Role of UN Mechanisms and Mandates

Linked to their attempts at delegitimization, anti-rights actors also seek to pressure UN agencies, TMBs and Special Procedures to narrow and change their focus. For instance, anti-rights actors will first deceptively frame rights related to gender, sexuality and reproduction as *ultra vires* or outside the mandate of UN bodies, and then go on to lobby states to "ensure that UN entities do not exceed their limited mandates."⁷¹⁹

They also use the discourse of "new rights" here - to argue that these mechanisms are advancing "new" or "false" rights to pressure them to stop upholding rights for women, girls, and persons who are gender or sexually non-conforming in their reports and communications. In August 2020, for example, anti-rights actors attempted to pressure the UN Working Group on Discrimination Against Women and Girls on their upcoming report on women's and girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights in situations of crisis.⁷²⁰ The Working Group received several submissions towards this report from regressive actors seeking to narrow or change its focus. One such submission from ADF International again made the deceptive argument that sexual and reproductive health and rights "have no basis in international law," and then attacked the WGDAW's objectivity and impartiality⁷²¹ on the basis of their own misleading representation of international law.

Regressive actors take a similar approach in regional spaces – in its manifesto entitled *Restoring the Natural Order*,⁷²² the Agenda Europe network also urges a strategically critical approach to multilateral institutions like the European Court of Human Rights and the EU's Fundamental Rights Agency, calling for the network to "call into question the legitimacy of statements and decisions that are not in line with Natural Law."⁷²³

Blocking and Weakening Language in Negotiations

Another key way in which anti-rights actors seek to undermine human rights standards related to gender and sexuality is to push for deletions and amendments to intergovernmental resolutions at the UN. At the 2019 CSW, for instance, Bahrain, the United States, Malaysia, and the Russian Federation demanded removal of the word "gender" in multiple parts of the Agreed Conclusions text. They also worked to negotiate out references to comprehensive adolescent sexuality education, the reaffirmation of the Beijing Platform for Action, and references to sexual health and reproductive rights.

In another example, at the 72nd session of the General Assembly's Third Committee, the Africa Group led by Egypt worked in negotiations to weaken existing commitments to provide comprehensive sexuality education to children with language that favoured parental approval for information.⁷²⁴ Anti-rights actors like Family Watch International have put together and regularly update a comprehensive UN Resource Guide that aims to closely guide state delegates in negotiations. The Resource Guide to UN Consensus Language on Family Issues⁷²⁵ is over 90 pages long and includes over 85 indexes on negotiating tips and language recommendations organized thematically,⁷²⁶ and a section on "standard negotiating techniques." The guide and its associated private database is disseminated and used in online and in-person trainings for state delegates and fellow non-state anti-rights actors. FWI suggests that the techniques in the guide be "used creatively by delegates in UN negotiations to affirm and strengthen the traditional family."

ANTI-RIGHTS ACTORS PUSH FOR DELETIONS AND AMENDMENTS TO INTERGOVERNMENTAL RESOLUTIONS AT THE UN

The guide's recommended negotiating techniques include to "propose family-supportive language to modify the meaning of a potentially harmful provision under negotiation." For example, suggesting that if a resolution provision about CSE is put forward, the state negotiator respond by proposing language from the guide's section on "education and parents."⁷²⁷

It also recommends the common tactic of citing "national sovereignty"⁷²⁸ or misleading

references to culture⁷²⁹ or religion⁷³⁰ in negotiations to bolster state impunity for human rights violations. It calls for states to "propose positive language that gives member states more flexibility in implementing problematic provisions" by "inserting language from the guide's sections on 'sovereignty' and 'religious and ethical values'." Amongst its recommended negotiating techniques, the guide also calls on states to add in language to "minimize the negative outcomes of UN agencies or treaty bodies that may overstep their mandates,"⁷³¹ and to request the replacement of phrases like "ensure," "must," and "guarantee" with non-mandatory terms.

In another example, after the 2015 Human Rights Council Resolution on the Rights of the Child called on states to ensure children's access to comprehensive CSE and to sexual and reproductive health care services, several states expressed reservations against this language during HRC resolutions in 2017 and 2018.⁷³²

A related move at the HRC is to first introduce new resolutions on similar themes to agreements with strong language on rights related to gender and sexuality, then to exclude any references to gender and sexuality in these new resolutions; and finally to argue against progressive language in other agreements, citing the new "sanitized" resolution.733 For example, two new resolutions on the theme of youth and girls' education were recently introduced at the Council, one on "youth and

human rights"⁷³⁴ by a core group headed by El Salvador, and another on girls' education⁷³⁵ led by the United Arab Emirates – neither of which made reference to CSE. The following year in negotiations on the Child, Early and Forced Marriage (CEFM) resolution at the HRC, the Russian Federation argued that the right to CSE should not be included or referenced in the resolution, as if this language was to exist anywhere, it should be in the resolution on girls' education.

AN ADDITIONAL MOVE AT THE HRC IN RECENT YEARS IS FOR STATES TO SUBMIT HOSTILE AMENDMENTS TO THE PROPOSED RESOLUTION AFTER IT HAS BEEN NEGOTIATED, BUT BEFORE IT HAS BEEN VOTED ON

An additional move at the HRC in recent years is for states to submit hostile amendments to the proposed resolution after it has been negotiated, but before it has been voted on. For instance, at the 44th session of the Council in July 2020, the Russian Federation, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia put forth five proposed amendments to the resolution on discrimination against women and girls. Russia called for "girls" to be deleted from the paragraphs calling for the full participation of women's and girls' rights organizations, feminist groups and women and girls human rights defenders,⁷³⁶ and to delete language on "universal access to evidence-based comprehensive sexuality education."737 Egypt called for deletion of the term "reproductive rights" from the language on women's and girls' right to sexual and reproductive health,⁷³⁸ and to the "right to" bodily autonomy and sexual and reproductive health. It also called to delete "evidencebased" sexual and reproductive health information and education, and to restrict the scope of SRHR to previous outcome documents.⁷³⁹ Saudi Arabia additionally called for the deletion of the phrase "sexual and reproductive health information and services" from essential health services in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.⁷⁴⁰ All of these hostile amendments were defeated in the final vote.

Co-optation – Building a Parallel Human Rights Framework

"We are carrying out a counter-revolution in UN social policy."⁷⁴¹

A s highlighted in the first OURs human rights trends report,⁷⁴² an overarching anti-rights strategy is to build a regressive parallel human rights framework. The aim is to work within human rights spaces not only to undermine progressions and accountability for violations, but to infiltrate and reframe human rights standards themselves so that they promote antirights agendas.

THE AIM IS TO WORK WITHIN HUMAN RIGHTS SPACES NOT ONLY TO UNDERMINE PROGRESSIONS AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR VIOLATIONS, BUT TO INFILTRATE AND REFRAME HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS THEMSELVES SO THAT THEY PROMOTE ANTI-RIGHTS AGENDAS

This is the corollary to anti-rights attempts to weaken and block rights related to gender and sexuality. A goal of "hollowing out" the system is to lay the groundwork for the promotion of alternative norms and standards that validate patriarchal, hierarchical, discriminatory, and culturally relativist norms. Anti-rights actors seek to do this both by co-opting and subverting existing human rights standards, and through campaigns to develop and obtain consensus on ultra-conservative language. This is linked to ultra-conservative efforts to redefine rights related to gender and sexuality as "faux" or "new" rights – which is now being extended into the project of suggesting a new set of "unalienable rights," as promoted by a dedicated commission in the United States.⁷⁴³ **A key objective of this move is to undermine the universality of rights⁷⁴⁴ and push for a redefined framework that ultimately argues that not everyone is worthy of human rights, and that discrimination and violence against some is acceptable.**

Regressive movements have been explicit about their parallel framework scheme in a number of documents and trainings – and indeed it is a key reason why the Holy See and others have increasingly shifted to appropriating rights language.⁷⁴⁵ For instance, in its manifesto, Agenda Europe recommends that members of its network "use the weapons of our opponents and turn them against them,"⁷⁴⁶ and "turn our opponents' discourse against themselves."⁷⁴⁷

They go on to state:

"It therefore seems to be a much better strategy to use all those words, including neologisms such as 'reproductive rights'...[i]f this is done consistently, we might even succeed in 'contaminating'... the vocabulary that our opponents have crafted, so that they cannot use them anymore. If, for example, a sufficient number of governments clearly state that 'reproductive rights' means that anybody has the right to reproduce, but that they do not imply any right to have access to abortion or...contraception, then all existing references to this term could be used in our favour."⁷⁴⁸

Proposed Regressive "Rights"

Anti-rights actors have recently promoted the reframing of the right to life as anti-abortion, "the family's" right to protection, and "parental rights." In each of these attempts, regressive movements seek to embed their discourses into human rights standards.

As discussed in the first OURs human rights trends report, a number of anti-rights actors have sought to appropriate the right to life in service of their anti-abortion mission.⁷⁴⁹ The Vatican and allied Christian Right organizations have been attempting to insert their doctrinal caveat that human life begins at the moment of conception into the right. They argue that the right to life therefore prohibits abortion and/or some forms of contraception – whereas the UN Human Rights Committee has repeatedly reaffirmed that the right to life begins at birth.⁷⁵⁰

Yet anti-rights actors continue to try to coopt this right towards their agenda. For instance, in its 2020 submission to the UN Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, C-Fam⁷⁵¹ and Family Watch International⁷⁵² again misleadingly referred to "the right to life of children in the womb." Similarly, ultraconservative movements have sought to embed into international law other anti-rights discourses including "protection of the family"⁷⁵³ and "parental rights."⁷⁵⁴

Declarative Texts

Drafting declarative texts is a key part of the strategy of building a parallel human rights framework. These texts pose as soft human rights or a persuasive encapsulation of existing standards. To boost their "institutional" appearance and weight as advocacy and lobbying tools, anti-rights actors look to broadly disseminate these declarative texts and gather sign-ons from multiple civil society and state actors.

DECLARATIVE TEXTS POSE AS SOFT HUMAN RIGHTS OR A PERSUASIVE ENCAPSULATION OF EXISTING STANDARDS

The first edition of this report highlighted several such declarative texts,⁷⁵⁵ including the **Declaration on Rights of Children and their Families**, the **Family Articles**, the **World Family Declaration**, the **Declaration on the Rights of the Family**, the **Decalogue of Commitments for Human Dignity and the Common Good**, and the **San Jose Articles**.

More recently, a number of ultraconservative actors have developed and began to rally around another text: the **Geneva Statement**.⁷⁵⁶ First launched in 2018 around the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the statement retreads a number of anti-rights moves highlighted above. Echoing the misleading "new rights" tactic, the statement argues that, "the UDHR must not be used to advance *newly claimed rights* that do not enjoy international agreement."⁷⁵⁷

It then goes on to state:

"We call for a renewed attention from the UN and its Member States to the core human rights that currently are threatened internationally, beginning with the *right to life*. People *in all stages of life* and in all regions of the world are increasingly vulnerable to assaults on this foundational right. Respect for human life, *from conception to a natural death*, is the indisputable corollary of respect for human dignity."⁷⁵⁸

The Geneva Statement also claims that the "principle of self-determination guarantees the right of every nation to inform its approach to human rights according to its own national tradition." It goes on to argue for "protection of the family," to privilege heteronormative forms of family, and for "parental rights."⁷⁵⁹

ADF launched this statement, along with allies, during their "I'm Human, Right?" campaign with a drive for signatures. In one call for endorsement, they stated, "through a new and exciting global campaign, we're hoping more countries will...uphold conscience protections for medical professionals," and that individuals could "help defend the right to life by signing"⁷⁶⁰ the statement. C-Fam has been lobbying state representatives – including in Brazil, Indonesia, Uganda, Hungary, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Paraguay – to sign the statement. ADF International claims that people from more than 165 countries have signed it.

THE GENEVA CONSENSUS REPRESENTS THE CONTINUED USE OF DECLARATIVE TEXTS TO UNDERMINE THE UNIVERSALITY OF RIGHTS, AS WELL AS THE CURRENT SHAPE OF ALLIED ANTI-RIGHTS GOVERNMENTS GLOBALLY

More recently, in 2020, the Geneva Consensus was launched by co-sponsors Brazil, Hungary, the US, Egypt, Indonesia, and Uganda.⁷⁶¹ This declarative text gained more prominence in October 2020 when 32 countries signed on, following lobbying and publicity efforts of the US government.⁷⁶² The document denies the right to abortion and states that there is no international obligation for states to "finance or facilitate abortion."763 It also states that children need special safeguards and care "before as well as after birth" and that "the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State."764 The co-sponsors' efforts were considered by many to have

www.oursplatform.org

been less than successful in terms of the number of signatories garnered, and the text was met with opposition from civil society in the different countries.⁷⁶⁵ Nevertheless, the document represents the continued use of declarative texts to undermine the universality of rights, as well as the current shape of allied anti-rights governments globally.

Exercise

Holding Governments Accountable

Questions

What is the overall position of your state representative in the Human Rights Council, the General Assembly or other human rights mechanisms? Do they have different positions on different issues (eg. support LGBTQI rights but condemn abortion). Which issues do they prioritize and which do they sideline?

Have feminist movements in your country engaged in these processes?

How do feminist and social justice movements hold governments accountable for their positions at international and regional human rights systems around bodily autonomy and rights related to gender and sexuality? What have you done right, and what are the areas to strengthen?

We want to hear what you found out!

Please share your reflections with us at rightsatrisk@awid.org or via OURs members' social media platforms using **#RightsAtRisk**

Resources

There are a number of databases to help you find out your government's position in the international human rights system, listed below. Consult your local feminist and human rights organizations for additional sources and information.

Universal Rights Group's voting portal tracks countries' votes on resolutions when they are Council members. <u>https://www.universal-rights.org/country-voting-history-portal/</u>

Universal Rights Group's YourHRC portal has a summary overview for each country, including which resolutions they led on, how much they participate in discussions, their joint statements, etc. <u>https://yourhrc.org/interactive-map/</u>

Sexual Rights Initiative (SRI)'s Universal Periodic Review (UPR) sexual rights database allows you to search all sexual rights related recommendations and references made during the Universal Periodic Review of states.

https://www.uprdatabase.org/recommendations

Plan International Girls' rights database includes the most recent documents from more than 15 human rights bodies. https://database.girlsrightsplatform.org/

Yes, they are strong, but so are we!

Mapping our Tactics and Strategies

The focus of this report is to map how anti-rights actors work and the amount of power and resources they have. However, feminist movements around the world have also been building strategies and tactics to advance our agendas. In fact, many anti-rights strategies and tactics have been inspired by us! This exercise is for you to identify, name and celebrate some of our own strategies.

This report and the first OURs Trends Report *Rights at Risk* outline different tactics used by anti-rights actors. Let's map those used by feminist movements.

Instructions:

- 1. Divide participants into small groups.
- 2. Give each group flip charts, each with the name of one of the tactics used by anti-rights actors.

TACTICS:

Campaigns and mobilization, Spectacle & shock tactics, Media engagement, Trainings, Grants, Engagement at the UN and other multilateral spaces, Coordination and links with other actors, Strategic litigation, Lobbying and model legislation, Civil society training of UN delegates.

Using different colours, groups will complete the flip charts, reflecting:

TACTICS:

- · How feminist movements have used these tactics successfully?
- What should we do better?

MOVEMENTS:

- Who has been using (leading and/or engaging with) this tactic in your context?
- Who is still missing?
- 3. In plenary, each group shares their work with the others, offering some time for complementing and collective reflections.

If you are in a virtual meeting: you can do the same exercise using breakout rooms and platforms that allow co-creating these kinds of maps, like padlet, mentimeter or jamboard.

Alternative – Music Ball Game:

If you are in an in-person meeting and you want to bring more playfulness to this exercise, try this game.

Prep work: Write the names of the different Tactics (described in the previous exercise) on small pieces of paper, and put them in a bag.

Tip: As an alternative to sound, you could use light, such as a spotlight that you turn on and off.

Instructions

- 1. All the participants gather in a circle
- 2. Turn the music on, and ask participants to start passing the ball to the person at their left
- 3. When the music stops, the participant with the ball picks a paper from the bag and responds: "How has the feminist movement in your context used X tactic to advocate for bodily autonomy/sexual rights/the universality of rights? What could be done better?"
- 4. Offer time for the group to complement the response
- 5. Turn on the music, and start again!

We want to hear what you found out!

Please share your reflections with us at rightsatrisk@awid.org or via OURs members' social media platforms using **#RightsAtRisk**

Endnotes - Chapter 5: Anti-Rights Tactics, Strategies, and Impacts

- 650 Juan Marco Vaggione, Reactive Politicization and Religious Dissidence: The Political Mutations of the Religious, Universidad Nacional de Cordoba https://programaddssrr.files.wordpress.com/2013/05/reactive-politicization-and-religious-dissidence-the-political-mutations-of-the-religious.pdf
- 651 And, often, national level.
- 652 As we can see elsewhere, the reactive politicization of religion is also manifested through a shift to "secularized" discourses in these spaces, in contrast to openly religious language. See further ibid; and Naureen Shameem, *Rights at Risk: Observatory on the Universality of Rights Trends Report 2017*, AWID pp. 20-21, 25, 58 and 100, https://www.oursplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/Rights-At-Risk-OURs-Trends-Report-2017.pdf
- 653 "Norm spoiling" is a process in which anti-rights actors directly challenge existing human rights norms with the aim of weakening their influence. The goal of norm spoiling is to limit the development and diffusion of the norms it targets, and in doing so, to create political space for competing anti-rights norms. As such, while norm spoiling is destructive, its aim is to lay the groundwork for norm promotion. See e.g., Rebecca Sanders, *Norm spoiling: undermining the international women's rights agenda*, International Affairs 94: 2, 2018. Available at: https://tinyurl.com/2u4x29es
- 654 Allan Carlson, The New Agrarian Mind: The Movement toward Decentralist Thought in Twentieth-Century America, 2000.
- 655 https://csonet.org/?menu=100
- 656 For instance, CitizenGo is registered under its national affiliate's name, HazteOir, which is less well-known in international circles. Family Watch International is registered at the UN under the name of "Global Helping to Advance Women."
- 657 See also, Civicus, United Nations: 'Anti-rights groups come in under the pretence of speaking about human rights', 27 August 2019, https://www.civicus.org/index.php/media-resources/news/interviews/4012-united-nations-anti-rights-groups-come-in-under-thepretence-of-speaking-about-human-rights
- 658 Circa 2013, as HazteOir.
- 659 Circa 2010.
- 660 See Naureen Shameem, *Rights at Risk: Observatory on the Universality of Rights Trends Report 2017*, AWID p.40, https://www.oursplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/Rights-At-Risk-OURs-Trends-Report-2017.pdf
- 661 From 2014, see p.38 ibid. The hardline anti-rights group Human Life International was unsuccessful in its bid for special consultative status at the UN, so it subsequently set up C-Fam as its UN lobbying arm. See further re C-Fam generally at p.36, ibid
- 662 For more on the World Youth Alliance, see p.46, ibid.
- 663 HazteOir, El Gobierno retira la declaración de utilidad pública a HazteOir, 5 February 2019. Available at: https://www.eldiario.es/sociedad/hazteoir_1_1716147.html
- 664 Claire Provost and Peter Geoghegan, *Revealed: US anti-LGBT 'hate group' dramatically increases UK spending*, openDemocracy, March 2019, https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/revealed-us-anti-lgbt-hate-group-dramatically-increases-uk-spending/ The Council of Europe decision is available at: https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016808b8645
- 665 Christina Cauterucci, *Trump Sends Hate Group Leader to U.N. Women's Commission, Echoing George W. Bush*, Slate, 16 March 2017. https://slate.com/human-interest/2017/03/trump-sends-hate-group-leader-to-u-n-womens-commission-echoing-george-w-bush.html. The delegate from C-Fam was their executive vice-president, Lisa Correnti. C-Fam has also been categorized by the SPLC as an anti-LGBTQI hate group. The delegate from Heritage Foundation was Grace Melton, associate for UN social issues.
- 666 Grace Melton, In Bed with Radical Feminists: The U.N.'s Misguided Women's Agenda, The Heritage Foundation, 3 June 2011. https://www.heritage.org/global-politics/report/bed-radical-feminists-the-uns-misguided-womens-agenda
- 667 Diana Chandler, *UN-related religious liberty committee led by ADF rep*, Baptist Press, 2 July 2018, https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/un-related-religious-liberty-committee-led-by-adf-rep/. The chair is Kelsey Zorzi, ADF International's Director of Advocacy for Global Religious Freedom. Other members of the NYC NGO Committee on FoRB at this time are Ryan Koch of the evangelical Latter-Day Saints Charities (the treasurer of the Committee), and Scott Stearman of the Baptist World Alliance. See e.g., NGO Committee on Freedom of Religion or Belief, About, https://www.unforb.org/about/.
- 668 See e.g., NGO Committee on the Family New York, About, http://www.ngofamilyny.org/about/
- 669 For more on World Youth Alliance, see Naureen Shameem *Rights at Risk: Observatory on the Universality of Rights Trends Report 2017*, AWID, p.46, https://www.oursplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/Rights-At-Risk-OURs-Trends-Report-2017.pdf
- 670 Ryan Koch, who is also on the NYC NGO Committee on freedom of religion.
- 671 Susan Roylance, *Sustainable Families Group United Families International*, World Congress of Families, 2016. http://www.familycapital17sdgs.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/FamilyCapital.SDGs_.Book_.2016.09.08.pdf. Lynn Walsh, formerly chair of the Committee and now its recording secretary.
- 672 CitizenGo: Cyberactivism confronting the radical left, session at WCF Verona, March 30, 2019. See this strategy promoted also by the pan-European Christian-extremist network Agenda Europe in its publication *Restoring the Natural Order: An Agenda for Europe*, https://agendaeurope.files.wordpress.com/2019/05/rtno-2014.pdf

- 673 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, *Group of Friends of the Family launched in the UN*, 04 February 2015. http://mfa.gov.by/en/press/news_mfa/f8ff663d7481c615.html
- For more on this discourse, see p. 59, Naureen Shameem, *Rights at Risk: Observatory on the Universality of Rights Trends Report 2017*, AWID, p.59. Available at: https://www.oursplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/Rights-At-Risk-OURs-Trends-Report-2017.pdf
- 675 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, *Group of Friends of the Family launched in the UN*, 04 February 2015. http://mfa.gov.by/en/press/news_mfa/f8ff663d7481c615.html
- 676 Stefano Gennarini, J.D., *Pro-Family Nations and NGOs Celebrate 25th International Day of Families*, The Center for Family and Human Rights (C-Fam), 17 May 2019. https://c-fam.org/friday_fax/pro-family-nations-ngos-celebrate-25thinternational-day-families/
- 677 Now the parent organization of the World Congress of Families.
- 678 Hatewatch, Anti-LGBTQ Hate Groups Co-Sponsor United Nations Event, Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), 13 May 2019. https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2019/05/13/anti-lgbtq-hate-groups-sponsor-united-nations-event
- 679 Stefano Gennarini, J.D., *Pro-Family Nations and NGOs Celebrate 25th International Day of Families*, The Center for Family and Human Rights (C-Fam), 17 May 2019. https://c-fam.org/friday_fax/pro-family-nations-ngos-celebrate-25thinternational-day-families/
- 680 Conseil de l'Europe, Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, 11 May 2011. https://www.coe.int/fr/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/rms/090000168008482e
- 681 Milosz Hodún, *Mr. Ziobro and "Gender Gibberish"*, Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom, (FNFEUROPE), 3 August 2020. https://fnf-europe.org/2020/08/03/mr-ziobro-and-gender-gibberish/
- 682 BBC News, Istanbul Convention: Poland to leave European treaty on violence against women, 25 July 2020, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-53538205
- 683 Europa, What Is The Istanbul Convention? Who is it for? Why is it Important? https://ec.europa.eu/justice/saynostopvaw/downloads/materials/pdf/istanbul-convention-leaflet-online.pdf
- 684 BBC News, Istanbul Convention: Poland to leave European treaty on violence against women, 25 July 2020, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-53538205
- 685 Suzana Kos, Where does Janez Janša's train take us? Delo, 02 September 2020 https://www.delo.si/novice/slovenija/kam-nas-peljevlak-janeza-janse-345422.html?fbclid=lwAR1IjTrq0i_JgmkFEDbiClwhYIBAYsx8vu37SzSWQMD2XyHWQJVwzUaucFc#
- 686 Agence France-Presse in Budapest, *Hungary's parliament blocks domestic violence treaty*, The Guardian, 5 May 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/05/hungarys-parliament-blocks-domestic-violence-treaty
- 687 Marc Santora, *Poland Considers Leaving Treaty on Domestic Violence, Spurring Outcry*, New York Times, 27 July 2020 [Updated Oct. 27, 2020], https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/27/world/europe/poland-domestic-violence-treaty.html
- 688 Maria Dulgher, *The dispute of the day: Should Moldova ratify the Istanbul Convention? The answer of the Moldovan NGOs*, Moldova. org, 18 December 2019, https://www.moldova.org/en/the-dispute-of-the-day-should-moldova-ratify-the-istanbul-convention-the-answer-of-the-moldovan-ngos/
- 689 Ruzha Smilova, Promoting 'Gender Ideology': Constitutional Court of Bulgaria Declares Istanbul Convention Unconstitutional, Oxford Human Rights Hub, 22 August 2018, https://ohrh.law.ox.ac.uk/promoting-gender-ideology-constitutional-court-of-bulgaria-declares-istanbul-convention-unconstitutional/
- 690 Serkan Demirtaş, Istanbul Convention stirs debate among Turkey's conservatives, Hürriyet Daily News, 03 August 2020, https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/opinion/serkan-demirtas/istanbul-convention-stirs-debate-among-turkeys-conservatives-157072
- 691 Domestic Violence: Turkey pulls out of Istanbul Convention, BBC, March 2020, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-56467689
- 692 See e.g., Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) International, *Brief: The Istanbul Convention*, https://adfinternational.org/resource/the-istanbul-convention/
- 693 The grounds cited by the review committee stated that ADF "does not meet the requirements of Articles 2a and b of Resolution(2016)3 which are to respect and defend the values and principles of the Council of Europe, and to support the achievement of the closer unity mentioned in Article 1 of the Council of Europe's Statute."
- 694 The International Justice Resource Center (IJRC), U.S. Resists International Oversight, Reduces IACHR Funding Over Reproductive Rights, 8 April 2019, https://ijrcenter.org/2019/04/08/u-s-resists-international-oversight-reduces-iachr-funding-over-reproductive-rights/
- 695 Colin Dwyer, U.S. Announces Its Withdrawal from U.N. Human Rights Council, NPR, 19 June 2018, https://www.npr.org/2018/06/19/621435225/u-s-announces-its-withdrawal-from-u-n-s-human-rights-council
- 696 Jeoffrey Maitem, *Philippines won't quit UN rights council or sever ties with Iceland despite Duterte's threat: Locsin*, South China Morning Post, 16 Jul, 2019,
 - https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/southeast-asia/article/3018770/philippines-will-not-leave-un-human-rights-commission
- 697 For more on this tactic, see Naureen Shameem, *Rights at Risk: Observatory on the Universality of Rights Trends Report 2017*, AWID p.93, https://www.oursplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/Rights-At-Risk-OURs-Trends-Report-2017.pdf
- 698 Stefano Gennarini, UN Commission Ends in Acrimony, Charges of Harassment and Bullying, The Center for Family and Human Rights (C-Fam), 23 March 2019, https://c-fam.org/friday_fax/un-commission-ends-acrimony-charges-harassment-bullying/

- 699 The Member State signatories were Bahrain, Belarus, Cameroon, Comoros, Djibouti, Libya, Indonesia, Iraq, Iran, Gambia, Malaysia, Mauritania, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Sudan, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Family Watch International, *Saudi CSW 63 Statement*, https://familywatch.org/saudi-csw-63-statement/?inf_contact_key=53b388075702c1da30213d67fba9b0cbcc0558ed5d4c28cbfab114022b1ec50d#.XJwCzShKg2x
- 700 See e.g., Sharon Slater, *Breaking News! Major Transgender, Abortion, and Sexual Rights Controversies Erupt at the United Nations,* Family Watch International, 23 March 2019, https://familywatch.org/resources/newsletters/17282-2/#.X2lyJZNKjR2
- 701 U.S. Mission to International Organizations in Geneva, U.S. Explanation of Position "COVID-19 Response" Resolution, 19 May 2020. https://geneva.usmission.gov/2020/05/19/explanation-of-position-covid-19-response-resolution/
- 702 For more information, see Naureen Shameem, *Rights at Risk: Observatory on the Universality of Rights Trends Report 2017*, AWID, p.102. Available at: https://www.oursplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/Rights-At-Risk-OURs-Trends-Report-2017.pdf
- 703 Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) International, *Response to the Questionnaire of the UN Working Group on discrimination against women and girls*, https://adfinternational.org/resource/response-to-the-un-working-group-on-discrimination-against-women-and-girls/
- 704 Rebecca Oas, Human Rights Council Approves Abortionist as Special Expert on Right to Health, The Center for Family and Human Rights (C-Fam), 17 July 2020. https://c-fam.org/friday_fax/human-rights-council-approves-abortionist-as-special-expert-on-right-to-health/
- 705 OHCHR, Report on freedom of religion or belief and gender equality, 27 February 2020, A/HRC/43/48. Report available at: https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomReligion/Pages/ReportGenderEquality.aspx. The CitizenGo petition is available at: https://www.citizengo.org/en-af/rf/181707-stop-un-dismantling-religious-freedom.
- 706 Protect Religious Freedom, A Call to Protect Religious Freedoms Worldwide, https://protectreligiousfreedoms.org/
- 707 Family Watch International, Human Rights Gone Awry: The UN Human Rights System Exposed Part 1&2, https://familywatch.org/2020/09/01/humanrights/#.X2luo5NKjR2
- 708 See e.g., Mattha Busby, UN is running out of money and member states should pay what they owe, warns secretary-general, Independent, 27 July 2018, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/un-budget-deficit-united-nations-money-cash-flow-memberstates-antonio-guterres-a8465906.html
- 709 See e.g., Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) International, *White Paper: The UN's Failure to Promote and Protect Religious Freedom*, https://adfinternational.org/resource/the-uns-failure-to-promote-and-protect-religious-freedom/
- 710 Elyssa Koren and Paul Coleman, *The Universal Declaration and the Distortion of Human Rights*, Public Discourse Journal of the Witherspoon Institute, 10 December 2018, https://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2018/12/47365/, authored by ADF International's Executive Director and Director of UN Advocacy.
- 711 Rebecca Sanders, Norm spoiling: undermining the international women's rights agenda, International Affairs 94: 2, 2018. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Rebecca_Sanders14/publication/323652136_Norm_spoiling_Undermining_the_international_ women%27s_rights_agenda/links/5b2ab93fa6fdcc72db507a57/Norm-spoiling-Undermining-the-international-womens-rights-agenda.pdf
- 712 In some fora, like the Commission on the Status of Women, the outcome document is determined on the basis of consensus. In spaces such as the UN General Assembly, the Human Rights Council and the Security Council and others, agreements may be finalized either by vote or consensus.
- 713 At the 60th session of CSW
- 714 For instance, on family and CSE at UNGA, and on "gender" at the Security Council.
- 715 See e.g. p.64, "Sexual Rights," and p.84, "Universal or fundamental human rights," in Naureen Shameem, *Rights At Risk: Observatory* on the Universality of Rights Trends Report 2017, AWID, https://www.oursplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/Rights-At-Risk-OURs-Trends-Report-2017.pdf
- 716 Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) International, Response to the Questionnaire of the UN Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, https://adfinternational.org/resource/response-to-the-un-working-group-on-discrimination-against-women-and-girls/
- 717 Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) International, *White Paper: The Rise of Faux Rights*, https://adfinternational.org/resource/the-rise-of-faux-rights/
- 718 ibid
- 719 Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) International, *White Paper: The Rise of Faux Rights*, https://adfinternational.org/resource/the-rise-of-faux-rights/
- 720 OHCHR, Call for submissions: *Women's and girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights in situations of crisis*, 31 August 2020. https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/WGWomen/Pages/SexualReproductiveHealthRights.aspx
- 721 Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) International, Response to the Questionnaire of the UN Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, available at:

https://adfinternational.org/resource/response-to-the-un-working-group-on-discrimination-against-women-and-girls/ The submission states, for e.g., "[c]onsidering that so-called "sexual and reproductive health rights" have no basis in existing international law, and that their acceptance is widely and consistently contested among UN Member States, the theme envisaged by the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls for its next annual report to the Human Rights Council casts serious doubts as to the Working Group's impartial and objective discharge of its mandate." 722 Agenda Europe, Restoring the Natural Order, https://agendaeurope.wordpress.com/restoring-the-natural-order/

723 ibid

- 724 Concluding Intense Session, Third Committee Approves 5 Draft Resolutions on Children's Rights, Assistance to Refugees, Persons with Disabilities, United Nations, Meetings Coverage, 21 November 2017, https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/gashc4224.doc.htm
- 725 Family Watch International, *Resource Guide to U.N. Consensus Language on Family Issues*, https://familywatch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2017/05/Resource_Guide_2013.pdf. An earlier version of the guide is also further discussed in Naureen Shameem, *Rights at Risk: Observatory on the Universality of Rights Trends Report 2017*, AWID, pp.40-46. Available at: https://www.oursplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/Rights-At-Risk-OURs-Trends-Report-2017.pdf
- 726 These focal areas include abortion, education and parents, family disintegration, gender male and female, parental rights, right to life, sex education, sexual orientation, and various forms of the family. See further ibid.
- 727 ibid
- 728 See further in the "Discourses" section in Naureen Shameem, *Rights at Risk: Observatory on the Universality of Rights Trends Report 2017*, AWID, 2017, p. 77. Available at: https://www.oursplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/Rights-At-Risk-OURs-Trends-Report-2017.pdf
- 729 See further in the Discourses section, pg 80, ibid
- 730 See further in the Discourses section, pg 78, ibid
- 731 Such as adding "within their mandate" to the following text: "Support the Commission on the Status of Women, within its mandate, in assessing and advancing the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action..."
- 732 For more information, see: Erin Aylward and Stuart Halford, *How gains for SRHR in the UN have remained possible in a changing political climate*, Taylor & Francis Online, 07 Apr 2020, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/26410397.2020.1741496
- 733 ibid
- 734 UN General Assembly, 32/... Youth and human rights, 27 June 2016, A/HRC/32/L.1. https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/32/L.1
- 735 UN General Assembly, 32/... Realizing the equal enjoyment of the right to education by every girl, 30 June 2016, A/HRC/32/L.30/Rev.1. https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/32/L.30/Rev.1
- 736 See the voting chart on the amendment here: https://www.sexualrightsinitiative.com/sites/default/files/resources/files/2020-07/L.30%20Result%20of%20the%20vote.pdf
- 737 See the voting chart on the amendment here: https://www.sexualrightsinitiative.com/sites/default/files/resources/files/2020-07/L.31%20Result%20of%20the%20vote.pdf
- 738 See the voting chart on the amendment here: https://www.sexualrightsinitiative.com/sites/default/files/resources/files/2020-07/L.32%20Result%20of%20the%20vote.pdf
- 739 Specifically, to restrict the scope of SRHR to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (from 1994), and the Beijing Platform for Action (from 1995) and the outcome documents of their review conferences. See the voting chart on the amendment here: https://www.sexualrightsinitiative.com/sites/default/files/resources/files/2020-07/L.33%20Result%20of%20the%20vote.pdf
- 740 See the voting chart on the amendment here: https://www.sexualrightsinitiative.com/sites/default/files/resources/files/2020-07/L.34%20Result%20of%20the%20vote.pdf
- 741 Austin Ruse of C-Fam, 61st session of the Commission on the Status of Women.
- 742 Naureen Shameem, Rights At Risk: Observatory on the Universality of Rights Trends Report 2017, AWID, p.95. Available at: https://www.oursplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/Rights-At-Risk-OURs-Trends-Report-2017.pdf
- 743 US Department of State, Report of the Commission on Unalienable Rights, https://www.state.gov/report-of-the-commission-on-unalienable-rights/. For commentary on the Commission, see e.g. Masha Gessen, Mike Pompeo's Faith-Based Attempt to Narrowly Redefine Human Rights, The New Yorker, 10 July 2019, https://www.newyorker.com/news/our-columnists/mike-pompeos-faith-based-attempt-to-narrowly-redefine-human-rights
- 744 This is an example of the misleading discourse on "universal or fundamental" human rights which seeks to use the language of universality itself to undermine the fundamental principle. For further, see p. 84, https://www.oursplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/Rights-At-Risk-OURs-Trends-Report-2017.pdf
- 745 In another example of the tactic of strategic secularism, at the UN, see e.g. Amy L. Coates, Peter S. Hill, Simon Rushton and Julie Balen, *The Holy See on sexual and reproductive health rights: conservative in position, dynamic in response*, Taylor & Francis Online, 30 Dec 2014, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1016/S0968-8080%2814%2944815-8
- 746 Agenda Europe, Restoring the Natural Order, https://agendaeurope.files.wordpress.com/2019/05/rtno-2014.pdf
- 747 ibid
- 748 ibid
- 749 Naureen Shameem, Rights at Risk: Observatory on the Universality of Rights Trends Report 2017, AWID, p.63, https://www.oursplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/Rights-At-Risk-OURs-Trends-Report-2017.pdf

www.oursplatform.org

- 750 UN Treaty Body Database: https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download. aspx?symbolno=CCPR%2fC%2fGC%2f36&Lang=en
- 751 For more information on C-Fam, see Naureen Shamem, *Rights at Risk: Observatory on the Universality of Rights Trends Report 2017*, AWID, 2017, p. 36. Available at: https://www.oursplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/Rights-At-Risk-OURs-Trends-Report-2017.pdf
- 752 For more information on FWI, see Naureen Shamem, *Rights at Risk: Observatory on the Universality of Rights Trends Report 2017*, AWID, 2017, p. 40. Available at: https://www.oursplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/Rights-At-Risk-OURs-Trends-Report-2017.pdf
- 753 Naureen Shamem, *Rights at Risk: Observatory on the Universality of Rights Trends Report 2017*, AWID, p.59. Available at: https://www.oursplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/Rights-At-Risk-OURs-Trends-Report-2017.pdf
- 754 Naureen Shamem, *Rights at Risk: Observatory on the Universality of Rights Trends Report 2017*, AWID, p.69. Available at: https://www.oursplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/Rights-At-Risk-OURs-Trends-Report-2017.pdf
- 755 See Naureen Shameem, *Rights at Risk: Observatory on the Universality of Rights Trends Report 2017*, AWID, p.95. Available at: https://www.oursplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/Rights-At-Risk-OURs-Trends-Report-2017.pdf
- 756 http://adfinternational.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/IMHR-Poster-Geneva-Statement.pdf
- 757 ibid, italics added.
- 758 ibid, italics added.
- 759 ibid, italics added.
- 760 ADF International newsletter, September 2018.
- 761 The text, along with its co-sponsors and signatories can be found here: https://www.hhs.gov/about/agencies/oga/global-health-diplomacy/protecting-life-global-health-policy/geneva-declaration.html
- 762 The text was also promoted by anti-rights non-state actors such as Alliance Defending Freedom. See: https://www.adflegal.org/press-release/geneva-consensus-declaration-reaffirms-inherent-dignity-and-worth-human-person
- 763 ibid
- 764 ibid
- 765 See Kerry Cullinan, *Will Trump's anti-abortion Geneva Consensus fall apart?*, openDemocracy, January 2021, https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/will-trumps-anti-abortion-geneva-consensus-fall-apart/



www.oursplatform.org

