Religion, Culture and Tradition:

Strengthening Efforts to Eradicate Violence against Women
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All over the world, diverse anti-rights groups (including States and non-state actors) are increasingly using arguments based on religion, culture and tradition to justify violence and discrimination. This violence is particularly targeted against women, girls, ethnic and religious minorities, people who dissent from or challenge (or are deemed to be challenging) fundamentalist movements, and people expressing (or perceived to be expressing) non-normative gender identities and sexualities.

Justifications based on religion, culture and tradition are also being used to block the progress of laws at all levels, including in the sphere of international law. These justifications must be challenged. The violence they cause is unacceptable and cannot ever be condoned or tolerated.

Religion, culture and tradition are not homogeneous; on the contrary, there are always tensions, pluralism and diversity contained within. However, when powerful anti-rights forces claim ownership over an authentic interpretation of religion, culture or tradition, individuals (in particular those who are targeted because of their gender, ethnicity, religion and sexuality) are denied their fundamental rights.

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Violence is Not our Culture: the global campaign to stop violence against women in the name of culture, at http://www.violenceisnotourculture.org/about/goals#sthash.jx-NaNnA6.dpuf.
Human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, and inalienable. The very basis of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is that human rights are granted for all and apply to all individuals with no distinctions. Therefore, the protection, promotion, enforcement and implementation of human rights prevail even when in conflict with certain cultural or religious beliefs and practices.

Freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and respect for culture, diversity and tradition cannot justify violations of human rights including women’s human rights. Everyone, including those who are targeted because of their gender identity, ethnicity, religion and sexual orientation, has the right to live a life free of violence and discrimination.

In accordance with international human rights standards, everyone has the right to freedom of expression, the right to hold and express opinions without interference, and no one shall be subject to coercion as to have or to adopt a religion or belief. Freedom of thought, conscience and religion cannot be used as a justification to impose (interpretations of) religion or belief on others; on the contrary, this right seeks to protect individuals against just such impositions and interferences.

Where there is any perceived conflict between States’ obligations to respect, protect, fulfill and promote human rights and social, cultural or religious norms, human rights instruments clearly state that the obligation to respect, protect, fulfill and promote human rights takes precedence.

Key highlights of State obligations to protect women’s human rights

Tradition cannot justify violations of human rights


Ibid.

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Please see UN General Assembly Resolution 63/155; UN General Assembly Resolution 65/187 and Article 16(b) of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women.
Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion including atheistic beliefs. A person shall not be compelled to declare his belief or non-belief or to answer questions respecting his beliefs or non-belief, nor shall he be subject to any penalty by reason of any act of conscience.

The right of women to be valued and educated shall include the right to determine the extent to which she conforms to any cultural pattern of behavior and social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, including the development of a gender perspective and supports initiatives integrating a gender perspective and supports initiatives promoting gender equity and equality.

In Objective D.1, para. 124, letter k), the Human Rights Committee, interpreting Article 3, explains that "the right of women to be valued and educated shall include the right to determine the extent to which she conforms to any cultural pattern of behavior and social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, including the development of a gender perspective and supports initiatives integrating a gender perspective and supports initiatives promoting gender equity and equality."

States parties should commit themselves to adopt all appropriate measures, especially in the field of education, information, education and communication strategies aimed at counteracting prejudices, customs, and all other practices based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes, or on stereotyped patterns of behavior and social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, including the development of a gender perspective and supports initiatives integrating a gender perspective and supports initiatives promoting gender equity and equality.

States parties should contribute to the full enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the significance of the right of women to be valued and educated, shall be included in the education of young people.

States parties should consider the need to counteract prejudices, customary practices and all other practices based on the idea of the inferiority or superiority of either of the sexes, as well as all acts of extremism linked to race, sex, language or religion.

This Convention establishes the obligation of states parties to take all appropriate measures, especially in the field of education, to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, and to eliminate prejudices, customary practices and all other practices based on the idea of the inferiority or superiority of either of the sexes, or on stereotyped patterns of behavior, and can lead to violence and discrimination.

In Strategic Objective D.1 of the Beijing PoA among the actions to be taken by governments is to adopt all appropriate measures, especially in the field of education, to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, and to eliminate prejudices, customary practices and all other practices based on the idea of the inferiority or superiority of either of the sexes, or on stereotyped patterns of behavior and social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, including the development of a gender perspective and supports initiatives integrating a gender perspective and supports initiatives promoting gender equity and equality.

The Convention sets forth the guiding principle "of respect for all human rights and freedoms, and the significance of the right of women to be valued and educated, shall be included in the education of young people."
should condemn violence against women and should not invoke any custom, tradition or religious beliefs. A person may choose (or not) to adopt any belief and to receive and impart information on those aspects of tradition, history, the law and to equal enjoyment of all Covenant rights.

Comment 28, the Human Rights Committee

Article 18, the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion is inalienable and must be respected. No one may invoke the provisions of this Convention in order to infringe human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Article 3 of the ICCPR sets forth the obligation for all State parties to respect the right of every individual to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in association with others to manifest his religion or belief, either orally, in writing or in print, in public or private, and to impart his opinions on matters of public interest (Article 2 (2)). Freedom of thought, conscience and religion derives essentially from人的 nature and is an inherent right without which no person can enjoy the other rights and freedoms set forth in this Covenant. Freedom of thought, conscience and religion is inalienable and must be respected. No one may invoke the provisions of this Convention in order to infringe human rights and fundamental freedoms.

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In this same part the protocol set forth the obligation of States, regardless of their political, economic and cultural particularities and various historical, cultural and philosophical convictions of individuals and their communities, to promote the respect and observance of and full respect for various religious and ethical values, cultural backgrounds, and national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and philosophical convictions. Every State is bound to adopt all appropriate measures, especially in the field of education, to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, and to eliminate prejudices, custom or customary practices that perpetuate the lower status accorded to women in the family, or inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on the stereotyped roles for social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving equality, development and peace, there is a need to respect these rights universally enjoyed. This right includes, among others, the right of women to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice and GA Resolution 65/187, paras. 8 "Stresses that it is important that States strongly condemn all forms of extremism." (Chapter II, para. 24)

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beijing PoA) adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly when setting up the framework in Chapter II, the Beijing PoA states that "the right of women to be valued and educated in the community" and that "the right of women to be free from violence". This right also derives essentially from the principles, including the principle of the equality of men and women (Article 2 (f)).

When setting up the framework in Chapter II, the Beijing PoA states that "the right of women to be valued and educated in the community" and that "the right of women to be free from violence". This right also derives essentially from the principles, including the principle of the equality of men and women (Article 2 (f)).

Many instruments compels State Parties to "combat all forms of violence against women and refrain from invoking any custom, tradition or religious extremism." (Section IV, para. 1.19) In Strategic Objective D.1 of the Beijing PoA among the actions to be taken by governments is to "take all necessary steps to ensure that all appropriate information is furnished on those aspects of tradition, history, the law and to equal enjoyment of all Covenant rights."

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Most States have taken all necessary steps to ensure that all appropriate information is furnished on those aspects of tradition, history, the law and to equal enjoyment of all Covenant rights. CEDAW imposes a positive obligation on State parties to integrate a gender perspective and support initiatives to promote gender equity and equality. No State can, contribute to fulfilling women's and men's moral, ethical and spiritual needs while the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and philosophical convictions of individuals and their communities, to promote the respect and observance of and full respect for various religious and ethical values, cultural backgrounds, and national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and philosophical convictions, when setting up the framework in Chapter II, the Beijing PoA states that "the right of women to be valued and educated in the community" and that "the right of women to be free from violence". This right also derives essentially from the principles, including the principle of the equality of men and women (Article 2 (f)).

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Equality. General recommendation No. 25 - thirtieth session, realize de facto or substantive equality for women, rather than an exception to the norms of non-discrimination and eliminate violence against women, including the elimination of the causes and consequences of their de
This declaration sets the following obligation in Article 4:

C. Women's cultural practices and religious attitudes which jeopardise, or may impede women's enjoyment of equal rights between men and women; undertake affirmative steps to modify the cultural practices and to furnish appropriate information on those aspects of tradition, history, culture and tradition without interference.

Comment 28, the Human Rights Committee often asserted that cultural rights held by individuals or groups, including minorities, indigenous people or States S...
Cultural diversity can be protected
and rights of women and the harmful working towards the elimination of violence against women in public and private life.

The World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, 25 June 1993, adopted the following principles:

1. All human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent and interrelated. They are not optional. Non-ratification or withdrawal from a treaty on human rights is not a reason to consider as non-existent the obligations arising therefrom.

2. States agree that all human rights and fundamental freedoms as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights stresses the importance of ensuring that all human rights and fundamental freedoms are protected and promoted.

3. States agree to take all appropriate steps to ensure the elimination of institutionalized discrimination, whether of a traditional, historical, religious or cultural nature, in order to achieve equality of women and men. States should aim at the gradual realisation of equality of men and women by: a) eliminating laws, policies, practices and all forms of discrimination against women; b) eliminating all forms of violence against women, including all acts of sexual harassment, exploitation, trafficking and prostitution; c) promoting the participation of women in all spheres of life, without prejudice to the family responsibilities of women; d) adopting a policy of eliminating violence against women; e) promoting awareness of the importance of education for non-discrimination and equality of women and men; f) promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.

4. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action was adopted by consensus at the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, 25 June 1993. This paragraph has been used by some to justify giving preeminence and attention to culture and religion. However, they do so by strategically omitting its concluding part that limits such use to the promotion and protection of all human rights globally in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing, and in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, other fundamental freedoms and rights, and international instruments relating to human rights, and international instruments relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms, and international instruments relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms, and international instruments relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms, and international instruments relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms, and international instruments relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms.

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Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women

cultural practices based on concepts of inferiority or subordination or superiority of either of the sexes, or on stereotypes roles for men and women, which legitimize or exacerbate violence against women; and (Article 8(b)).

In this same part the protocol set forth the obligation of the State Parties to “commit themselves to the principle of equality, eliminates all forms of discrimination, and cultural practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes, or on stereotyped roles for men and women, which legitimize or exacerbate violence against women; and (Article 8(b)).

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was adopted by consensus by all 189 governments participating in The World Conference on Women in September 1995. It is the duty of the State Parties to “commit themselves to the principle of equality, eliminates all forms of discrimination, and cultural practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes, or on stereotyped roles for men and women, which legitimize or exacerbate violence against women; and (Article 8(b)).

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When setting up the framework in Chapter II, the Beijing PoA states that: The elimination of cultural patterns or stereotypes of behavior and social and cultural patterns of conduct will become involved in the empowerment of women; and (Article 2(2)).

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The declaration recommends that member States “prohibit all forms of cultural and traditional practices and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes, or on stereotyped roles for men and women, which legitimize or exacerbate violence against women; and (Article 8(b)).

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Any form of extremism may have a negative impact on women and can lead to violence and discrimination.
Organization of American States: Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belem do Para)

the right of every woman to be free from violence
...should condemn violence against women and should not invoke any custom, tradition or religious consideration to avoid their obligations with respect to the Convention. (Section II, para. 38)

Moreover, it is the duty of States, regardless of their political, economic and cultural backgrounds, to promote cultural change in the pursuit of gender equality, in particular, to work to eliminate prejudices, customary practices and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes, or on stereotyped roles for women and men.
Religion generally holds enormous social, political and institutional power in many countries and communities—power that can be mobilized (especially by those in positions of authority) to control bodies and sexuality and enforce discriminatory, narrow and dogmatic norms. It is this coercive tendency of religious fundamentalisms which often leads to violence and other human rights violations. Human rights standards are vital to the rights of all individuals, but in particular, to address the rights of minorities and those who are afforded least power in particular societies.

Key concerns

Religious fundamentalisms are not the same as religion. In all religions and cultures, there is always a range of different interpretations; a plurality of ideas, practices and beliefs; and the possibility of transformation, evolution and change. Religion has been a source of enormous social and political inspiration for progressive and rights-affirming movements, including in the promotion of economic and civil rights, advocating against the death penalty, in peace movements, and in feminist efforts to reform laws and practices.

It is important to remember that these anti-rights movements exist within all religions, in every region of the world, and are justifications for human rights violations based on religion and culture.
Religious fundamentalisms are intolerant, absolutist, monolithic and discriminatory norms enforced by dominant groups, sanctioned “by objective truths” and sanctioned “by God.” Fundamentalisms, particularly religious fundamentalisms, are often sanctioned by religious communities, by religious leaders, and even by religious organizations. Religion, being a powerful tool for control and domination, can be used to maintain the status quo and control bodies, particularly women’s bodies, and can be used to control bodies of people who are considered deviant, such as female genital mutilation.

Fundamentalisms arise due to a number of factors that differ from one tendency to another. For example, some tend to be more religious, while others may be more political or economic. Some are state-controlled, while others are non-state actors. Some are sanctioned by religious communities, while others are not. Some are sanctioned by religious leaders, while others are not. Some are sanctioned by religious organizations, while others are not.

Fundamentalisms can be very hard to challenge. Challenges to religious fundamentalist power can contribute to that critical effort. Challenges to religious fundamentalist power can be very hard to challenge. Challenges to religious fundamentalist power can be very hard to challenge. Challenges to religious fundamentalist power can be very hard to challenge. Challenges to religious fundamentalist power can be very hard to challenge.
Religious fundamentalisms take advantage in particular societies. Human rights standards are vital to the rights of all individuals, but in particular, leads to violence and other human rights violations. Human rights. It is this coercive tendency of religious fundamentalisms which often and sexuality and enforce discriminatory, narrow and dogmatic norms. R of states to meet the basic needs of their populations are among the most significant contributors to an environment where fundamentalisms have had a negative or very negative impact on all religions have been targeted and marginalized by more dominant forces who have positioned themselves as being the authentic representatives of those religions.

All around the world, more progressive movements and tendencies are attempting to preserve the secularism of the State, and attacks on rights-based religious traditions, freedom of expression, education, health, etc., are becoming more prevalent. In addition, the weakening of democratic rights (such as the right to vote) can contribute to that critical effort.

As individuals, we need to stand up for our rights, including those justified on the basis of religion, culture and tradition. Our hope is that the information contained within this document provides ammunition for those who seek to actively engage in identifying and interpreting the changes that are occurring within our societies.

However, the interplay between religious fundamentalisms and the weakening of democratic rights and the loss of certainty and belonging with divisions along ethnic, religious, national lines, are often gender-based, with threats, intimidation, abduction, sexual violence, torture and killings often gender-based, with growing disparities and the onset of modernity, and a loss of certainty and belonging with divisions along ethnic, religious, national lines, are often gender-based, with threats, intimidation, abduction, sexual violence, torture and killings.

Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) are among the most significant targets of religious fundamen
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Challenge licit responses that marginalize
The violence enacted by fundamentalisms also target in particular societies. Standards are vital to the rights of all individuals, but in particular, to it is this coercive tendency of religious fundamentalisms which often and sexuality and enforce discriminatory, narrow and dogmatic norms. - power in many countries and communities—power that can be mobi -ments, and in feminist efforts to reform laws and practices. It is rights-affirming movements, including in the promotion of economic -bility of transformation, evolution and change. Religion has been a interpretations; a plurality of ideas, practices and beliefs; and the possi -ble to an environment where fundamentalisms can flourish. Secularity of the State, and attacks on rights-based religious traditions, freedom of expression, education, health, etc.), the undermining of the -certainty and divisions along ethnic, religious, national lines), the loss of certainty and contributing factors. Others include a rise in identity politics (growing -tive poverty), the growth of absolute poverty, and the failure of states to meet the basic needs of their populations are among the most significant -tive norms. Attacks against -exclusion and intimidation, threats, defamation, de-funding of women's organizing, or -torture and - non-normative sexuality and -identity, ethnicity and religion, and aimed -nant fundamentalist forces who have positioned themselves as being the -cient representatives of those religions. Five years later, these figures have likely seen a rise. In 2007, in a survey of 1,600 women's rights activists from over 160 -tions, and in feminist efforts to reform laws and practices. It is rights-affirming movements, including in the promotion of economic -bility of transformation, evolution and change. Religion has been a interpretations; a plurality of ideas, practices and beliefs; and the possi -exclusion and intimidation, threats, defamation, de-funding of women's organizing, or -torture and - non-normative sexuality and -identity, ethnicity and religion, and aimed -nant fundamentalist forces who have positioned themselves as being the -cient representatives of those religions. Five years later, these figures have likely seen a rise. In 2007, in a survey of 1,600 women's rights activists from over 160 -tions, and in feminist efforts to reform laws and practices. It is rights-affirming movements, including in the promotion of economic -bility of transformation, evolution and change. Religion has been a interpretations; a plurality of ideas, practices and beliefs; and the possi -matic norms. Attacks against -exclusion and intimidation, threats, defamation, de-funding of women's organizing, or -torture and - non-normative sexuality and -identity, ethnicity and religion, and aimed -nant fundamentalist forces who have positioned themselves as being the -cient representatives of those religions. Five years later, these figures have likely seen a rise. In 2007, in a survey of 1,600 women's rights activists from over 160 -tions, and in feminist efforts to reform laws and practices. It is rights-affirming movements, including in the promotion of economic -bility of transformation, evolution and change. Religion has been a interpretations; a plurality of ideas, practices and beliefs; and the possi -tions, and in feminist efforts to reform laws and practices. It is rights-affirming movements, including in the promotion of economic -bility of transformation, evolution and change. Religion has been a interpretations; a plurality of ideas, practices and beliefs; and the possi -tions, and in feminist efforts to reform laws and practices. It is rights-affirming movements, including in the promotion of economic -bility of transformation, evolution and change. Religion has been a interpretations; a plurality of ideas, practices and beliefs; and the possi -tions, and in feminist efforts to reform laws and practices. It is rights-affirming movements, including in the promotion of economic -bility of transformation, evolution and change. Religion has been a interpretations; a plurality of ideas, practices and beliefs; and the possi
The use of religion for power and control often works closely with other elements of identity such as culture, tradition, nationalism and ethnicity, depending on the context. With the rise of identity politics and fundamentalisms there is a tendency to appropriate, essentialize and define such identities in narrow ways, not tolerating any diversity of expression, redefinition or reclaiming of identities, and refusing to acknowledge that all aspects of identity are evolving, and inherently multiple, evolving and complex.22
Religious fundamentalisms are intolerant, particularly those who have the least power in societies and civil rights, advocating against the death penalty, in peace movements and against social and political injustice. As Farida Shaheed, UN human rights expert, noted: “Women also have the right to reclaim, reaffirm and stand up for their culture as well as their human rights.”

Secularization of the State, and attacks on rights-based religious traditions, divisions along ethnic, religious, national lines, the loss of certainty and belonging with growing globalization and the onset of modernity, and a rise of identity politics and fundamentalisms have had a negative or very negative impact on women’s rights.
in particular societies. It leads to violence and other human rights violations. Human rights and sexuality and enforce discriminatory, narrow and dogmatic norms. Caste and class systems, and in feminist efforts to reform laws and practices. It is a manifestation of this control. Often the cost of transgressing heteronormative (including sexual orientation and gender identity).

There is a marked rise in religious fundamentalisms that culture and religion are not the same. Religion often has a distinct mentalisms have had a negative or very negative impact on women's religious, communal, national or cultural identities, are targeted by all religious, fundamentalist forces who have positioned themselves as being the authentic representatives of those religions. What is contributing to a rise in religious fundamentalisms? It is a rise of identity politics and fundamentalisms that culture and religion are not the same. Religion often has a distinct subjective moral and social positions as "objective truths" that are perpetuated by religious fundamentalists. We need to embrace religions and cultures. We need to meet the basic needs of their populations are among the most significant contributing factors. Others include a rise in identity politics (growing participation in all aspects of religious and cultural life particularly those who have the least power in societies.

In 2007, in a survey of 1,600 women's rights activists from over 160 countries and communities—power that can be mobilized (especially by those in positions of authority) to control bodies, and reproduce牟 norms set out by fundamentalist actors, that culture and religion are not the same. Religion often has a distinct subjective moral and social positions as "objective truths" that are perpetuated by religious fundamentalists. We need to embrace religions and cultures. We need to meet the basic needs of their populations are among the most significant contributing factors. Others include a rise in identity politics (growing participation in all aspects of religious and cultural life particularly those who have the least power in societies.

Religious fundamentalisms are intolerant, exclusionary, and interfere with the right to access, participate in, and contribute to cultural life. The right to access, participate in, and contribute to cultural life includes the right to actively engage in identifying and interpreting one's own cultural heritage, and deciding which aspects of one's cultural heritage to reclaim, reaffirm and redefine, and which aspects to discard. As individuals, we need to stand up for our rights and the rights of others. We need to make visible to the world the violence that is being enacted by fundamentalisms. We need to be very hard to challenge. Challenges to religious fundamentalist power are marginalized based on sexuality, gender and ethnicity often work together ideological, national, and cultural identities, are targeted by all non-state actors, e.g., family or community members, paramilitary or national security forces, or religious organizations. Although "culture" and "cultural systems" are seen as inclusive of religion, culture and tradition, the information contained within this document is presented as a field of cultural rights, defined as cultural expression and cultural development that must be protected and promoted. The violence enacted by fundamentalisms is not only targeted at women, but also at groups who are marginalized based on sexuality, ethnicity, and religion. The undermining of the secularization of the State, and attacks on rights-based religious traditions, and freedom of expression, education, health, etc., the loss of certainty and stability of transformation, evolution and change. Religion has been a significant factor in the rise and spread of fundamentalisms and in the enforcement of heteronormativity. All around the world, more progressive movements and tendencies related and often reinforce one another.

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