International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief
22 August 2023

Resolve to expose violence based on religion or belief: UN experts

GENEVA (18 August 2023) – On the occasion of the International Day to commemorate victims of acts of violence based on religion or belief, a group of UN experts issued the following joint statement:

“In 2019, 22 August was designated by the United Nations General Assembly as the International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief, deploring the widespread violations suffered by individuals – including migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and persons belonging to minorities – who are targeted on the basis of religion or belief.

Back in 1981, it had taken some two decades for the international community to finally adopt the UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief. That Declaration acknowledged the great suffering brought about by the disregard and infringement of human rights including of freedom of religion or belief. It noted that for those that profess religion or belief, this constitutes one of the fundamental elements of their conception of life and therefore also of their freedoms.

On this, the 75th anniversary year of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), there is a particular resonance with the 1981 Declaration’s emphasis that the use of religion or belief for ends inconsistent with the UN Charter, the UDHR and other instruments is inadmissible and condemnable (Article 3).

The international community resolved to adopt all necessary measures to speedily eliminate and combat intolerance and discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief, observing that this can stem from any actor whether a State, business, institution, group of persons, or person. Intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief is defined as: “Any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on religion or belief and having as its purpose or as its effect nullification or impairment of the recognition, enjoyment or exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis” (Article 2.2).

Regrettably, such impairments and violations continue to plague us from every direction in every corner of the world. 42 years on from the 1981 Declaration, this year’s international day to Commemorate the Victims of Acts of Violence based on Religion or Belief offers the opportunity to make visible the multiple, daily and egregious violence that takes place based on religion or belief, and to seek to respond to its root causes, urgently and with far greater determination.”

ENDS

The experts: Ms. Nazila Ghanea, Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief; Ms. Alice Jill Edwards, Special Rapporteur on Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading
Treatment or Punishment; Mr. Fernand de Varennes, Special Rapporteur on Minority issues; Mr. Balakrishnan Rajagopal, Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing; Ms. Alexandra Xanthaki, Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights; Mr. Felipe González Morales, Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants; Mr. Tom Andrews, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar; Mr. Vítit Muntarbhorn, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia; Mr. Michael Fakhri, Special Rapporteur on the right to food; Ms. Farida Shaheed, Special Rapporteur on the right to education; Mr. Tomoya Obokata, Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences; Mr. Alioune Tine, Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran | OHCHR; Mr. Gerard Quinn, Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities; Mr. Morris Tidball-Binz, Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; Ms. Dorothy Estrada Tanck (Chair), Ms. Ivana Radačić (Vice-Chair), Ms. Elizabeth Broderick, Ms. Meskerem Geset Techane and Ms. Melissa Upreti - Working Group on discrimination against women and girls; Ms. Paula Gaviria Betancur, Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons; Mr. Surya Deva, Special Rapporteur on the right to development; Claudia Mahler, Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons; Ms. Siobhán Mullally, Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children; Ms. Ashwini K.P, Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance; Ms. Reem Alsalem, Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls; Ms. Margaret Satterthwaite, Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers; Mr. Damilola Olawuyi (Chair), Mr. Robert McCorquodale (Vice-Chair), Ms. Fernanda Hopenhaym, Ms. Elżbieta Karska, and Ms. Pichamon Yeophantong - Working Group on Business and Human Rights; Muluka-Anne Miti-Drummond Independent Expert on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism; Mr. Victor Madrigal-Borloz, Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity; Ms. Priya Gopalan (Chair-Rapporteur), Mr. Matthew Gillett (Vice-Chair on Communications), Ms. Ganna Yudkivska (Vice-Chair on Follow-Up), Ms. Miriam Estrada-Castillo, and Mr. Mumba Malila, Working Group on arbitrary detention; Ms. Isha Dyfan, Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Somalia; Ms. Irene Khan, Special Rapporteur on the Protection and Promotion of Freedom of Opinion and Expression.

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