

Call for Submissions: Report to the United Nations General Assembly on Eliminating Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief and the Achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16)

Background and purpose

In many parts of the world, the attainment of SDG 16 to achieve peaceful, just and inclusive societies is challenged by circumstances of increased fragility, social tensions and conflict. In his 2019 report on the progress towards the SDGs, the Secretary General expressed concerns at “the uneven advances in ending violence, promoting the rule of law, strengthening institutions and increasing access to justice, which continue to deprive millions of their security, rights and opportunities and to undermine the delivery of public services and broader economic development” ([E/2019/68](#)).

The continued prevalence of internal and international conflicts, persecution, discrimination and violence, which particularly affect the most vulnerable, have resulted in the forced displacement of more than 68 million people, in placing approximately 10 million at risk of statelessness¹, and kept approximately 1 billion of them – with an estimated 625 million children - in the margins of society and rendered them legally “invisible”,² and many of them see their dignity and rights violated through arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, blatant disregard of due process, trafficking and other contemporary forms of slavery, as well as torture and other cruel or degrading treatment.

Recognizing that the underpinning of peaceful and inclusive societies is respect for the equality of all persons regardless of race, sex, ethnicity, nationality, culture, religion or belief, birth or other status, SDG 16 seeks inter alia to significantly reduce violence, abuse and exploitation; to promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development; to promote rule of law and equal access to justice, strengthen transparency and accountability of institutions; and to broaden and strengthen participation without discrimination on any grounds. These targets will only be achieved through effective integration of minority and marginalized voices, including members of religious communities.³

Article 2 of the 1981 Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief provides that “[n]o one shall be subject to discrimination by any State, institution, group of persons, or person on the grounds of religion or belief.”

In his report to the 75th session of UN General Assembly, the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief will explore direct and indirect forms of discrimination perpetrated against religious or belief minorities – including indigenous peoples, refugees and migrants - as drivers of

¹ UNHCR, *A Special Report: Ending Statelessness within 10 Years*, at <https://www.unhcr.org/ibelong/special-report-ending-statelessness-within-10-years/>

² See information and data at <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals/goal-16-peace-justice-and-strong-institutions.html> and at <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg16>

³ The Global Alliance, *Enabling the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda Through SDG16+*, July 2019, at <https://www.sdg16hub.org/system/files/2019-07/Global%20Alliance%20SDG%2016%2B%20Global%20Report.pdf>

conflict and insecurity, and will formulate recommendations to help States and other stakeholders in their efforts for early warning and conflict prevention and mitigation.

In this regard, the Special Rapporteur invites States, UN agencies and programmes, other international and regional organizations, national human rights institutions, civil society organizations, faith-based actors, academics and policy experts to submit information on the following issues:

Discrimination in law and practice

- Patterns and examples of discrimination against minority religious or belief communities, in the area of:
 - a) civil and political rights, including but not limited to participation and representation in the public life, access to justice and effective remedies, liberty and security, freedom of expression, assembly and association;
 - b) economic, social and cultural rights, including but not limited to the rights to adequate food and housing, education, employment and healthcare.

In providing the above-mentioned information, please also include examples of discriminatory practices in the provision of both public and private services, on the grounds of religion or belief, and highlight the relevant legal provisions that protect against and sanction such practices.

- Laws and policies restricting the right to manifest freedom of religion or belief of minority religious communities, including blasphemy, national security and counter-terrorism laws; laws and policies with regard to the registration of faith-based organizations and associations; and those pertaining to religious property, religious educational institutions and places of worship and of burial
- Circumstances in which religious communities are prevented from administering their own affairs without State interference.
- Gender-based discrimination: the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination faced by minority women and girls who are members of minority religions or belief-based communities.
- Examples of laws (constitutional and other legal provisions) and policies at the national and local levels, or public statements by political and religious leadership that impose a uniform understanding of national identity around one dominant religion.
- Examples of family and personal laws, particularly those related to marriage, divorce, inheritance and alimony that impose beliefs traditions of the predominant religion on religion or belief minorities.

The effects of discrimination

- Displacement and forced migration of religious or belief communities owing to discrimination, exclusion or land rights violations.
- Instances of communal violence against religious minorities, and incitement to such violence, and the adequacy of state responses.
- Disaggregated data showing the impact of instances of conflict and communal violence on religious communities and minorities.
- Examples of religious or belief communities at risk of statelessness.

Good practices

- Examples of legislative, policy and institutional frameworks and measures protecting minority religious or belief communities against discrimination and violence.
- Examples of state legislative, institutional and policy measures to address past injustices, including violence and discrimination, against religious or belief minorities and to provide redress and reparations (or examples of State failure to address such injustices).
- Specific policies and initiatives promoting effective participation of religious or belief minorities in public life, including through responsive, inclusive and representative decision-making processes at all levels.
- Adequacy and effectiveness of law enforcement training in monitoring, combatting, reporting and responding to discrimination and hate crimes involving religion or belief.
- Remedies provided by States to victims of religious hate crimes.
- Specific measures to promote interfaith dialogue and religious pluralism in school curricula.
- Examples of civil society organizations and other non-state actors protecting the right to freedom of religion or belief for religious minorities, in particular where State action has been inadequate.
- Examples of State efforts to protect against religious communities' infringement of the human rights of women and girls.
- Specific measures and initiatives promoting understanding and cooperation between different religious or belief communities in public life, including in the conflict and post-conflict contexts as well as part of transitional justice processes, and the role of faith actors and religious leaders in this regard (e.g. training and awareness-raising programmes; local interfaith institutions and dispute settlement mechanisms).

Guidelines for Submissions

Submissions and inputs on the above-mentioned areas can be submitted in **English, French or Spanish** and addressed to the Special Rapporteur by email to freedomofreligion@ohchr.org by **Monday 1 June 2020**. Submissions should be limited to a maximum of 2,500 words.

Submissions and inputs will be considered public records unless expressed otherwise by the submitting individual or organization, and will be published on the website of the Special Rapporteur.