

**Excerpts of the discussions concerning “Faith for Rights” since July 2017  
by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)**

<b>Summary records of consideration of reports by States parties</b>	<b>Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women</b>
<p><b><u>Costa Rica, CEDAW/C/SR.1508:</u></b></p> <p>20. Ms. Haidar said the fact that worship-related matters fell within the remit of Ministry of Foreign Affairs only served to underscore the centrality of faith in Costa Rican society. The State party should make use of the latest tools and resources to promote a better understanding of the relationship between faith and the realization of human rights, such as the Beirut Declaration on Faith for Rights, as a means of forestalling conflicts between the two.</p>	<p><b><u>CEDAW/C/CRI/CO/7:</u></b></p> <p>15. The Committee recommends that the State party: (a) Devise a comprehensive strategy with medium-term and long-term benchmarks aimed at eliminating discriminatory gender stereotypes and upholding women’s dignity and contribution in all areas of economic and social life, engaging in that regard with religious leaders and civil society organizations in a positive dialogue on women’s rights; [...]</p>
<p><b><u>Niger, CEDAW/C/SR.1516:</u></b></p> <p>27. Ms. Jahan, noting that the draft document on the personal status code had not been adopted owing to the hostility of certain social groups, said that she wished to know whether the State party intended to adopt a new draft in consultation with civil society and with community and religious leaders, including those who might be expected to oppose such an initiative. In view of the fact that over 70 per cent of the population of Niger was under the age of 25, she asked what measures would be taken to involve young people in the process of reviewing the draft personal status code. Lastly, she asked whether the State party would consider seeking the advice of the Governments of other Muslim-majority countries that had taken steps to improve the status of women, promote the principle of gender equality in their personal status laws and reconsider religious interpretations that appeared to perpetuate gender inequality and harmful stereotypes.</p> <p>28. In order to promote reflection on the relationship between faith and human rights, the State party might wish to consider organizing a symposium similar to the one held in Dakar in May 2017 on the rights of women and children from the perspective of Islam.</p>	<p><b><u>CEDAW/C/NER/CO/3-4:</u></b></p> <p>21. The Committee, in line with Sustainable Development Goal 5.3, on the elimination of all harmful practices, such as child marriage and forced marriage and female genital mutilation, recommends that the State party: [...] (d) Develop and allocate sufficient resources for the implementation of a national plan of action to combat harmful practices, providing for strategic media campaigns and educational programmes to raise awareness among traditional and religious leaders, health-care and social workers and the general public about the negative impact of the practices on women and girls. [...]</p> <p>35. The Committee recommends that the State party accord priority to the participation of women in its efforts to meet the targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and that it: [...]</p> <p>(d) Raise awareness among parliamentarians, traditional and religious leaders and the general public about the need to promote women’s economic empowerment as a poverty alleviation strategy.</p> <p>43. The Committee, recalling its general recommendations No. 21 (1994) on equality in marriage and family relations and No. 29 (2013) on the economic consequences of marriage, family relations and their dissolution, as well as joint general recommendation No. 31 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/general comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2014) on harmful practices, recommends that the State party: [...] (c) Prohibit, including under customary law, the harmful practices of child marriage, forced marriage and polygamy and repudiation and conduct awareness-raising campaigns targeting parliamentarians, traditional and religious leaders and the general public on the harmful effects of these practices on women and girls.</p>
<p><b><u>Nigeria, CEDAW/C/SR.1518:</u></b></p> <p>14. Ms. Jummai Alhassan (Nigeria) said that the proposal to amend legislation to give equal rights to women married to foreigners was before the Legislative Assembly. Changes to the law on marriage could be made only by continuing to pursue campaigns to raise religious leaders’ awareness of the importance of amending the legislation in question. One such campaign was the HeForShe campaign, which had recently been launched in Nigeria. [...]</p>	<p><b><u>CEDAW/C/NGA/CO/7-8:</u></b></p> <p>7. The Committee notes that the State party’s efforts to implement its obligations under the Convention have been significantly affected by various conflicts in Nigeria, in particular the terrorist insurgency waged by Jama’atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda’Awati Wal-Jihad (Boko Haram) since 2009. The Committee notes the efforts of the State party to rescue and rehabilitate women and girls who have been abducted and subjected to sexual slavery by Boko Haram. It considers that the full implementation of the Convention, so as to ensure respect for and enjoyment of women’s rights, is a prerequisite for the success of those efforts, including those aimed at securing education facilities, bringing about</p>

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<p>16. Ms. Haidar said that she understood the importance of advocacy in bringing about changes in mindsets and in legislation, as she, too, hailed from a religiously diverse country, namely Lebanon. She drew the State party's attention to the Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constituted incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence and the Beirut Declaration on "Faith for Rights" and its related 18 commitments, which could serve as useful tools in encouraging different faith communities to work together to promote human rights. [...]</p> <p>43. Ms. Rana, highlighting the high numbers of women and girls who were subjected to all forms of violence, and welcoming the introduction of the Violence against Persons (Prohibition) Act, said that she was concerned about the persistence of patriarchal attitudes and deep-rooted discriminatory stereotypes concerning women's roles that perpetuated women's subordination within the family and society. She wondered whether the Violence against Persons (Prohibition) Act applied outside the federal capital territory. She would appreciate information on the specific steps taken to enforce the Act in all states and to investigate and prosecute cases of violence against women and adolescent girls in schools. She would also welcome data showing whether the Act had helped reduce the incidence of harmful practices, stereotypes and other forms of violence against women. The failure to pass the gender and equal opportunities bill remained a matter of grave concern. She asked what measures had been taken or planned to assess the impact of the education and gender-related awareness-raising programmes at all levels and increase support for the relevant programmes among women's groups, local communities, traditional and religious leaders, prominent male figures, teachers and members of the media. [...]</p> <p>49. Ms. Rana said that she wondered whether there were plans to make the current ad hoc approach to cooperation with religious leaders and men more permanent so as to bring about a change in mindsets.</p>	<p>deradicalization and combating violent extremism. The Committee recommends, therefore, that the State party implement the recommendations contained in the present concluding observations as a matter of high priority, including by seeking international assistance and cooperation, if appropriate, for their implementation. In this regard, it also recommends that the State party adopt a national action plan on the implementation of the present recommendations, in consultation with civil society organizations and religious leaders, which should provide a road map for the enhanced implementation and monitoring of the concluding observations. [...]</p> <p>12. The Committee recommends that the State party: [...] (c) Expedite the repeal or amendment of all discriminatory laws identified by the Nigerian Law Reform Commission following its comprehensive audit of discriminatory laws in the State party and include religious leaders in the process of addressing issues of faith and human rights, so as to build on several "faith for rights" initiatives and identify common ground among all religions in the State party, as acknowledged by the delegation.</p> <p>22. Recalling joint general recommendation No. 31 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/general comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2014) on harmful practices, the Committee recommends that the State party: [...] (b) Expand public education programmes on the negative effect of such stereotypes on women's enjoyment of their rights, in particular in rural areas, targeting men and boys, as well as the traditional and religious leaders who are the custodians of customary and religious values in the State party; [...]</p> <p>24. Recalling its previous recommendation (CEDAW/C/NGA/CO/6, para. 22), and in line with Sustainable Development Goal 5.3, to eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation, the Committee recommends that the State party: [...] (b) Raise awareness among religious and traditional leaders and the general public about the criminal nature of female genital mutilation, including so-called "female circumcision", and its adverse effect on the human rights of women. [...]</p> <p>46. The Committee recommends that the State party: [...] (e) Eradicate polygamy through the use of awareness-raising campaigns and education, which should, among other things, focus on the harmful effects of this practice and fully involve religious, traditional and local government leaders.</p>
<p><b><u>Fiji, CEDAW/C/SR.1578:</u></b></p> <p>3. In preparation for the dialogue with the Committee, government agencies had worked closely with the private sector, civil society and religious organizations, not only gaining the strong sense of data so vital for national efforts to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, but also laying stronger foundations for tackling the barriers to women's advancement, which included the fact that Fiji had one of the highest rates of domestic violence in the world. The Prime Minister had labelled domestic violence statistics as a national shame and had called on all stakeholders to unite in the battle to stamp out such</p>	<p><b><u>CEDAW/C/FJI/CO/5:</u></b></p> <p>26. The Committee recommends that the State party adopt a comprehensive strategy to eliminate discriminatory stereotypes on the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society, in cooperation with civil society organisations, in particular women's groups, community leaders, teachers and the media, to facilitate and accelerate the necessary societal change and create an enabling environment that is supportive of gender equality.</p> <p>27. The Committee welcomes the State party's efforts to eradicate gender-based violence against women, including the establishment of the National Domestic Violence Toll Free Helpline. However,</p>

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<p>violence. Various measures had already been taken, including the launch of the “Man Up” campaign, aimed at involving men in the national movement to combat violence; a national forum to promote cooperation with religious organizations; and a task force on eliminating violence against women, which had devised a service delivery protocol to ensure the seamless handling of cases of gender-based violence by all relevant stakeholders. Strong partnerships with cultural and religious leaders were now needed to bring about changes in people’s mentalities, break down gender stereotypes and challenge the concept of hypermasculinity. [...]</p> <p>37. Ms. Rana asked what specific steps had been taken, or were planned, to combat deeply rooted patriarchal cultural and religious norms, which gave rise to gender stereotypes and led ultimately to discrimination against women, including, in particular, what measures had been adopted to ensure that traditional apologies such as bulubulu (reconciliation and forgiveness ceremony) were never accepted as mitigating circumstances in domestic violence cases. [...]</p> <p>53. Ms. Manalo said that the delegation had not provided any information on female genital mutilation — a harmful practice that was spreading throughout the Asia and Pacific region. It was essential to prevent the problem from taking root in Fiji.</p> <p>54. Although NGOs undoubtedly played a crucial role in combating gender-based violence, it was vital for the Government to ensure that cooperation with religious organizations did not lead to conflict with its obligations under the Convention. [...]</p> <p>62. Ms. Haidar said that a number of United Nations bodies and programmes, particularly the “Faith for Rights” initiative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), would be able to lend assistance in the dialogue with representatives of faith groups concerning human rights.</p>	<p>it notes with concern the incidence of gender-based violence in the State party continue to be the highest in the region, as well as:</p> <p>(a) The underreporting of gender-based violence against women due to stigma, societal pressure to resort to traditional apology and reconciliation such as bulubulu, and distrust in the justice system;</p> <p>(b) The prevalence of hate speech against women in society and the media;</p> <p>(c) The cost of GBV which represents 7% of GDP;</p> <p>(d) The persistent perception among law enforcement officials that domestic violence is a private matter, as illustrated by the fact that women victims of gender based violence are referred to the Family Law Court; intimidation of victims by the police; reluctance to adhere to the “no-drop policy,” and/or to issue Domestic Violence Restraining Orders (DVROs), and the encouragement of victims, despite the zero tolerance policy, to resort to traditional apology and reconciliation procedures, as well as several cases of intimidation of victims by police;</p> <p>(e) That perpetrators of gender-based violence against women frequently enjoy impunity or receive lenient sentences owing to gender stereotypes among the judiciary, such as the notion of the man as “sole breadwinner”, as well as factors such as the perpetrator’s first appearance in court resulting in sentence reduction;</p> <p>(f) Discriminatory attitudes of healthcare personnel and frequent inability to respond to the health needs of victims of gender-based violence and the particularly limited access to emergency contraception and post exposure prophylactics (PEP) for rape victims;</p> <p>(g) The limited availability of support services, including adequate shelters, for women victims of gender-based violence;</p> <p>(h) The increase of gender based violence in disasters and post-disasters situations. [...]</p> <p>55. The Committee notes with concern that women belonging to ethnic and religious minority groups and indigenous women are exposed to significant rates of intersectional discrimination.</p>
<p><b>Botswana, CEDAW/C/SR.1678:</b></p> <p>13. Ms. Mokganya (Botswana) said that the Government recognized that more needed to be done to lower the maternal mortality rate. [...]</p> <p>15. Various media campaigns had been conducted to raise awareness of cervical cancer, and workshops had been held for chiefs and faith-based organizations. Some faith-based organizations had permitted health-care workers to address their congregations directly. In one case, a faith-based organization had made its premises available for cervical cancer screenings. [...]</p> <p>24. Ms. Haidar said that, with regard to cooperation with religious leaders, she wished to draw the State party’s attention to Faith for</p>	<p><b>CEDAW/C/BWA/CO/4:</b></p> <p>24. The Committee recommends that the State party: [...]</p> <p>(b) Continue its efforts to engage with relevant actors, including tribal chiefs, religious and community leaders, government officials and parliamentarians, on the negative impact of discriminatory stereotypes on women’s enjoyment of their rights; [...]</p> <p>32. The Committee recommends that the State party: [...]</p> <p>(b) Conduct awareness-raising campaigns for politicians, community and religious leaders, the media and the general public on the importance of the participation of women in political life and decision-making positions;</p>

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<p>Rights, an initiative launched by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to explore the ways in which human rights issues could be framed from a religious perspective.</p>	
<p><b><u>The Gambia, CEDAW/C/SR.1925</u></b></p> <p>19. Ms. Ameline said that it was gratifying to note that the State party had introduced a legal prohibition of female genital mutilation [...]</p> <p>22. The State party's recognition of Sharia law and customary law prevented the effective implementation of the universally agreed principles underlying the Convention. Article 33 (5) of the Constitution limited the applicability of the Convention, which the State party had ratified without reservations. The Government might consider engaging with religious leaders to discuss women's fundamental human rights, as envisaged in the Beirut Declaration on Faith for Rights, and amend those legal provisions that conflicted with the Convention.</p> <p>23. She wished to know [...] whether any efforts had been made to harmonize the procedures followed by religious tribunals [...]</p> <p>40. [Ms. Rana] would welcome information on the key findings of the study conducted in 2021 with a view to developing the National Strategy and Policy on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting and the Plan of Action for the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation. The delegation might describe the current status of both instruments. She wondered what measures were being taken to promote understanding of the criminal nature of female genital mutilation, especially among medical professionals, parents, and community and religious leaders, and to tackle cross-border female genital mutilation. [...]</p> <p>44. [Ms. Kinteh, Gambia] A sensitization programme had led to greater awareness of the criminal nature of female genital mutilation and the penalties that it carried. However, underreporting continued to be a problem, including in cases involving the death of children or cross-border female genital mutilation. The Government therefore offered the public assurances that the identities of persons who reported such offences would not be disclosed. Religious leaders had participated in sensitization initiatives, but some still continued to practise female genital mutilation. The topic was becoming less taboo, which had resulted in a slight decrease in the proportion of girls who had been victims, although numbers were still high.</p>	<p><b><u>CEDAW/C/GMB/CO/6</u></b></p> <p>10. Recalling that the Convention covers women's rights in both the private and public spheres and that discrimination against women cannot be justified on the grounds of religion, customs and/or practices, the Committee recommends that the State party:</p> <p>(a) Within a set timeline and in consultation with women's civil society organizations and traditional and religious leaders, ensure that the provisions of the Convention are fully integrated into the national legal framework, including by amending or repealing all legislative provisions that are incompatible with the principles of equality and non-discrimination, such as sections 7 and 33 (5) (c) and (d) of the 1997 Constitution, as replicated in the Women's Act, establishing the primacy of customary and sharia law over ordinary laws; [...]</p> <p>(c) Encourage religious (qadi) and common law courts, law enforcement officers and imams to respect, in their decisions and actions, the State party's commitments deriving from its ratification of the Convention to ensure that Muslim women and girls enjoy equal rights in all aspects of family life, including in marriage, divorce, inheritance, marital property, adoption, burial and devolution of property on death, including through the Faith for Rights initiative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights;</p> <p>(d) Undertake a review of legislative provisions in countries with similar sociocultural and religious backgrounds and legal systems for integration into its legislative harmonization process and development of strategies to ensure the implementation of legislation promoting and protecting women's rights. [...]</p> <p>20. In line with joint general recommendation No. 31 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/general comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2019) on harmful practices, the Committee recommends that the State party:</p> <p>(a) Address the cultural beliefs underlying the harmful practice of female genital mutilation, including by educating parents and traditional and religious leaders on the lifelong devastating effects on both the physical and mental health of girls and women, and by raising awareness of the criminalization of female genital mutilation;</p>