

REPORT ON THE 52ND UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

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The following paragraphs summarize the United Nations reports presented at the last Human Rights Council in Geneva regarding religious freedom or other human rights related to the freedom of religion and belief.

Several other critical issues were discussed at the UN, such as the devastating consequences of multiple regional and national conflicts, issues regarding different human rights, such as privacy, objections concerning conscience, the death penalty, disability rights, the elimination of racial discrimination, children and women rights, freedom of expression, hate speech and the crucial role of civil society in promoting religious freedom and other human rights.

Freedom of Religion or Belief:

The Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief presented the inaugural edition of this Digest with excerpts from the reports from 1986 to 2011 to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Commission on Human Rights' adoption of resolution 1986/20. The Digest's second edition offers updates on mandate practice through 2022, organized topically in accordance with the updated communications architecture. The Digest's second edition provides updates on mandate practice until 2022, arranged thematically in accordance with the updated communications framework.

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Religion/RapporteursDigestFreedomReligionBelief.pdf>

The Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Dr. Nazila Ghanea, outlined her goals regarding freedom of religion and belief in the 2023 report, named Landscape of Freedom of Religion or Belief. According to the Special Rapporteur, the landscape of freedom of thought, conscience, religion, or belief has changed significantly since the inception of the mandate 36 years ago. In order to fulfill her mandate, Dr. Ghanea conducted a landscape analysis of religious freedom activities, examining the implications, the work, and her approach.

The report addresses three major concerns. In the first dimension, freedom of religion or belief for everyone must be promoted, in the second dimension, discrimination on the basis of religion or belief must be prohibited, and in the third dimension, individuals must not be targeted because of, or because of, their religion or belief.

According to the understanding that human rights are interconnected and interdependent, the mandate holder will try to point out violations of other human rights as well as the rights of others while also acknowledging that religion or belief can strengthen human rights respect.

The report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Nazila Ghanea:

[https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?](https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2FHRC%2F52%2F38&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False)

[FinalSymbol=A%2FHRC%2F52%2F38&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False](https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2FHRC%2F52%2F38&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False)

Counterterrorism and human rights:

Over the past few decades, surveillance technologies have evolved and been deployed extensively to combat terrorism and national security threats. However, terrorism remains an unresolved issue in many countries all over the world.

During the interactive dialogue, the Special Rapporteur on promoting and protecting human rights while countering terrorism presented a report on the use of technology in counterterrorism efforts.

This comes after a resolution emphasizing that terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism cannot and should not be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization, or ethnic group and that tolerance, pluralism, inclusion, and respect for diversity, dialogue among civilizations, and the enhancement of interfaith and intercultural understanding and respect among people, including at the national, regional and global levels. Also, the resolution calls for the importance of combating the escalation of hatred as being among the most important elements in the promotion of cooperation and success in preventing and combating terrorism and violent extremism.

Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council on 7 October 2022:

<https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G22/521/61/PDF/G2252161.pdf?>

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Minority Issues:

The Special Rapporteur on minority issues, Fernand de Varennes, presented his report on the Recommendations of the Forum on Minority Issues at its fifteenth session on the theme “Review, rethink, reform: the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities.” Minorities Forum recommendations aim to address gaps in the Declaration's implementation and new challenges that have emerged since it was adopted. As a result, it emphasizes the primary responsibility of the state to implement and promote the Declaration's principles. This reaffirms the crucial role of minority human rights advocates in implementing the Declaration's principles and recognizes that they must be protected as well. It emphasizes the importance of eliminating persistent barriers to the implementation of the Declaration. It emphasizes the need to include minorities and their representatives in all policy and decision-making processes that affect them.

Additionally, the recommendations recognize the importance of the United Nations, international and regional organizations, civil society organizations, minority representatives, and other stakeholders in removing persistent barriers to the Declaration's implementation and generating wider and more tangible means of achieving progress.

Report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues:

<https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G22/620/04/PDF/G2262004.pdf?>

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Good practices in national criminalization, investigation, prosecution, and sentencing for offences of torture:

The Special Rapporteur for torture and other cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment or punishment, Alice Edwards, presented her report to the 52nd session of the Human Rights Council. She urged national authorities to take control of justice processes in cases of torture and inhumane treatment and to serve as the primary response. The report has outlined a number of challenges that impede the timely and thorough investigation of allegations of torture, including institutional, regulatory, political, and practical obstacles. 105 countries have adopted explicit criminal offenses prohibiting torture, as the report noted, which demonstrates the promise of implementing the duty to investigate torture.

State authority is not threatened by national torture trials. In the opinion of the Special Rapporteur, what threatens the legitimacy of a government is torturing individuals, refusing to investigate and prosecute terrorists, and allowing them to go unpunished. As a means of enhancing the legitimacy of their government, she encouraged UN member states to speak out for truth and justice instead of being seen as complicit in torture.

Report of the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment:

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/ahrc5230-good-practices-national-criminalization-investigation?fbclid=IwAR1TivrzJxyTNqk14U0US9Qwkevfi9Buj9tmcRRBXjlxIfG7vl-GTQ7j2as>

Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping, and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence, and violence against persons based on religion or belief:

Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance: follow-up to and implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

The report presents the Member States' response to the implementation of an action plan to combat intolerance, negative stereotypes, stigmatization, discrimination, and violence against religious or cultural minorities. It contains information about state efforts and measures taken to implement the action plan and views about potential follow-up measures to further enhance its implementation.

The action plan outlined in Council Resolution 49/31 should be implemented, with the consistent involvement of states, national human rights institutions, United Nations entities, independent experts, and civil society, including faith-based actors.

According to the report, various mechanisms are in place within governments to prevent and mediate conflicts between members of different religious communities. Government officials in certain states are also trained in effective communication strategies.

Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related forms of intolerance: follow-up to and implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action:

[https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G22/619/98/PDF/G2261998.pdf?](https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G22/619/98/PDF/G2261998.pdf?OpenElement)

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Following this web page, you can see all the reports discussed and presented in this 52nd edition of the Human Rights Council:

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/regular-sessions/session52/list-reports>

High-level panel discussion on the question of the death penalty:

During the 52nd session of the Human Rights Council, there was a high-level panel discussion on the question of the death penalty. The theme was Human rights violations relating to the use of the death penalty.

The panel discussion aimed to address the human rights violations associated with the death penalty, focusing particularly on limiting the death penalty to the most serious crimes.

According to the Human Rights Committee's general comment no. 36, "most serious crimes" should be interpreted restrictively and to include only crimes involving intentional killing. Based on article 6, crimes that do not result directly and intentionally in death cannot be grounds for the imposition of the death penalty.

An important focus of the panel discussion was to foster a deeper understanding of the international obligation to confine the death penalty to the most serious crimes, exploring ways in which international human rights norms and standards can be met while reducing the scope of the death penalty use. On the basis of the international obligations of the Member States, the speakers discussed how the Council and its mechanisms might contribute to giving visibility to the human rights impacts of the death penalty.

Among the speakers were H.E. Mr. Václav Bálek, President of the Human Rights Council, Mr. Volker Türk, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and other representatives of member states such as Ms. Sarah Belal, Executive Director of Justice Project Pakistan, and H.E. THX. Azalina Othman Said, Ministry of Law and Institutional Reform of Malaysia, and academic community members.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights asked all nations to work harder towards abolishing the death penalty, an ongoing practice in 79 countries. Death penalty opponents claim that victims' rights risk being overlooked. Experts in criminal justice, based on experience around the world, advise preventing and controlling crimes as the best response. In their recommendation, they urge the establishment of functional, human rights-based criminal justice systems that ensure accountability for perpetrators and afford victims and survivors access to justice, redress, and dignity.

For more information, see the UN Web TV link:

<https://media.un.org/en/asset/k11/k11anmh0h8>

See also the response of The Biblical Research Institute (BRI) of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists on capital punishment:

<https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/Death-Penalty-An-Opinion-rev7-copy.pdf>