



Rights at Risk

Observatory on the
Universality of Rights
Trends Report 2017

The Observatory on the Universality of Rights (OURs) is a new collaborative initiative that aims to monitor, analyze, and share information on initiatives that misuse religion, culture, and tradition to undermine the universality of human rights. Grounded in a feminist framework, the OURs initiative works across regions, issues, and human rights spaces towards the advancement of social justice. The OURs Working Group is made up of organizations and activists who work to protect and promote the universality of rights.

The OURs Working Group includes:

- Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW)
- Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID)
- ARC International
- Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir Mexico (CDD-Mexico)
- Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies (CSBR)
- Cynthia Rothschild (independent expert)
- Due Diligence Project
- International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN)
- Ipas
- Planned Parenthood - Global (PPFA)
- Musawah: global movement for justice and equality in the Muslim family
- Muslims for Progressive Values
- Sexual Rights Initiative
- World Council of Churches (WCC)

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AWID gratefully acknowledges the generous support of Ford Foundation, Foundation for a Just Society, Oak Foundation, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), and an anonymous contributor.



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Published by Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) in Toronto and Mexico City.

ADDRESS: 215 Spadina Ave, Suite 150, Toronto, Ontario M5T 2C7 Canada

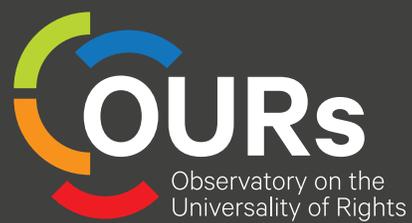
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ACRONYMS

ADF	Alliance Defending Freedom
BYU	Brigham Young University
C-Fam	Center for Family and Human Rights
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CDHRI	Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CPD	Commission on Population and Development
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSE	comprehensive sexuality education
CSO	civil society organization
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
ERA	U.S. Equal Rights Amendment
FWI	Family Watch International
GA	General Assembly
GC	General Comment
GoFF	Group of the Friends of the Family
HIV/AIDS	human immunodeficiency virus / acquired immune deficiency syndrome
HLI	Human Life International
HRC	Human Rights Council
HRD	human rights defender
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
IE	Independent Expert
IPHRC	Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission
IVF	in-vitro fertilization
IYF	International Year of the Family
IYC	International Youth Coalition
JONAH	Jews Offering New Alternatives to Homosexuality
LGBT	lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans

LGBTQ	lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NARTH	National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality
NGO	non-governmental organization
NHRI	National Human Rights Institution
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OIC	Organization of Islamic Cooperation
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OURs	Observatory on the Universality of Rights (initiative)
PNV	Political Network for Values
ROC	Russian Orthodox Church
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SOGI	sexual orientation and gender identity
SRHR	sexual and reproductive health and rights
TMB	treaty monitoring bodies
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VAW	violence against women
VDPA	Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action
WCF	World Congress of Families
WG	Working Group
WHO	World Health Organization
WOOMB	World Organization of Ovulation Method Billings
WYA	World Youth Alliance

A note on language

This paper employs several terms to describe the range of problematic tactics, arguments, and actors currently at play in the international human rights system.

It uses the term 'religious fundamentalisms' to refer to the authoritarian manipulation of religion and use of extreme interpretations of religion by particular State or non-State actors to achieve power, money, and extend social control. The report generally refers to 'religious fundamentalist actors' when speaking of those active at the local and national level.

The paper further refers to 'religious fundamentalist discourses' employed at multiple levels, of which some common themes include: speaking from the position of the 'one true religion,' moral superiority and cultural authenticity; emphasizing the traditional family and fixed gender roles; adopting absolutist, intolerant, and coercive stances; and selectively adopting and co-opting human rights language.

With respect to actors utilizing such themes or discourses in the international human rights system, the report uses the term 'anti-rights' to describe both their stance and their desired impact. The terms 'regressive' and 'ultra-conservative' are also used to describe similar actors and their lines of argumentation.



Introduction

Introduction

The trend is unmistakable and deeply alarming: in international human rights spaces, religious fundamentalists are now operating with increased impact, frequency, coordination, resources, and support.

In international human rights spaces, religious fundamentalists are now operating with increased impact, frequency, coordination, resources, and support

The worldwide rise in religious fundamentalist actors is not happening in a vacuum. This growing phenomenon is inextricably linked to geopolitics, systemic and growing inequalities and economic disparities, conflict, militarism, and other political, social, and economic factors. In turn, these factors drive religious fundamentalists to regional and international policy spaces in search of increased impact.

Our ongoing analysis of religious fundamentalisms and fundamentalist discourses and strategies underpins our understanding of the forces currently at play at the United Nations. Religious fundamentalisms are about the strategic use and misuse of religion by particular State and non-State actors to gain power and control. They are about the authoritarian manipulation of religion, as well as references to culture and tradition, rhetoric linked to sovereignty, and employment of patriarchal and absolutist interpretations of religion to achieve political, social and/or economic power. Across regions and religious contexts, fundamentalisms seek to employ references to religion, culture, and tradition to justify violence and discrimination.

A common theme amongst conservative and anti-rights actors is their fixation on gender and sexuality. Gender justice is greatly undermined by the strategies of religious fundamentalisms, which use the bodies of women, girls, and individuals with non-conforming gender identities or sexual orientations as a battlefield in their struggles to appropriate and maintain institutional and social power. Time and again, across regions and levels, women are turned into symbols of community, embodiments of the nation's 'culture and tradition' and its future reproduction. Women and non-conforming bodies and sexualities become key sites of religio-political preoccupation and control, as they are considered the custodians of family norms and honor.

Unsurprisingly then, in a recent study on young feminist organizing worldwide, a significant percentage of the 1,400 survey participants described fundamentalisms as a top challenge to their work, and a significant threat to their safety and security.¹ In a previous survey of over 1,600 Women Human Rights Defenders worldwide², activists listed the top negative impacts of religious fundamentalists as: limited health rights and reduced fulfillment of reproductive rights; less autonomy for women; increased gender-based violence; restrictions on sexual rights; and diminished rights for women in the public sphere.

If, according to fundamentalist arguments, we have no rights to violate, then there will be no basis to claim rights or hold our governments accountable

We now watch as these fundamentalist strategies and preoccupations manifest themselves at the international human rights level. The United Nations has become another space in which bodies and autonomy are used as pawns in a struggle to appropriate institutional power.

But here the impact of religious fundamentalisms is not to violate our rights directly, but to erode the very basis on which we can make claims at all. If, according to their arguments, we have no rights to violate, then there will be no basis to claim rights or hold our governments accountable.

Anti-rights actors are chipping away at the very content and structure of our human rights concepts, institutions, and protections, with disastrous consequences for human rights and gender justice. These manifest in sexual rights, including rights to bodily integrity, the right to choose one's partner, and the right to decide on sexual relations; rights related to sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI); reproductive rights and health, including access to comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), contraception, and safe abortion; equal property and inheritance rights; equal rights in all aspects of family law including marriage, divorce, and custody of children; freedom of expression, belief, assembly, and opinion; the right to reclaim, reaffirm, and participate in all aspects of religious and cultural life; the right to live free from gender-based violence; and women's full equality.

Anti-rights mobilization at the international level constitutes a response to the significant feminist and progressive organizing and impact therein over the past three decades. It also represents ultra-conservative actors' new commitment to multilateral processes as a space of influence. Today we are witnessing a set of interlocking factors that paint an unsettling picture of our human rights system under attack: increased coordination of religious fundamentalists across regional, institutional, and religious lines in human rights spaces, and the strategic and proactive undermining and co-optation of our human rights framework.

Although fundamentalisms are often shaped in opposition to globalization, they also embrace the international realm as a site to foster conservative social change. Similarly, while their messaging is often situated



**Anti-rights
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the objectives and
operation of human
rights systems**

in an opposition to modernity, they are both a product of modernity and happy to fight using 'modern' tools. Fundamentalist discourses are strongly focused on the primacy of 'state sovereignty' and question the very legitimacy of international standards and their universal application to all. Their engagement in the international arena operates as a Trojan horse meant to undercut the objectives and operation of human rights systems, transform the human rights framework, and transmit new rights norms infused with their values and messaging.

Feminist and other progressive activists have worked hard to hold our ground and to push back against these hostile initiatives to protect and further our rights

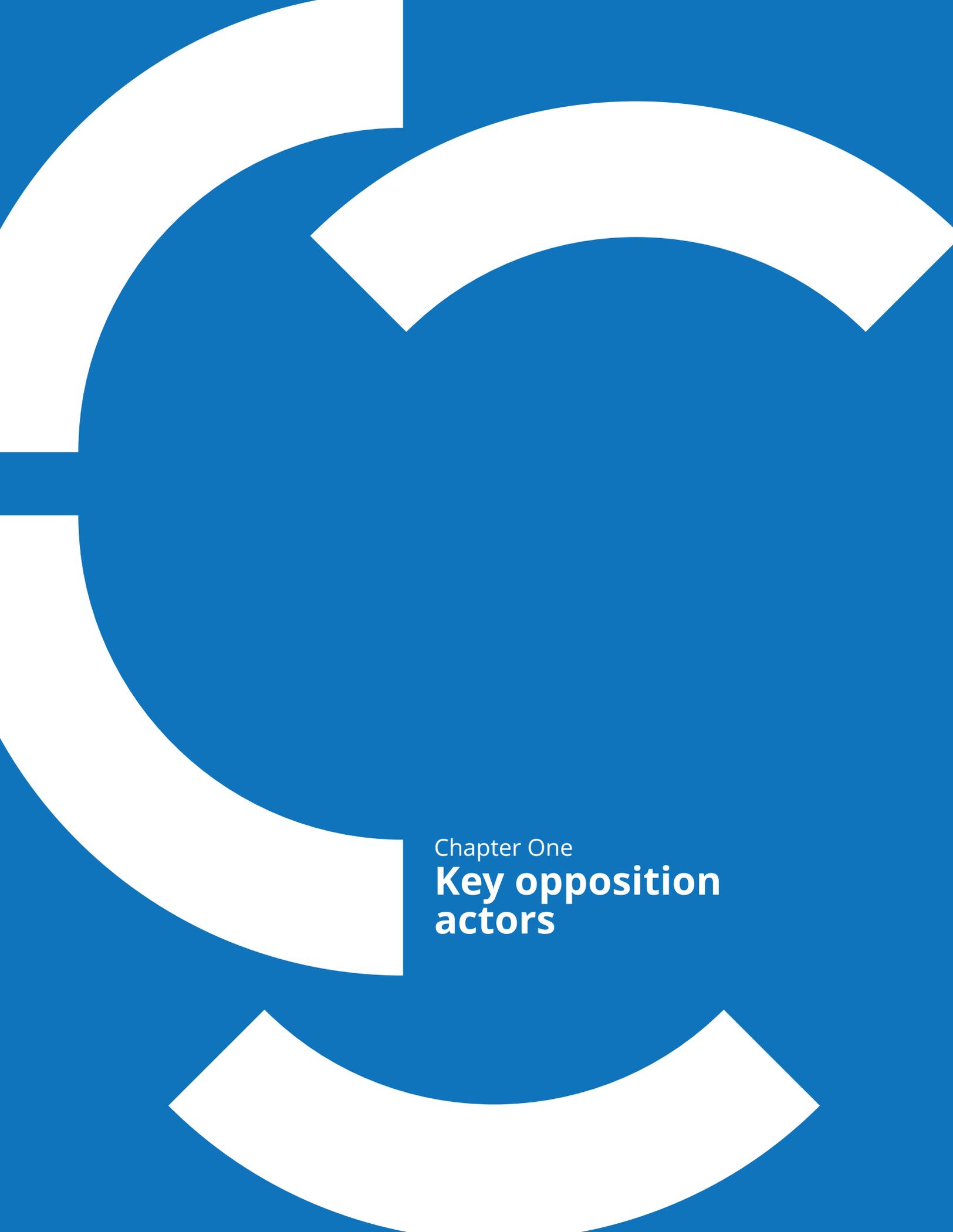
In international human rights spaces anti-rights actors are misusing religion, along with arguments based on culture, tradition, and national sovereignty, to erode and undermine the universality of human rights. Common themes emerge in their advocacy: emphasis of the 'traditional family,' 'morality,' protection, and fixed gender roles; emotive and divisive language; misleading and co-opted discourses and misinformation; charges of elitism; and arguments based on ideas of moral superiority and cultural 'authenticity.'

Feminist and other progressive activists have worked hard to hold our ground and to push back against these hostile initiatives to protect and further our rights. We now need a sharper understanding of these trends, including key actors, discourses, and their current impact, in order to continue countering them. Based on this knowledge, we need to organize collectively and creatively to maintain and continue developing human right standards to reclaim our rights, protect universality,

and hold governments accountable for their rights violations.

This report represents the first of a yearly series on human rights trends produced by the Observatory on the Universality of Rights (OURs) initiative. OURs is a new collaborative and multi-organizational project that aims to monitor, analyze, and share information on these anti-rights initiatives threatening international and regional human rights systems.

The focus of this report is the international human rights sphere. It aims to discuss and analyze key trends and developments mapped over 2015 to late 2016 in order to inform and support our collective advocacy moving forward. This includes information on anti-rights actors, their discourses, strategies, and the significant impacts on the international human rights system during this period.

The background is a solid blue color. It features several large, white, curved shapes that resemble thick, stylized letters or abstract forms. One large shape on the left side is partially cut off by the edge of the page. Another large shape is at the top, and a third is at the bottom. The text is positioned in the lower right quadrant of the page.

Chapter One
**Key opposition
actors**

Background

Imperatives for the future include...[t]o take energetic action within the NGO process to blunt or prevent new assaults on family integrity; to identify, protect, and help advance existing “friends of the family” within the U.N. Secretariat; to “place” such friends in positions of current or potential influence within the U.N. Secretariat; and to build an international movement of “religiously grounded family morality systems” that can influence and eventually shape social policy at the United Nations.³

*– Allan Carlson,
founder of the World Congress of Families*

We are witnessing an unprecedented level of engagement of anti-rights actors in international human rights spaces today.

Following their initial foray into the United Nations (UN) arena during the Beijing and Cairo conferences of the 1990s, ultra-conservative actors have been increasingly identifying the international policy area as a target for their organizing and advocacy. The numbers of regressive civil society actors active at the UN who are manipulating arguments based on religion, culture, tradition, and national sovereignty have spiked in recent years. Likewise, intergovernmental and state-affiliated traditionalist actors and blocs have become regular and highly vocal participants on the global policy stage.

To bolster their impact and amplify their voices, anti-rights actors increasingly engage in tactical alliance building across sectors. In the formation of a complex, rising, and evolving anti-rights lobby at the UN, older forms of religious and institutional affiliation continue to cede to the exigencies of shared goals.

Firstly, in what has been characterized as the ‘unholy alliance,’ traditionalist actors from Catholic, Evangelical, Mormon, Russian Orthodox, and Muslim faith

backgrounds have found common cause in shared talking points and advocacy efforts attempting to revert feminist and sexual rights gains at the international level.

Further, anti-rights actors at the UN are uniting across national and regional lines, and across sectors. Specifically, we have observed strengthening links between regressive civil society, religiously-defined intergovernmental entities, conservatively-oriented States and regional blocs. The coalition forged between the Holy See, ultra-conservative Civil Society Organizations, such as Family Watch International, and Member States of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to oppose comprehensive sexuality education as a component of sexual rights is but one example.

Such alliances are no accident; indeed, the modus operandi of initiatives like the World Congress of Families is to create ongoing platforms for connection, networking, and collective strategizing. Organizations, such as C-Fam, have long signaled their desire to foster an allied conservative State bloc to undermine human rights at the United Nations.⁴

In the formation of a complex, rising, and evolving anti-rights lobby at the UN, older forms of religious and institutional affiliation continue to cede to the exigencies of shared goals

This section examines a number of key actors who currently operate at the United Nations, strategically employing arguments which cite tradition, culture, and religion to pursue their political ends. It also examines the ways in which many regressive actors are working towards the formation of a transnational community of political actors active in undermining rights related to gender and sexuality.

1. Religious / intergovernmental actors

Holy See

BACKGROUND AND SPECIAL STATUS

The Catholic Church occupies a uniquely powerful role at the United Nations amongst religious actors. By virtue of its possession of a territorial entity—Vatican City—the Holy See, the government of the Roman Catholic Church, claims that it qualifies as a State with the right to attendant privileges in international policy spaces. In this sphere it plays dual roles as a religious institution and a political actor.

Vatican City is the world's smallest 'city-State', with a size of 108.7 acres (0.44 square km) and a population of less than 600 people.⁵ It is governed by the Holy See, which operates within the international community as the juridical personification of the Church.⁶ The Holy See consists of the Pope and the Roman Curia, or the set of departments and institutes that assist the Pope in running the Church.

Vatican City does not meet the criteria of a nation-State under international law. It does not possess a permanent population, a defined territory, an independent government or formal capacity to enter into relations with other States—all of which are necessary qualifications for a State as a person of international law under the Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States.⁷ Nonetheless, the Holy See has been awarded Permanent Observer status at the United Nations by operation of custom.⁸

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In its engagement at the United Nations, the Vatican does not present itself as a 'Catholic' actor. It instead characterizes itself as a State-like entity with universal citizenship, playing the necessary role of providing a moral voice in the international realm.

The Vatican plays a key role in advancing an anti-rights agenda in human rights fora to which other conservative actors may not have access

As a Permanent Observer since 1964, the Holy See is entitled to rights of attendance and representation at the UN much greater than those of NGOs, although somewhat less than those given to a full State Member. Thus, the Holy See is normally invited to attend UN conferences—such as the Commission on the Status of Women and the Conference on Population and Development—and participate therein with all the privileges of a State regarding the formal proceedings, including the right to vote. As these conferences operate by consensus, the Holy See's designation endows it with significant power to influence the outcomes. During the Beijing Conference on women, for example, the Holy See was influential in blocking references to women's right to control their sexuality and their fertility.

The Holy See has legal jurisdiction on a par with Member States to negotiate, sign, and ratify UN-sponsored international law treaties. Using official privileges, it also engages actively in negotiations throughout the sessions of the General Assembly, Human Rights Council, Security Council, and the commissions of the Economic and Social Council. Due to its heightened status, as well as a long, established, and interventionist history in UN negotiations, the Vatican plays a key role in advancing an anti-rights agenda in human rights fora to which other conservative actors may not have access. Civil society initiatives, such as the See Change campaign, have

advocated for the UN to treat the Holy See as a religious body rather than a State, and thus have criticized the disproportionate impact and role of the Holy See in shaping human rights norms and standards.⁹

Generally, the Holy See has not taken advantage of its special status to bind itself to international human rights standards. Despite its ability to join international treaties and its commitment to global poverty eradication, the entity has not yet ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. Nor has the Holy See ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) or the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). It has ratified only four UN human rights conventions: the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, and its Optional Protocols¹⁰); the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment (CAT); the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CRD); and the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. Even here, however, the Vatican places reservations on the treaties it has ratified,¹¹ and strongly resisted the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child during its February 2014 review.¹²

In practical terms, the Holy See refers to the Vatican's representatives at international fora, with foreign affairs run out of its Secretariat of State located in Rome.¹³ A number of papal councils support the Pope's international advocacy, including—until recently—the Pontifical Council for the Family, which is centrally involved in the Holy See's engagement in rights related to gender and sexuality.¹⁴ The Council's objectives were to "ensure that the rights of the family be acknowledged and defended even in the social and political realm," and to support and coordinate initiatives to "protect human life from the first moment of conception and to encourage responsible procreation."¹⁵ In 2006, the Council stated that "never before has the natural institution of marriage and the family been the victim of such violent attacks."¹⁶

In October 2015, Pope Francis announced his intent at the Synod of Bishops on the Family¹⁷ to replace the Council with a new Dicastery for the Laity, Family, and Life, effective September 2016. The new department is expected to “maintain the dignity and basic good of the Sacrament of marriage” and work so that “the family institution may always fulfill its proper functions within the Church and society.”¹⁸ Together with informing the Holy See’s policy positions on rights related to gender and sexuality in human rights fora, the Dicastery will work with the Pontifical Council for Life, which is responsible for many of the Church’s positions on abortion, contraception, in-vitro fertilization (IVF), and euthanasia, as well as the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family, which is based in Rome and with affiliates in Benin, Brazil, India, the United States, Mexico and Spain.¹⁹



The Holy See has consistently opposed the right to equality, instead embracing the concept of the ‘complementarity’ of men and women

BRIEF HISTORY OF ENGAGEMENT AT THE UN

The Holy See has been highly active in UN negotiations on rights related to gender and sexuality since the 1990s, taking a consistently conservative stance in relation to issues of women’s human rights, sexual rights, reproductive health and rights, and sexual rights. The Holy See has consistently opposed the right to equality, instead embracing the concept of the ‘complementarity’ of men and women. It frequently promotes women’s value—her ‘natural’ role—as based only on her status within a family context, such as a mother or wife.

With respect to contraception, at the UN level the Holy See regularly works to scale back language. Its representatives have repeatedly “refused to endorse” contraception, including for use in HIV/AIDS prevention programs, and have spoken out against emergency contraception in the context of wartime rape.²⁰

Especially at the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Population and Development (CPD), the Holy See has fought hard against the right of women to choose abortion. At the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), the Holy See objected to the phrase “unwanted pregnancy”, arguing that it implies pregnancy is a negative experience, which is inconsistent with the Church’s notion of womanhood.²¹ The Holy See has criticized comprehensive sexuality education and objected to the provision of sexual and reproductive health services for adolescents, seeking instead to promote ‘parental rights.’²²

The Holy See first became visible in anti-rights advocacy at the United Nations—and inspired Catholic and other Christian Right religious and civil society organizations to operate at the international level—during the Cairo Conference on Population and Development in 1994. The Vatican spearheaded concerted opposition to the draft program, which has been described as a “full court press against abortion involving the Vatican diplomatic service, the Roman Curia, and bishops around the world.”²³

Motivated by the potential recognition of a right to abortion as a part of reproductive rights, the Holy See launched a high-level international campaign prior to the Cairo negotiations: the Pope wrote to each head of state, and called in all ambassadors to the Holy See in Rome to explain the Vatican’s position.²⁴ The Vatican also called upon Bishops’ conferences around the world to pressure their governments to oppose pro-abortion language in the Cairo outcome document. Finally, Vatican representatives abroad were instructed to develop alliances with Catholic and Muslim countries that opposed abortion.²⁵

EVOLVING RHETORIC

While the Holy See’s mission has communicated a consistent conservative position on issues related to

gender and sexuality at the UN, the Vatican has been dynamic in the ways it presents its arguments. It increasingly relies upon ‘secularized’ technical claims and purportedly empirical evidence, frames reproduction and sexuality in the context of ‘the family’, and strategically reframes human rights norms to reflect its own regressive position.²⁶

The Vatican increasingly relies upon ‘secularized’ technical claims and purportedly empirical evidence

To justify its positions on contraception and reproductive health and rights, the Vatican increasingly resorts to scientific or ‘technical’ arguments concerning population dynamics, such as the pressures of old-age support rates²⁷ on governments. More than ever,²⁸ the Holy See tends to employ a unitary and strictly defined concept of ‘the family’ as an overarching principle to articulate its moral positions concerning sexuality and reproduction. This involves strategic employment of the comments on family as set out in article 16 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR), which states that, “men and women of full age...have the right to found a family.”

Ignoring subsequent human rights texts, including those on marriage and diversity of families around the world,²⁹ the Holy See, alongside other anti-rights actors and allies, misleadingly focuses its attention on the third clause of the article. They employ the text, “the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State,”³⁰ to argue for human rights protection of a strictly patriarchal and heteronormative conception of family. The Holy See then calls for greater recognition of this narrow conception of family in cultural, political, fiscal, and social policy. That the Vatican does not focus critique on non-nuclear family arrangements outside of Western cultures, and adopts a

'compassionate' attitude towards 'incomplete' families (such as grandparents raising children), highlights that its attack is ultimately focused on expressions of women's and sexual dissidents' autonomy and free choice.

In the days of the Cairo and Beijing conferences, the Vatican's rhetoric at the United Nations was couched in explicitly religious language and prescription of personal moral responsibilities. It has since shifted to language in a secular register, citing dignity, duties, and responsibilities to influence negotiations and international policy. For example, the Holy See now calls for agreements that uphold the 'dignity' and 'rights' of the couple³¹ that "promote a responsible kind of personal liberty,"³² and "create the social conditions which will enable them to make appropriate decisions in the light of their responsibilities."³³ With respect to the latter, the Vatican's language on 'social responsibility' is implicitly or explicitly contrasted with 'selfish individuality,' harnessing the power and appeal of the social justice critique of capitalism and liberalism.

As exemplified by its discourse on the family, in its advocacy at the UN the Vatican has in recent years become more strategic by frequently referring to re-interpreted human rights instruments. The Holy See regularly attempts to set up a 'battle of rights,' such as presenting abortion rights as in opposition to the right to life, and setting child and youth rights to comprehensive sexuality education against 'parental rights.'³⁴ These approaches echo the talking points and negotiating techniques of such anti-right civil society training materials as Family Watch International's UN Resource Guide.

The Vatican's language on 'social responsibility' is implicitly or explicitly contrasted with 'selfish individuality,' harnessing the power and appeal of the social justice critique of capitalism and liberalism

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COORDINATION AND ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHER ANTI-RIGHTS ACTORS

As the mimicry in rhetoric noted above suggests, the Holy See has established strong links with many anti-rights civil society organizations active at the United Nations, especially amongst Catholic CSOs. Recently, the Vatican has broadened its appeal through its self-proclaimed role as the international “voice of conscience,” and given its special access in policy spaces. Thus, it has taken on a leading and coordinating role of conservative Christian and Catholic proponents of ‘the family’ and opponents of ‘gender ideology’ at the UN.³⁵

Christian Right organizations in the United States who were active on the domestic level and who had previously ignored international fora made public statements of support of the Vatican

Galvanized by the publicity around the Holy See’s first concerted foray into rights related to gender and sexuality at the ICPD, Christian Right organizations in the United States who were active on the domestic level and who had previously ignored international fora made public statements of support of the Vatican³⁶ and began to engage the UN.³⁷ In the following year in Beijing, for instance, the U.S. anti-rights groups Concerned Women for America and Focus on the Family attended the World Conference to lend a hand to the Holy See’s efforts to curtail abortion and other rights. Today we can see how these links persist, most visibly in the number of public UN events co-hosted by the Holy See and Christian Right civil society.

In many ways, the Vatican also instigated conservative links not only across institutional and regional lines, but across religions. The Holy See’s outreach and coordination with conservative Muslim-majority

countries, such as Iran and Libya, to develop a unified front against reproductive rights during the Cairo negotiations first established the connections that have evolved into a dynamic interfaith orthodox alliance at the UN.³⁸

Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)

STATUS AND STRUCTURE

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation, formerly known as the Organization of the Islamic Conference, is the second-largest intergovernmental organization in the world, after the United Nations itself. The OIC is composed of 57 Member States, but this may increase to 58 if Liberia’s November 2016 bid to join the OIC is approved. There are also five OIC Observer States, the most recent of which is Russia.³⁹ The Organization has a Permanent Observer Mission to the United Nations.

There have been several shifts in leadership of the OIC in the recent past, which point to changes in the organization’s culture and policy bent. The former secretary general of the organization, Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu—a Turkish national and academic described by some internally as relatively ‘moderate’ or a ‘reformer’—was replaced in 2014 by İyad bin Amin Madani, a Saudi national who formerly served as a member of its Shura Council,⁴⁰ as Minister of Hajj,⁴¹ and as Minister of Information and Culture. The Organization’s headquarters are now located in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Madani subsequently resigned in late October 2016 citing health reasons two days after Egypt’s Foreign Affairs minister condemned remarks he made that were perceived to be mocking Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.⁴² Yusuf al-Othaimen, nominated by Saudi Arabia and a former Minister of Social Affairs, became secretary general in November 2016.⁴³

The Organization, which was founded in September 1969, describes itself as the “collective voice of the Muslim world” that aims to “safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony.” The OIC’s relationship to institutionalized religion, however, is very different from the Holy See’s.⁴⁴ Not all OIC Member States have Muslim-majority populations, nor do the governments of all Member States define themselves as ‘Islamic.’ The Organization is at its heart an alliance of States and has no formal ties to doctrinal authorities or doctrinal authority of its own, nor does it employ religious institutional figures in any position of power. Its constituent nation-States feature a broad and often conflicting range of policies with respect to the role of religion in public life and the State, religious interpretations, and schools of thought.

INTERNAL DEVELOPMENT

On a surface level, the OIC appears to have made a number of moves towards greater engagement—and a change in positioning and rhetoric—with respect to human rights and women’s human rights over the past decade. However, like most conservative actors who are involved in international human rights fora, the overall trend of the OIC is toward the creative employment of human rights language to limit State accountability and increase State impunity; create loopholes in human rights protection based on arguments citing religion, culture, or national sovereignty; and develop a parallel and conservative human rights regime fashioned out of co-opted human rights norms.

From its initial foray into the field of human rights, the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam (CDHRI), the OIC has subsequently worked to evolve its framework, developing a new Charter, a Covenant on the Rights of Children in Islam, and working towards the development of the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC), and a subsidiary program on women’s and children’s rights.



The overall trend of the OIC is toward the creative employment of human rights language to limit State accountability and increase State impunity

The OIC was sharply criticized for the Cairo Declaration, approved by the Organization in 1990⁴⁵ and still the organization's primary human rights document, albeit not binding for Member States. The Declaration was developed in large part in reaction to the UDHR, which was perceived as a Western and imperialist document;⁴⁶ however, the text of the CDHRI actually reinforced a number of rights and norms enshrined in the UDHR, the ICCPR, and the ICESCR, such as that of human dignity.⁴⁷ Similarly, rights are declared to have a universal character, and described as fundamental.⁴⁸ The Declaration features an anti-discrimination clause⁴⁹, the right to life⁵⁰, the prohibition of genocide⁵¹, and the right to marry⁵²; in addition, it includes due process rights,⁵³ a right to equality under the law⁵⁴, and rights to property⁵⁵ and privacy.⁵⁶ The Declaration also includes a general right to education and to health⁵⁷, the right to work⁵⁸, and the right to a clean environment.⁵⁹

However, the Cairo Declaration features several exclusions. It does not include a right to freedom of religion and conscience, nor to free assembly or association. The CDHRI omits the UDHR's requirement for free consent in marriage.⁶⁰ The Declaration also makes no mention of minority rights, the rights of detainees, the right to a nationality, the right to vote, trade union rights, the right to social security and to strike, and the right to participate in cultural life (all of which are, in contrast, included in the UDHR).

Crucially, the document also evokes an undefined (and seemingly unitary) conception of 'Islamic shariah' as the foundation of the human rights included therein, and employs 'shariah' to justify sweeping exceptions on universal human rights. The CDHRI states that the "Islamic Shariah" shall be the sole reference for the "explanation or clarification" of the rights contained in the Declaration⁶¹, and recognizes individuals' freedom and right to a dignified life *in accordance with* the "Islamic Shariah."⁶² Additional references to the "shariah" and its principles can be found throughout the text.⁶³

The document can be critiqued in many ways from a human rights perspective. Firstly, it is restrictive, as above, and undermines the universality of the rights it describes. In several cases it conflicts with established human rights law, with respect to equality and non-discrimination, for example. The Declaration suggests distinct sets of rights and duties for women⁶⁴, and outlines a differentiation of gender roles by giving husbands the duty of maintenance and welfare of the family.⁶⁵ It also does not provide for a general right to work for all.

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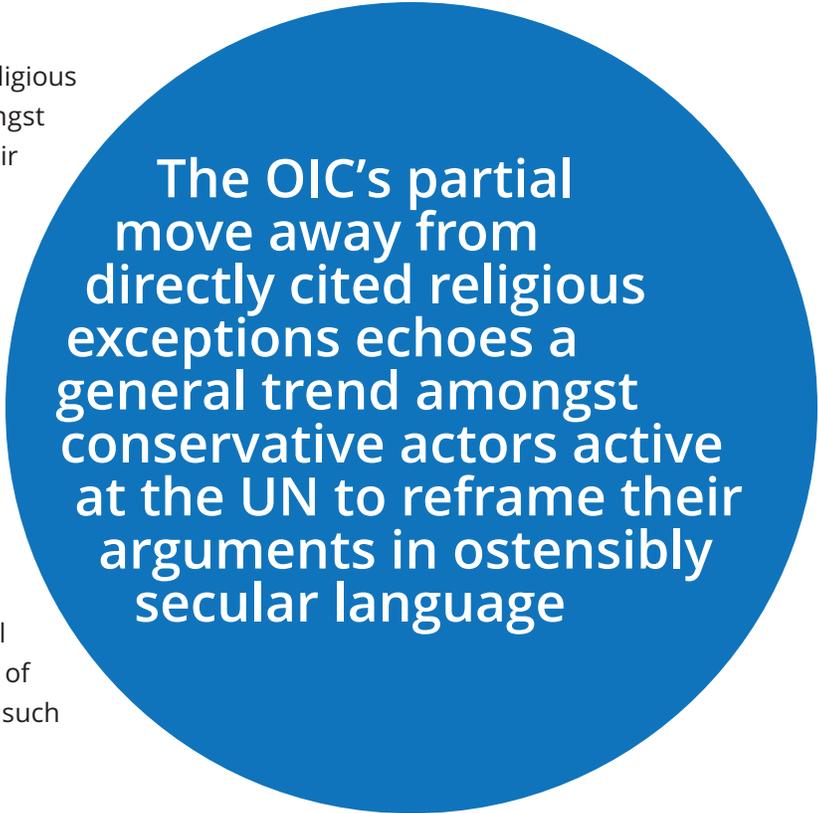
Further, since the Declaration does not define what it means by "shariah" in this context, its restrictions on rights are themselves ambiguous and flexible, dependent on a given government's interpretation of the concept. This gives State leaders exceptional influence in determining their own human rights commitments to their nationals. Thus, the Declaration empowers governments over individuals,⁶⁶ and therefore fails to provide a framework for accountability.

In subsequent years, the OIC sought to revisit and, to some extent, revise its textual approach to human rights as an institution, although it has not yet developed an alternative to or an update on the Cairo Declaration in its breadth. In 2005, however, the OIC approved its second authoritative⁶⁷ statement on rights, the Covenant on the Rights of the Child in Islam.⁶⁸ To some extent, the Covenant moves away from a reliance on "shariah" and exceptions on the basis of religion. It does continue to cite "shariah," but does not establish the concept as a guiding

force in interpretation of the document. The text also refers to practices that States have justified regarding 'shariah' in international human rights spaces, urging States to make efforts to "end actions based on customs, traditions, or practices that are in conflict with the rights and duties stipulated in this Covenant."⁶⁹

The OIC's partial move away from directly cited religious exceptions echoes a general trend amongst conservative actors active at the UN to reframe their arguments in ostensibly 'secular' language. The themes of the document also reflect many of the emerging preoccupations of religious right actors who are working internationally. The Covenant follows up on a general OIC commitment to focus on issues related to women, children, and 'the family.' Its main objectives are: to care for and strengthen families, and "to establish the conditions in which Muslim children can be proud of their nation, country, and religion."⁷⁰ In this way, the Covenant emphasizes the key role of the 'traditional family' and religious values in protecting the rights of the child, privileging the role of collective bodies, such as the nation and the family.

Also in 2005, as part of a larger reform of the OIC, the organization launched a Ten Year Programme of Action, finalizing an amended Charter in 2008 and establishing the IPHRC in 2011. The then-Secretary General, Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, declared that this "new approach, in the objectives of the Charter" would mark "a great step forward in adapting to global human rights values" and would involve "closer alignment of principle to the international instruments and the practices of other regional or intergovernmental organizations."⁷¹ In 2011, the OIC also co-sponsored a UN resolution on religious discrimination⁷², which seemed to signal a move away from its multi-year anti-defamation agenda (outlined below).



The OIC's partial move away from directly cited religious exceptions echoes a general trend amongst conservative actors active at the UN to reframe their arguments in ostensibly secular language

Yet the following years have been troubling for most observers of the OIC's engagement with human rights. Universalist or liberalizing tendencies present at the beginning of the IPHRC project seem to have been overtaken by relativist and regressive inclinations. As of today, the OIC's fledgling human rights institutions lack monitoring and enforcement capacity and are focused outwards to the actions of non-Member States.

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The IPHRC has thus far failed to develop any major initiatives to promote and protect human rights in its constituent States. The Commission meets yearly, and consists of 18 human rights 'experts' —six from Arab Member States, six from Asian Member States, and six from African Member States—all of whom are elected for a period of four years. The statutory goal of the IPHRC is to "advance human rights" and to "support Member States' effort to consolidate civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights."

Changes in leadership reflect a hardening of stances since 2014. Madani, who replaced Ihsanoglu, has been described as a 'strong relativist' with respect to human rights.⁷³ Madani stated that the OIC was considering "limitations on freedom of expression, gender equality" and "applying human rights in accordance with the OIC Member States' constitutional and legal systems," highlighting his prioritization of untrammelled State sovereignty at the expense of universal human rights.⁷⁴ Madani has argued that there are aspects of the UDHR that are "beyond the normal scope of human rights and clash with Islamic teachings" and has criticized freedom of speech on the grounds of defamation of religion.⁷⁵

The leadership of the IPHRC has also shifted since 2011. The position of chairperson, formerly held by Siti Ruhaini Dzuhayatin, an Indonesian academic and women's rights activist, has now shifted to Mohammed Kawu Ibrahim, a Nigerian diplomat. Ibrahim has stated that the Commission will now use the "richness of Islamic values and traditions to nurture a new human rights culture," which suggests that the IPHRC's current focus is on articulating a parallel human rights system based on a particular conservative interpretation of Islam as an alternative to universal human rights.

Many OIC leading states increasingly see human rights as a threat to their power both internally and regionally and want to address this threat proactively

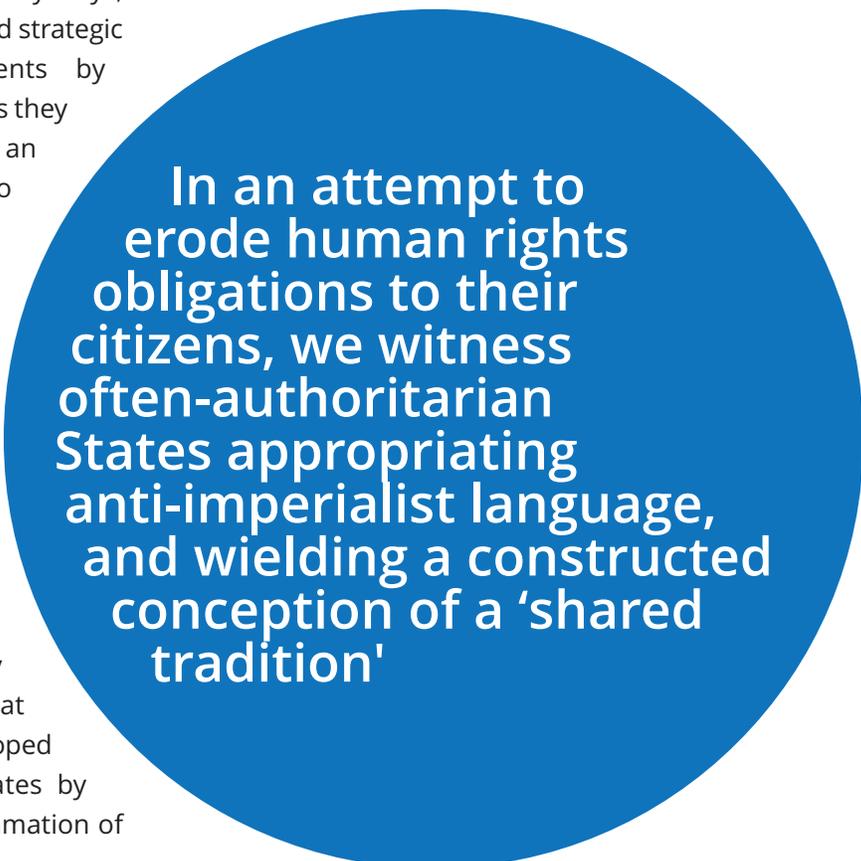
One key explanation for this landscape of ambiguity and regression is that the OIC's human rights initiatives run counter to the interests of a number of authoritarian governments involved in the organization. Many OIC leading states increasingly see human rights as a threat to their power both internally and regionally and want to address this threat proactively. For instance, OIC country host Saudi Arabia has been particularly active since the revolutions and uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region in undermining movements for greater democracy and popular empowerment within the region.⁷⁶ It seems likely that Member States are using the OIC as a tool in this strategy to reinforce existing power hierarchies—to subvert, reappropriate, and thus contain human rights on the domestic and international levels.

BRIEF HISTORY OF ENGAGEMENT AT THE UN

The OIC frequently employs arguments citing religion on the international stage. Several of the leading nations influential in its work are currently autocratic in nature, and strategically employ references to religion and claims to represent the values of 'the Muslim world' to bolster their social and political power on a domestic level and to gain legitimacy in multilateral spaces. In many ways, the organization is an example of the clear-eyed strategic use of religious fundamentalist arguments by government officials in service of geopolitics, as they jockey for regional and global power. In an attempt to erode human rights obligations to their citizens, we witness often-authoritarian States appropriating anti-imperialist language, and wielding a constructed conception of a 'shared tradition.'

Using these strategies, the OIC first rose to visibility at the UN as an advocate of the regressive series of 'defamation of religion' resolutions between 1999 and 2010 (first at the Commission on Human Rights and then at the Human Rights Council after its creation in 2006, as well as at the General Assembly since 2005). Beginning as an effort to combat "defamation against Islam," the OIC then developed a wider coalition amongst conservative States by broadening the focus of its campaign to "defamation of religion."

Described as a blasphemy law⁷⁷ on the international level, the 'defamation' resolutions sought to impose additional restrictions on individuals' freedom of expression to protect 'religion' from criticism. The initiative concluded after 2010. Firstly, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) initiated a series of workshops and consultations that culminated in the Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial, or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility, or violence in



In an attempt to erode human rights obligations to their citizens, we witness often-authoritarian States appropriating anti-imperialist language, and wielding a constructed conception of a 'shared tradition'

2012.⁷⁸ The Rabat Plan aimed to resolve the defamation of religion impasse by clarifying State obligations to prohibit incitement to hatred at the same time as it protected the rights to freedom of expression and freedom of religion. In addition, a series of yearly resolutions have been passed — beginning with resolution 16/18 in 2011 — on combating intolerance, negative stereotyping, and stigmatization of, discrimination, and incitement to violence against persons based on religion or belief. Related to these resolutions is the intergovernmental Istanbul Process.⁷⁹

In 2014, 2015 and 2016, the OIC sponsored a new series of resolutions at the Human Rights Council on ‘protection of the family.’ The Member States of the organization have largely coalesced in opposition to HRC resolutions on sexual orientation and gender identity in 2011, 2014, and 2016, and have also opposed the inclusion of references to sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) in several resolutions at the General Assembly.

2015–2016: MAJOR ACTIVITIES

A key focus of OIC advocacy at the United Nations over 2015 and 2016 has been the series of ‘protection of the family’ resolutions at the HRC, described in more detail below. ‘The family’ has been a central preoccupation of the OIC in international policy spaces in general and a focal point for collaboration with other anti-rights actors, including Christian Evangelical CSOs. Member States were also active in the lobby both to ‘mainstream’ family in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and in pushing for a dedicated goal on the family.

As mentioned above, the OIC was active in efforts to undermine the 2016 resolution on sexual orientation and gender identity at the HRC. All Member States of the OIC, with the exception of Albania, voted against the SOGI resolution or abstained. The organization released a statement outlining its strong opposition to the resolution and its creation of a UN Independent Expert

on sexual orientation and gender identity, arguing that “the notion of sexual orientation is alien to the international human rights norms and standards as well as against the fundamental precepts of not only Islamic but many other religious and cultural societies.”⁸⁰ According to Secretary-General Madani, adoption of the resolution constituted the imposition of “one set of values and preferences on the rest of the world and counteracts the fundamentals of universal human rights” and respect for “national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural, and religious backgrounds.”⁸¹

As the June 2016 HRC session wrapped up, the OIC also spearheaded hostile amendments to undermine the language and intent of the resolution, with Pakistan proposing 11 amendments to the text on behalf of the organization.⁸² While proposed amendments to remove specific language on SOGI and replace it with other categories of discrimination were rejected, several hostile amendments to the preambular paragraphs of the resolution were successfully included in the final text.⁸³

The successful amendments reflect the relativist tendencies of the OIC discussed above. Four amendments invoked the ideas of respecting “regional, cultural and religious value systems,” “domestic debates,” “sovereign priorities,” and expressed concern around “concepts pertaining to social matters including private individual conduct.”⁸⁴ The amendments also attempted to present the main content of the resolution as an imposition and as disruptive to the joint development of human rights norms, stressing the need to “maintain joint ownership of the international human rights agenda” and to consider human rights in an “objective and non-confrontational manner.”⁸⁵ This language, discussed in greater detail below, is deeply antithetical to the foundational principle of the universality of rights.

2. Civil society organizations

Introduction

In an unexpected shift in traditional dynamics at the UN, there has been a substantial increase in conservative religiously-affiliated non-State actors involved in the international human rights arena.⁸⁶ This trend can be understood as a form of backlash against the gains of feminists and other progressive actors.

In what appears to be a conscious attempt to replicate the organizing methods and level of engagement of feminist and progressive civil society in transnational policy spaces, anti-rights civil society organizations are moving into New York and Geneva to further a very different agenda.

In terms of Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) accreditation⁸⁷, the majority of such regressive civil society organizations are Christian Evangelical or Catholic in orientation.⁸⁸ Most of the anti-rights CSOs active in international human rights spaces were founded in or are based in the United States, although their rhetoric often claims to speak with the 'collective voice' of the global South.

In fact, the bulk of United States based religiously-affiliated conservative CSOs now operating at the UN have long been active on the domestic front in U.S. 'culture wars,'⁸⁹ targeting women and individuals who are non-conforming in their gender identity, expression and/or sexual orientation.⁹⁰ Ironically, given their

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tactical appropriation of anti-imperialist discourses at the United Nations, a number of the CSOs highlighted below—including the Family Research Council, World Congress of Families, and United Families International—have been and continue to be involved in attempts to export the United States ‘culture wars’ abroad, particularly in an attempt to shape national policies regarding sexuality and gender identity in several African, Eastern European, and Latin American countries.⁹¹ In the Latin American context, these activities coexist with a longer history of struggle between ultra-conservative and emancipatory discourses around sexuality and gender with the Vatican/Catholic Church significantly influencing outcomes.

Many in the network of U.S. anti-rights civil society organizations made the transition from outsiders to insiders through President Bush’s courting of the religious right at the international level

As the section below highlights, religious right civil society organizations working at the United Nations increasingly join forces in a cross-denominational conservative coalition that hopes to achieve common goals related to ‘life, family, and nation.’ For U.S.-based organizations, their capacity to organize, influence, and build cross-regional coalitions received a boost during the George W. Bush administration (2001-2009) that has yielded an ongoing effect.

Many in the network of U.S. anti-rights civil society organizations made the transition from outsiders to insiders through President Bush’s courting of the religious right at the international level. Under Bush, Christian Right activists were included as official representatives on U.S. delegations to UN conferences, such as the World Summit on Children.⁹² United States

religious right civil society benefited from increased access, institutionalization, and lobbying power in negotiations on rights for women, children, and individuals with non-conforming gender identity, expression and/or sexual orientation.

In the same period ultra-conservative actors in the U.S. built relationships with counterparts abroad. For instance, at the 2002 UN Special Session on Children, the U.S. led a coalition of majority Catholic and Muslim countries, including Sudan, Iran and Pakistan, to oppose draft language recognizing ‘various forms of the family’ and reproductive health services for adolescents.⁹³ The relationships initiated then form the basis of today’s ongoing strategic alliances with conservative allies on the State level and across religious lines.⁹⁴ With the new U.S. administration under Donald Trump and Vice-President Michael Pence—who describes himself as a “devout Evangelical”—it is highly probable that U.S. anti-rights CSOs will be again endowed with greater access, power, and inclusion in the determination of United States foreign policy. At the time of writing, the new administration had already reinstated and expanded the ‘Global Gag Rule,’ a policy that prohibits U.S. funding from going to any international organization that administers, counsels on, advocates for, or mentions abortion; and it has defunded the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).⁹⁵

Traditionalist civil society actors working to influence international human rights today are also more unified at the international level than the domestic

Traditionalist civil society actors working to influence international human rights today are also more unified at the international level than the domestic. While the relationship between the Protestant and Catholic Right is

uneasy within the United States⁹⁶, in UN venues Catholic, Mormon, and Evangelical organizations and individuals now largely act as a unified bloc. An ongoing project, anti-rights CSOs increasingly focus on coalition building and training as part of their operations. In turn, networks are developed to further collaboration at the international, regional, and national levels.

In the following section, we examine several of the most active ultra-conservative religiously-affiliated civil society actors engaged in international human rights advocacy over 2015 and 2016. Given the results of the recent U.S. election, it is likely that their influence and impact will rise sharply in the near future; indeed, as of early 2017, we have already seen their impact.⁹⁷

World Congress of Families

"You can imagine what the world would look like if the purveyors of today's culture get their way: abortion on demand, marriage abandoned, gender redefined, parental rights eliminated, religious liberty abandoned, commercial surrogacy mandated, the elderly and infirm killed in the name of "compassion"..."⁹⁸

- World Congress of Families

BACKGROUND, MISSION, AND KEY OBJECTIVES

The World Congress of Families (WCF)⁹⁹ was launched in 1997 by the conservative Christian scholar Allan Carlson as a project of the Howard Center for Family, Religion, and Society. Carlson argued that heterosexual, procreative marriage is the "bulwark of ordered liberty" and that its preservation and promotion is the sole path to preventing a future marked by "catastrophic population decline, economic contraction, and human tragedy" brought on by feminism, socialism and secularism.¹⁰⁰

In 2016, Brian Brown, the director of the National Organization for Marriage, was chosen as the new President of the WCF.¹⁰¹ The National Organization for Families, which is currently developing an international branch,¹⁰² was established to work against the legalization of same-sex marriage in the United States.

The World Congress of Families describes its mission as to "help secure the foundations of society" by uniting and empowering leaders worldwide to support and defend:

- i. the natural family "founded on marriage between a man and a woman";
- ii. "parental rights" and the welfare of children, "including their need for both a mother and a father";
- iii. the dignity and "sanctity of all human life from conception"; and
- iv. freedom of speech, religion, and conscience.

Fundamentally, the World Congress of Families defines itself as a "pro-family" organization, specifically positioning itself as defending what it defines as the "natural family." The WCF describes the natural family as a "totally self-evident expression," that signifies a "natural order to family structure that is common across cultures."

Emphasizing its heteronormative and patriarchal structure in a usefully vague manner, the WCF states that the natural family "precludes incompatible constructs of the family as well as incompatible behaviors among its members." The Congress supports criminalization of same-sex sexual conduct and is listed as an anti-LGBT hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center.¹⁰³

The World Congress of Families (WCF) is also the instigator of the World Family Declaration, a statement and advocacy tool launched in 2014 and endorsed by a coalition of anti-rights civil society actors.¹⁰⁴ The WCF draws its organizational principles and goals from the Declaration, holding that "the family exists prior to the

State and possesses inherent dignity and rights which States are morally bound to respect and protect.” Further, the World Congress of Families calls on officials and policymakers “to immediately establish policies and implement measures to preserve and strengthen marriage and family.”¹⁰⁵

The WCF's central objective is to develop and sustain a worldwide network of anti-rights 'pro-family' organizations, scholars, State officials, and conservative religious actors

The WCF carries out its work through a number of different programs, which are outlined below; however, its central objective is to develop and sustain a worldwide network of anti-rights 'pro-family' organizations, scholars, State officials, and conservative religious actors. Their stated aim is to build an international movement of “religiously grounded family morality systems” that can influence and shape policy at the United Nations.¹⁰⁶

REGION AND RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION(S)

The World Congress of Families, which has announced an upcoming name change to the International Organization of the Family¹⁰⁷, is based in Rockford, Illinois, and is affiliated with the Howard Center for Family, Religion, and Society.

While the WCF has significant links worldwide, headquarters staff are all North American, and eight of twelve members of its Board of Directors are also based in the United States. Other Board Members include:

Ignacio Arsuaga, the Spanish founder of conservative online petition and mobilization

platforms CitizenGo¹⁰⁸ and HazteOir¹⁰⁹

Alexey Komov, WCF's Russian representative, founder of the Russian CSO FamilyPolicy¹¹⁰, connected to the Russian Orthodox Church, Russian government, and linked to two prominent Orthodox Russian billionaires funding much of WCF's work in the region: Vladimir Yakunin and Konstantin Malofeev¹¹¹

Vicente Segu Marcos, director of La Fundacion in Mexico, which advocates for “family values and religious freedom”

Luca Volontè, former Italian politician, leader of the (Christian) Union of the Center, founder of the Novae Terra Foundation,¹¹² and author of such pieces as ‘European Resistance to Cultural Suicide’¹¹³

In terms of religious affiliation, while the founder of the WCF is a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the organization defines itself as inter-faith (in practice, Catholic and Christian), as “an alliance of orthodox believers, based on their commitment to Judeo-Christian values and the natural family.”¹¹⁴

PROGRAMS

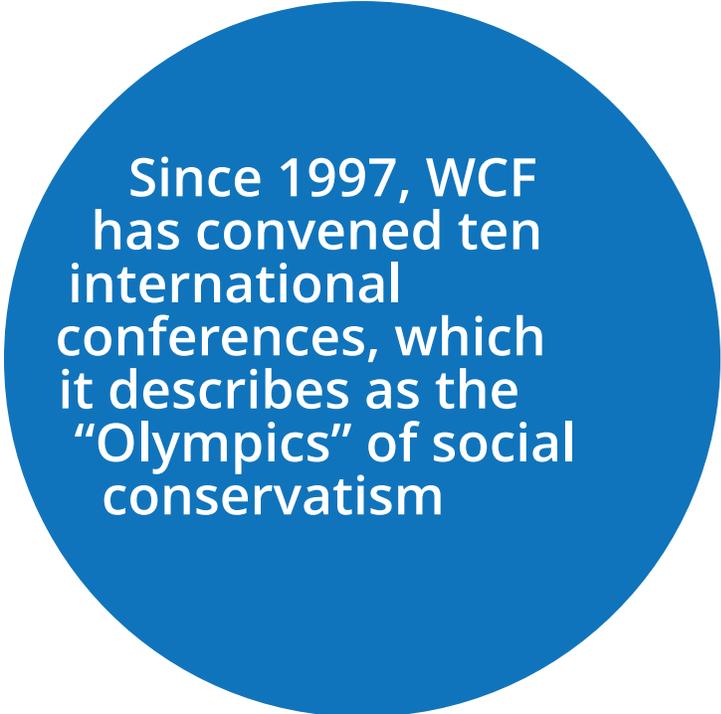
The World Congress of Families pursues several programs. Their work includes:

- i. Research;
- ii. Knowledge production and dissemination through a devoted academic journal, *The Family in America*¹¹⁵, which will soon be called *The Natural Family: An International Journal of Research and Policy*, and a related news service;
- iii. A partnership program and related newsletter;
- iv. Lobbying at the United Nations “to defend life, faith, and family”; and
- v. WCF international and regional conferences.

The WCF thus issues a regular stream of declarations, ‘social science’ publications, policy papers, and newsletters declaring and disseminating its messaging. Together with United Families International, the WCF recently co-authored the third edition of the massive UN Negotiating Guide¹¹⁶, a comprehensive text that advises anti-rights—including ‘pro-life’—actors on negotiating tactics, key talking points, and ‘consensus language’ to further their advocacy at the United Nations.

To further its work disseminating and amplifying pseudo-scientific arguments in defence of regressive claims, the Congress recently developed MARRIpedia, an online “social science encyclopedia on all matters related to family, marriage, religion, and sexuality.”¹¹⁷ This database project aims to streamline and synthesize the body of misleading ‘social science’ work from a growing set of conservative religious academics into concise entries that facilitate wider dissemination and use in lobbying at the international and national levels.

As aforementioned, however, the most significant contribution of the World Congress of Families to the constellation of regressive religiously-affiliated actors active in international human rights spaces is its convening power, and its associated networking and training role. Since 1997, WCF has convened ten international conferences, which it describes as the “Olympics” of social conservatism¹¹⁸, held in Prague, Geneva, Mexico City, Warsaw, Amsterdam, Madrid, Sydney, Moscow¹¹⁹, Salt Lake City, and Tbilisi. It also convened and provided logistical and financial support to a much greater number of regional conferences (outlined below) throughout this time.



Since 1997, WCF has convened ten international conferences, which it describes as the “Olympics” of social conservatism

COORDINATION AND ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHER ANTI-RIGHTS ACTORS

As of September 2016, the World Congress of Families has 35 organizational partners, which are based in various countries around the world.

North America

- Alliance Defending Freedom
- Christian Broadcasting Network
- Christian Film and Television Commission
- Ethics and Public Policy Center
- Family First Foundation
- Family Watch International
- Fellowship of St James
- Grasstops USA
- Home School Legal Defense Organization
- Human Life International
- Lighted Candle Society
- National Center on Sexual Exploitation
- National Organization for Marriage
- Population Research Institute
- REAL Women of Canada
- The Ruth Institute
- United Families International

Europe and Russia

- Cristiani – Luci sull’Est (Italy)
- Christian Concern (UK)
- CitizenGo (Spain)
- Novae Tarrae Foundation (Italy)
- ProVita (Italy)
- Associazione per la Difesa Dei Valori (Italy)
- Sanctity of Motherhood program (Russia)
- Dveri (Serbia)
- Georgian Demographic Society (Georgia)

Australasia

- Dads4Kids (Australia)
- Endeavour Forum (Australia)
- Family First New Zealand

Latin America

- Latin American Alliance for the Family
- Red Familia (Mexico)

Africa

- Family Policy Institute (South Africa)

Transnational/International

- Bruderhof Communities
- Heartbeat International
- Worldwide Organization for Women

To carry out its operations, especially its yearly conferences, a substantial part of the WCF’s budget comes from membership dues contributed by its partners. The combined annual budget for WCF’s partner network amounts to over \$200 million.¹²⁰ The WCF claims that its partner network reaches over 50 million people worldwide.¹²¹

The World Congress of Families has made progress toward its goal of extending links to anti-rights civil society, State, and religious institutional actors worldwide through its international and regional conferences. The 2015 Salt Lake City World Congress was hosted by the Sutherland Institute, a conservative think-tank, and featured presentations from the Church of Latter-Day Saints; the Russian Orthodox Church’s Department of Family and Life; the anti-abortion Catholic Priests for Life; the Foundation for African Culture and Heritage; the Polish Federation of Pro-Life Movements; the European Federation of Catholic Family Associations; the UN NGO Committee on the Family; and the Political Network for Values, among many others.¹²²

The 2016 World Congress in Tbilisi, Georgia was organized by the Georgian Demographic Society, and speakers included the leader of the Party of Socialists in the Republic of Moldova and representatives from the Polish Parliament; FamilyPolicy; the Russian Institute for Strategic Studies; and HatzeOir, among others.¹²³

2015 AND 2016: MAJOR ACTIVITIES

World Congress of Families IX in Salt Lake City, United States: October 27-30, 2015

- 3,300 delegates attended from over 60 countries
- Plenary on “Pro-Family and Pro-Life Victories at the United Nations,” featuring speakers from C-Fam, Family Watch International, the UN NGO Committee on the Family, and the Foundation for African Cultural Heritage (Nigeria)
- Training for delegates on networking and coalition building; media; fundraising; strategic planning; use of social media for maximum impact; hosting a WCF conference, etc.
- For the first time, five regional meetings convened during the WCF: Latin America, the Caribbean, Europe, Africa, and Australia/Asia¹²⁴

World Congress of Families X in Tbilisi, Georgia: May 15-18, 2016

- Theme: Civilization at the Crossroads: The Natural Family as the Bulwark of Freedom and Human Values
- Over 2,000 delegates attended from over 50 countries
- Organized by investment firm banker Levan Vasadze
- Georgian Patriarch Ilia II gave a blessing to the convening—first WCF convening in an Orthodox country—and George W. Bush sent a letter of welcome and support
- Presentation from Susan Roylance of the Howard Center on ‘Family Policy, as impacted by United Nations Treaties and Conference Documents’

Regional Conferences:

- Chisinau, Moldova: March 2015
- Belgrade, Serbia: April 2015
- Auckland, New Zealand: May 2015
- Tbilisi, Georgia: May 2015
- Orlando, United States: September 2015
- Port Harcourt, Nigeria: October 2015
- Christ Church, Barbados: April 2016
- Salta, Argentina: June 2016

- Nairobi, Kenya: September 2016
- Belgrade, Serbia: September 2016

Launch of MARRIpedia (see above): October 2015

Launch of the publication, website, and lobbying tool on “how the family as a unit can help achieve the SDGs,” *Family Capital and the SDGs*¹²⁵, together with United Families International, at the UN Habitat III conference in Quito in October, 2016.

Center for Family and Human Rights (C-Fam)

C-Fam is a Catholic organization based in the United States, with offices in New York and Washington, D.C. It operates primarily in multilateral spaces.

BACKGROUND, MISSION, AND KEY OBJECTIVES

Formerly the Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute, the Center for Family and Human Rights (C-Fam) was founded in 1997 to “monitor and affect the social policy debate at the United Nations and other international institutions.”¹²⁶ Since two months after its inception, it has been headed by the prolific and controversial¹²⁷ former journalist Austin Ruse.

C-Fam’s mission is to “defend life and family at international institutions” and to publicize what is described as an ongoing debate on these issues at the UN level. The organization’s stated vision is “the preservation of international law by discrediting socially radical policies at the United Nations” and other international policy spaces.¹²⁸ C-Fam’s mission and objectives are centred around this framing of a ‘proper’ (ultra-conservative) conception of international law as endangered by what they frequently refer to as ‘radical feminist ideology.’ Interestingly, they argue that the United Nations and other international mechanisms themselves hinder this ‘true’ understanding of international law, harming the family in the process.

The organization’s aims include re-establishment of this ‘proper understanding’ of international law, as well as ‘protection of national sovereignty’¹²⁹ and the dignity of the human person.

C-Fam is highly interested in building an anti-rights alliance active in UN spaces; Ruse has stated that he was inspired by the Holy See’s coalition-building efforts at the Cairo conference in 1994, and subsequently set out to

foster and grow the formation of a bloc of socially conservative State delegates to oppose the legalization of abortion and the inclusion of other rights related to gender and sexuality.¹³⁰ Ruse describes the religious right’s project at the United Nations as the defence of three sovereignties: nation, church, and family.¹³¹

PROGRAMS

While it occasionally joins other religious right organizations in conservative amicus briefs for regional legal fora, C-Fam’s focus in the international human rights arena is primarily in lobbying, media, information dissemination, and movement building.

The organization has been involved and highly visible at the UN, and particularly at the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), since its inception. Since 1997, C-Fam operates a ‘CEDAW Watch’ program that operates to undermine the work of the CEDAW Committee, monitoring and reporting on the Committee in order to “provide policy-makers...with the information they need” to “protect their national laws from the harmful effects of the activist committee.”¹³² C-Fam also coordinates numerous parallel events yearly at the CSW with anti-rights actors to amplify its skewed conception of human rights and to network with potential allies.

The organization’s influence is also largely due to its online and mail-out presence. As an organization with a strong focus on strategic communications, C-Fam produces multiple weekly critiques of UN processes and progressive actors engaged in international and regional human rights spaces, and disseminates these weekly in a newsletter entitled *Friday Fax*. The newsletter has an alleged readership of more than 400,000.¹³³ In part because of its links to other U.S.-based religious right civil society organizations, as well as its high level of visibility, C-Fam has also spearheaded several campaigns. Most recently, it launched the Civil Society for the Family campaign in April 2016,¹³⁴ which is discussed in more

detail below.

C-Fam also has a youth wing, which is a subset of the organization called the **International Youth Coalition (IYC)**.¹³⁵ Inspired by a 2010 conference on youth sponsored by the UN Population Fund (UNPF) in Mexico, the initiative began by drafting and circulating a 'Youth Statement to the UN and the World'¹³⁶ at the conference.

The IYC was formally launched at a founding conference and week of training in July 2011, featuring anti-abortion activists Lila Rose of Live Action and Kristan Hawkins of Students for Life as key speakers. The coalition states that it aims to counter the view that youth worldwide support "legal and accessible abortion, CSE [comprehensive sexuality education] for children as young as ten years old, and policies encouraging homosexuality, promiscuity, and premarital sex."¹³⁷

The IYC describes itself as "youth defending life and family around the globe," and aims to offer a forum for youth (defined as below the age of 30) to educate their peers on and "challenge cultural norms that attack the dignity of the human person." The coalition's objective is to defend 'traditional values' and to ensure these values have significant influence on future generations.¹³⁸

In its Youth Statement¹³⁹, the IYC claims that parents are the primary educators of young people; that the rights of youth are based on their evolving capacities and must be balanced with the rights and duties of parents; and that "the full and proper expression of one's sexuality can only be realized in the total life-long and selfless commitment founded on love and rooted in the natural institution of marriage."¹⁴⁰ The statement also cites anti-rights talking points on abortion and gender, claiming that "present day youth are survivors...by virtue of our being born at all," that men and women are 'complementary' and that gender is not a social construct.¹⁴¹



C-Fam's mission is centred around its framing of a 'proper' conception of international law endangered by 'radical feminist ideology'

COORDINATION AND ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHER ANTI-RIGHTS ACTORS

C-Fam is an offshoot of the hardline anti-rights civil society group Human Life International (HLI), whose founder, Paul Marx (a Catholic priest), has claimed that the United States' pro-choice movement is led by Jews "perpetrating another Holocaust."¹⁴² Because of these and similar positions, HLI was unsuccessful in its bid for ECOSOC status at the UN, and subsequently set up C-Fam as its UN lobbying arm. C-Fam was also instrumental in founding the conservative World Youth Alliance.¹⁴³

C-Fam prioritizes relationships with State delegates. Under Ruse's leadership it has worked to develop a friendly bloc of conservative State delegates at the UN¹⁴⁴, and to amplify the UN lobbying and activities of fellow religious right CSOs through its Friday Fax.

To some extent Austin Ruse's extreme rhetoric has weakened public links between the Holy See and the Catholic CSO in recent years; however, they continue to coordinate on UN events. C-Fam led the campaign to maintain the Holy See's special status at the UN,¹⁴⁵ countering a progressive call for the Vatican to be treated as a religious institution rather than a State on the international level.¹⁴⁶ C-Fam's senior vice president for research and director of its International Organizations Research Group also previously served as a member of the Holy See delegation to the Commission on Population and Development, and on the U.S. domestic level Ruse is a member of the Founders Circle of the National Catholic Prayer Breakfast.

In addition, C-Fam collaborates on conservative initiatives with likeminded CSOs and State delegates. Most recently, C-Fam spearheaded the creation of Civil Society for the Family, a new coalition and platform developed "to confront the growing international threat against the family" posed by "overreach by international institutions."¹⁴⁷

As of November 2016, the coalition had 178 members, with an organizing committee comprised of C-Fam (U.S.), the Family Research Council (U.S.), CitizenGo and HazteOir (Spain), Human Life International (U.S.), the European Centre for Law and Justice (France), the Institute for Family Policies (Spain), the Institute for Legal Culture (Poland), the Novae Terrae Foundation (Italy), Derecho a Vivir (Spain), the National Organization for Marriage (U.S.), and the TransAtlantic Christian Council (Netherlands).¹⁴⁸

C-Fam has directly linked the creation of Civil Society for the Family to the regressive campaign against the human rights of people with non-conforming sexual orientation, describing the initiative as the "first pro-family coalition to explicitly push back against UN entities attempting to redefine the family to include same-sex relations."¹⁴⁹

In reality, the Coalition appears to have been formed primarily to deploy a new declarative advocacy tool into the anti-rights conversation at the UN: *The Family Articles*¹⁵⁰ (also the official platform of the Coalition). The Articles aim to forward the 'protection of the family' language¹⁵¹, which has been on the rise amongst conservative actors at the United Nations since 2014, and state that relations between individuals of the same sex are neither equivalent nor entitled to such protections.¹⁵² The Articles also claim that "the best available social science validates the exceptional status of the family in international law,"¹⁵³ and articulate their beliefs regarding UN entities and mandate holders with respect to the family:

The UN secretariat, agencies, treaty bodies, and other mandate holders are bound to assist Member States in fulfilling their obligations toward the family as defined in international law, and following the directions of UN Member States,¹⁵⁴

and,

Acts and declarations by UN entities and mandate holders that treat relations between individuals of the same sex as equivalent or analogous to the family, including acts and declarations purporting the existence of international human rights obligations on the basis of “sexual orientation and gender identity” are *ultra vires* and cannot give rise to binding legal obligations on sovereign States. Such acts and declarations are not based on valid interpretations of international law and policy, and cannot contribute to the formation of new customary international law.¹⁵⁵



**C-Fam
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and State
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Russia is a supporter of the initiative, writing to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in the context of the International Day of Families in May 2016 that the Coalition describes “attacks on the institution of the traditional family...as outright pressure bordering on ‘totalitarian measures’” and that “we have often heard calls from our partners to ‘listen to the voice of civil society.’ We believe that the position...on the subject of family values in this case is no exception.”¹⁵⁶ The Russian representative to the OSCE went on to call for the OSCE Chairperson to “take due account of the subject of the family” in the agenda of the organization, including the Human Dimension Committee.¹⁵⁷ He also demanded that the specialist OSCE executive structures take the issue up in their work, and recommend a future OSCE event to “share experiences on supporting the institution of the family” and “defending motherhood.”¹⁵⁸

2015 AND 2016: MAJOR ACTIVITIES

In addition to its regular production of op-eds and calls to action through its Friday Fax throughout the period of review, C-Fam sent a delegation and helped conduct training of conservative activists at the Commission on the Status of Women, and organized parallel and side events at the UN.

In May 2016, C-Fam co-sponsored a High-Level event entitled “United Nations for a Family-Friendly World,” together with Family Watch International, the Foreign Service Fellowship,¹⁵⁹ and the Group of Friends of the Family,¹⁶⁰ a new bloc composed of 25 States. At the event:

- Supporting organizations included regressive CSOs, such as the Family Research Council, Human Life International, CitizenGo and HazteOir, and Derecho a Vivir.
- Ruse announced the creation of Civil Society for the Family, and the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus presented the Group of the Friends of the Family (GoFF) Statement in Support of the Family,¹⁶¹ whilst GoFF delegates pushed for the UN to emphasize ‘pro-family’ policies in the implementation of the SDGs.
- Presenters launched an anti-rights advocacy tool and document promoted by the UN Family Rights Caucus (a civil society-led group), called “A Declaration on the Rights of Children and their Families: A Call from the Children of the World.”¹⁶²

C-Fam co-sponsored an event with the Civil Society for the Family and the Group of Friends of the Family State bloc (led by Belarus) in October 2016, which was entitled “The Rights of the Child: Parents, Science and Experience.”¹⁶³ Speakers argued that sexual and reproductive autonomy and anti-discrimination measures protecting same-sex couples undermine the rights of children.¹⁶⁴

At the 2015 CSW, C-Fam co-organized an anti-abortion side event with the Holy See and International Youth Forum featuring Live Action founder Lila Rose, one of the key instigators in the purported ‘sting’ operation into Planned Parenthood’s abortion services.¹⁶⁵ C-Fam also worked with the Holy See and WOOMB International¹⁶⁶ on an event “exposing the dangers of assisted reproductive technologies.”

C-Fam hosted a particularly controversial panel at the 2016 CSW alongside REAL Women of Canada, Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) International, Human Life International, the Family Research Council, and the Irish anti-abortion organization Family and Life on ‘Political Correctness and Gender Ideology,’ featuring Austin Ruse, Stella Morabito of the Federalist, and Michael Walsh (author of a book called *The Devil’s Pleasure Palace*). The panel argued vociferously and inventively against the human rights of trans individuals, claiming that their right not to be discriminated against constitutes a violation of freedom of expression and leads to a society in which civil and political rights as a whole are undermined, inevitably leading to totalitarianism.

Family Watch International

Family Watch International (FWI) is based in the United States, in Gilbert, Arizona. It is a Mormon-led organization.

BACKGROUND, MISSION, AND KEY OBJECTIVES

Family Watch International (FWI), another Christian Right organization highly active in international human rights spaces, was founded in 1999 and claims to have members and supporters in over 170 countries. The stated mission of FWI is to “preserve and promote the family, based on marriage between a man and a woman as the societal unit that provides the best outcome for men, women and children.”¹⁶⁷ FWI is designated an anti-LGBT organization by the Southern Poverty Law Center in their categorization of hate groups in the United States. The organization has ECOSOC status at the United Nations, where it operates under the name of Global Helping to Advance Women and Children.

Key stated objectives of the organization at the UN include 'education', family policy advocacy, and research. FWI argues they have been particularly effective in "uncovering evidence of how the UN system is being manipulated"¹⁶⁸ to impact national laws that "promote abortion, prostitution, homosexuality, promiscuity, and the sexualization of children."¹⁶⁹

Family Watch International works primarily on the international front and keeps a low national profile in the United States. The CSO is also one of a number of organizations, such as Human Life International, who have worked to export U.S. 'culture wars' to African countries, including Kenya, Nigeria, and Uganda.¹⁷⁰

Sharon Slater, the former president of United Families International, where she took on a leading lobbying role at the UN, co-founded and heads FWI.

PROGRAMS

FWI is an activist lobby and advocacy organization, engaging in:

- Information dissemination through its regular Family News Wire
- Knowledge production and analysis
- Monitoring and tracking of developments on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in human rights spaces
- Multimedia advocacy
- Multi-level lobbying at the UN, and
- Regular training of anti-rights civil society and State delegates.

The organization also initiates and leads multi-organizational anti-rights initiatives, such as the UN Family Rights Caucus.



Family Watch International is one of a number of organizations who have worked to export U.S. 'culture wars'

In its programs, FWI argues that Christian family values are under attack and need to be defended globally. The organization's efforts focus on topics, such as marriage, abortion, LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer) rights—advocating, for instance, for conversion therapy—comprehensive sexual education, and religious freedom.

Family Watch International develops and circulates a wide range of detailed policy briefs on their focus topics.¹⁷¹ Their materials, claiming support from social science and international law, set out negotiating tactics and key discourses to be used for anti-rights lobbying at the United Nations, which are discussed further below. Among others, these materials include:

- "Threats to National Sovereignty: UN Entities Overstepping Their Mandates"¹⁷²
- "Binding Obligations of States to Protect the Family"¹⁷³
- "An Analysis of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda: The Hidden Threats to Life, Family and Children"¹⁷⁴
- "What You Need to Know About Homosexuality"¹⁷⁵
- "Traditional Marriage is Essential to a Healthy Society"¹⁷⁶
- "The Relentless Push to Create an International Right to Abortion"¹⁷⁷

In many cases, FWI pairs its policy briefs and their dissemination with calls to action and online petitions, e.g. advocating against comprehensive sexual education in 'Stop the Sexualization of Children!'¹⁷⁸ It also produces short and accessible 'documentaries' promulgating these arguments, which are circulated online and at UN events and trainings.¹⁷⁹ One recent documentary is entitled, "The War on Children: The Comprehensive Sexuality Education Agenda," and accompanies a petition that states that multiple UN agencies are implementing, promoting and/or funding "comprehensive CSE programs that

sexualize children and take away their innocence." Further, these programs "are designed to change all of the sexual and gender norms of society" and "openly promote promiscuity, high-risk sexual behavior and sexual pleasure even to very young children."¹⁸⁰

Most extensively, the organization has put together, and regularly updates, a sweeping anti-rights UN Resource Guide. *The Resource Guide to UN Consensus Language on Family Issues* is disseminated through meetings (including the World Congress of Families), trainings, and online, and is used to train State delegates and fellow conservative CSOs. The 2013 Guide¹⁸¹ is 90 pages in length, and discusses general techniques for conservative delegates and lobbyists to "negotiate a more family-friendly outcome document," as well as specific sections on 86 focal areas or 'policy issues'.

These include, among others:

"Various forms of the family": FWI highlights UN language on various forms of the family existing in different cultural, social, and political systems, but then recommends that advocates share information to "give governments reason to promote the traditional family structure of mother/father and children," such as a quote from the Institute for American Values claiming that "[a]ny deviation from the traditional married family structure generally leads to such things as poverty, crime, violence...and other problems that world governments must spend millions of dollars trying to fix," where, "[f]rom a purely economic perspective, there are enormous tangible costs to society that emanate from family breakdown."¹⁸²

Abortion: the Guide argues that "in no case should abortion be promoted as a method of family planning," and states that "many UN agencies and treaty bodies (e.g., United Nations Development Program (UNDP), World Health Organization (WHO), and the CEDAW Committee) are promoting abortion

for population control purposes” which is said to “[go] against the policies developed by the ICPD and the Beijing Platform for Action.”¹⁸³

Sovereignty: in this section, FWI argues against inclusion of “other status” in discrimination provisions, arguing that while all individuals are “entitled to the same fundamental human rights *regardless of fixed characteristics* such as race, color, sex or national origin,” that “rights should never be granted based on sexual behavior or preferences”¹⁸⁴ because to interpret a UN treaty to protect sexual orientation “undermines the entire UN negotiation process and is an assault on national sovereignty.”¹⁸⁵

“Child’s right to parental care”: the Guide quotes UN language citing the right to know and to be cared for by his or her parents, then goes on to flag the “growing trend among lesbians and unmarried women” to use “sperm fathers to gain children,” as “there is now a strong current of thought that it is irresponsible to aid in the begetting not only of fatherless children but also of children who can never know who their fathers were.”¹⁸⁶

FWI also develops and disseminates other anti-rights activist guides and publications at its training meetings, such as those originating from its Stand for the Family campaign.¹⁸⁷ The organization circulated “Protecting Children from the Sexual Rights Revolution” at the Family Rights Leadership Summit during the 2015 World Congress of Families in Salt Lake City. This 105-page “family defense handbook for parents and policymakers,” authored by Sharon Slater, includes talking points and ‘scientific’ facts to support what FWI describes as “pro-family, pro-life positions...before a State or national legislature or at the United Nations or other policymaking venues.” The introduction boasts that “a number of the talking points in this book have been used successfully at the United Nations by UN diplomats.”

FWI argues that Christian family values are under attack and need to be defended globally

This 105-page “family defense handbook,” includes talking points and ‘scientific’ facts to support what FWI describes as “pro-family, pro-life positions”

The contents of this publication focus on defending “man/woman marriage”; stopping the “war on our children,” attacks on Planned Parenthood¹⁸⁸, protecting “parental rights,” homosexuality and same-sex attraction, “understanding gender identity and transgender issues,” the comprehensive sexuality education ‘agenda,’ “negative impact of abortion on girls,” abstinence, the family planning contraception ‘agenda,’ the “dangerous youth political participation agenda,” and “understanding the sexual rights agenda.” With respect to the latter, FWI has stated that UN entities are “aggressively promoting broad sexual rights that are harmful...especially to children,” and that these “alleged ‘rights’...undermine the family, the rights of parents, respect for religious and cultural values,” and also “compromise the health and innocence of children.” FWI goes on to call upon States to “hold accountable those UN agencies and officials who overstep their mandates by promoting sexual rights” and “pressuring countries to accept these alleged rights.”¹⁸⁹

The handbook is a follow-up to the 2009 publication “Stand for the Family: A Call to Responsible Citizens Everywhere,”¹⁹⁰ which memorably described the CEDAW Convention as a “radical anti-mother, anti-life UN Treaty—dubbed the ERA [U.S. Equal Rights Amendment] on steroids.” Stand for the Family also forwarded arguments countering the “homosexual agenda” and talking points on “powerful groups manipulating the UN system to undermine families worldwide,” “alternative family structures” causing children negative outcomes, and arguing that “radical sexual ideologies” are being taught to children through UN programs.

Linked to these detailed policy and negotiating manuals, Family Watch International plays a key role in organizing regular training for civil society and UN delegates. FWI sponsors a yearly Global Family Policy Forum for diplomats that focuses on tactics to negotiate conservative outcomes on social and ‘family issues,’ and how to resist language to affirm rights related to gender and sexuality at the UN. Additionally, the organization works to train CSOs around the world on anti-rights

language and techniques regarding abortion, marriage, homosexuality, sexuality, and ‘other issues affecting the family’.

The 2015 Family Rights Leadership Summit at which ‘Protecting Children’ was launched is one of several closed-door events (and one of a series of events at the World Congress of Families) that bring together CSOs with UN delegates to equip them with the language, tools, and strategies of the U.S. Christian Right’s agenda.¹⁹¹ FWI follows up on these trainings and its networks through its lobbying efforts at the UN, for instance, by sending training participants who are State representatives at the Human Rights Council letters to promote and advocate for their support of regressive resolutions or amendments.¹⁹²

FWI has stated that UN entities are “aggressively promoting broad sexual rights that are harmful... especially to children”

In 2014, FWI helped found the UN Family Rights Caucus, an initiative it now chairs. The Caucus, a group of organizations and individuals “dedicated to defending and protecting the traditional family at the UN,” has been keenly involved with the recent rise of ‘protection of the family’ resolutions at the UN Human Rights Council. The initiative claims to represent government and religious leaders alongside civil society and individuals. Key members also include C-Fam, Jews Offering New Alternatives to Homosexuality (JONAH), and the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH).¹⁹³

In its Declaration to the Human Rights Council, the Caucus advocated against clear articulations of human rights protections for individuals who experience violence in family settings, calling on the HRC to “resist pressures

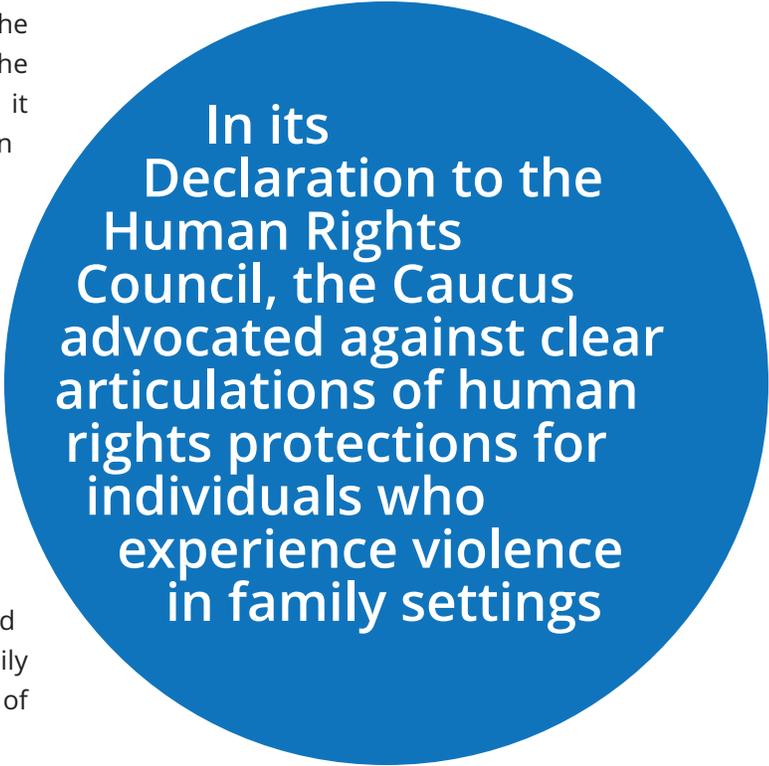
to focus solely on individual rights to the detriment of the family unit,” and stating that as family violence is “the exception rather than the rule,” references to it undermine the family.¹⁹⁴ The Caucus also called upon the Council to “allow nations to address the family according to their own national legislation” rather than universal human rights standards, and to “aggressively resist attempts to force various forms of the family.”¹⁹⁵

COORDINATION/ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHER ANTI-RIGHTS ACTORS

Family Watch International partners with a number of Christian Right civil society organizations in lobbying and advocacy activities at the UN, including the UN Family Rights Caucus and together with the World Congress of Families.

The FWI actively seeks State partners across religious and political boundaries through its training efforts, speaking engagements, and outreach. At the CSW, the organization recently collaborated with delegations from Nigeria, Qatar, Syria, Saint Lucia, and Iran¹⁹⁶, with the Group of Friends of the Family State bloc, and with the Forum Azzahrae for Moroccan Women.

In 2008 FWI was invited to give private briefings to the UN delegates in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), and the African Group, and to subsequently ‘institutionalize’ these briefings and hold them regularly to prepare delegates in these blocs to “protect the family” in further UN negotiations.¹⁹⁷ FWI has also coordinated publicly with other CSOs, the Holy See, and State delegations—including through coalitions with the OIC—on statements and counter-statements on issues related to gender and sexuality at the UN General Assembly.¹⁹⁸



In its Declaration to the Human Rights Council, the Caucus advocated against clear articulations of human rights protections for individuals who experience violence in family settings

2015 AND 2016: MAJOR ACTIVITIES

In addition to its training activities at the World Congress of Families Leadership Summit and in coordinating the Global Family Policy Center, Family Watch International was active in lobbying activities at the UN.

In particular, FWI was active in furthering the ‘protection of the family’ agenda¹⁹⁹ at the Human Rights Council, targeting State delegates with a letter campaign forwarding a sustained defence of the resolution at the 32nd session in June 2016. FWI was also highly active in HRC negotiations on the Promotion of Maternal Mortality, Morbidity and Human Rights resolution at the 33rd session in September 2016, preparing and circulating a mark-up of the text during negotiations (with the Magdalene Institute) that aimed to undermine universal human rights protections with regard to reproductive and sexual health from the final document.

Working with partners such as CitizenGo, FWI organized several calls to action during 2015–2016. In July 2015, jointly with the UN Family Rights Caucus, they issued an alert to supporters upon adoption of the ‘Protection of the Family’ resolution during the 29th session of the Human Rights Council, calling on individuals and organizations to engage in an online letter writing campaign, signing letters to 1) thank nations which voted for the resolution; and 2) to urge countries who didn’t support the 2015 resolution to change their position in the future.²⁰⁰

In conjunction with its 2016 CSW event on ‘Comprehensive Sexuality Education: Sexual Rights Versus Sexual Health – An Expose of Harmful Programs’, which was co-sponsored by the Worldwide Organization of Women, Asociación La Familia Importa and Forum Azzahrae for Moroccan Women, FWI launched its new video called ‘The War on Children: The Comprehensive Sexuality Education Agenda’.²⁰¹ During the CSW, the organization issued another alert requesting members and their networks to sign a petition calling on State

delegations at the CSW to “join with likeminded governments in calling for the UN to stop promoting and cease all funding for CSE.”²⁰²

During negotiations at the HRC on the June 2016 resolution on sexual orientation and gender identity, calling for the creation of a new mandate (Independent Expert) on SOGI, FWI once again issued a broad call to action, distributing a list of talking points “highlighting the serious problems” with the resolution and calling on supporters to sign a letter that requested Member States to vote against the resolution.²⁰³

World Youth Alliance

The World Youth Alliance (WYA) was founded in New York, United States, by Anna Halpine who is Canadian. The organization’s headquarters remain in New York City, but the WYA has also founded regional chapter offices in Nairobi, Quezon City, Brussels, Mexico City, and Beirut.

The founder of the WYA, and a number of its key supporters (such as C-Fam) are Catholic, and the organization often co-hosts UN events with the Holy See, but it aims for broader religious alliances and an inter-faith membership.

BACKGROUND, MISSION, AND KEY OBJECTIVES

The World Youth Alliance (WYA) was founded in 1999 by Anna Halpine to “fight against the dehumanizing, anti-life, anti-family trends of an increasingly decadent Western culture,”²⁰⁴ and in response to the successes of the Youth Coalition at the ICPD+5.²⁰⁵ The Alliance today claims to have a million members, although these numbers are difficult to substantiate.

The mission of the WYA is to promote the “dignity of the person” by building a global coalition of young people

able to “articulate, defend and live the dignity of the person in their lives and influence the communities and world in which they live.”²⁰⁶ The Alliance focuses its advocacy on international policy spaces including the United Nations, the European Union, and the Organization of American States. It focuses on education, global health, social development, economic development, and international policy and human rights.²⁰⁷

At the UN, the World Youth Alliance participates in the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the Commission on Population and Development (CPD), and the Commission on Social Development.

PROGRAMS

Overall, the World Youth Alliance’s programmatic work is divided into advocacy, education, and cultural engagement. The Alliance claims to train hundreds of youth members yearly in the use of diplomacy and negotiation, international relations, grassroots activities, and message development. It also hosts an internship program to encourage youth participation in its work, and organizes a regular Emerging Leaders Conference.²⁰⁸

At the CSW and the CPD, the Alliance aims to work directly with delegates to influence negotiations. The WYA also organizes an annual International Solidarity Forum at the UN, which brings together WYA civil society members and expert speakers, issuing a joint declaration on the theme of the Forum at its conclusion.²⁰⁹

The Alliance also engages in knowledge production and dissemination, creating fact sheets and white papers²¹⁰ to be used by conservative youth activists operating in human rights spaces. Fact sheets focus on ‘the family’, family planning, HIV/AIDS, reproductive health, and sexual education, among other topics.²¹¹



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The WYA also conducts advocacy regarding development, focusing especially on the Latin American context.²¹² They advance entrepreneurship as the solution for development²¹³ and are critical of State interventions in public health—also echoed in their ‘DIY’ approach to women’s health, as below—education and social welfare. To a large extent, this position is shared with neoliberal conservative governments in the region, leading to greater funding for and institutional embedding of the Alliance in these contexts.

COORDINATION/ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHER ANTI-RIGHTS ACTORS

The Alliance has strong links with several Christian Right organizations. The WYA’s co-founder Diana Kilarjian previously worked for C-Fam and was connected to Human Life International.²¹⁴ The organization also works with the Holy See, including to co-host UN events. Halpine remains closely linked to the Vatican, stating that the Pope “has told my generation to build a culture of life. Those are our orders. We’re just following them.”²¹⁵

Additionally, the WYA website is registered to Steve Jalsevac, director of the Campaign Life coalition, and the managing editor of the conservative news website LifeSiteNews.com. Amongst Alliance supporters is Rocco Buttiglione, an Italian politician and ultra-conservative Catholic with a substantial track record of regressive positions on women’s rights, HIV/AIDS, migrants’ rights, LGBTQ issues, and reproductive rights.²¹⁶

2015 AND 2016: MAJOR ACTIVITIES

The World Youth Alliance began several new initiatives in 2015 and 2016. During the 2015 Commission on the Status of Women, WYA launched a sister organization, FEMM, a “comprehensive women’s health program to address the global crisis in women’s health.” The program provides women with information on the reproductive

system and hormones, has developed an app to track health and fertility, and opened a pilot clinic at Ohio State University.²¹⁷ Essentially, the goal of the program is to shift the conversation on reproductive health and human rights towards ‘natural family planning’, and both away from and discouraging access to any other form of contraception.

In 2015, the Alliance launched its ‘Human Dignity Curriculum’, developed as a conservative alternative to comprehensive sexuality education

In 2015, the Alliance also launched its ‘Human Dignity Curriculum.’ Developed as a conservative alternative to comprehensive sexuality education, it claims to provide a “new paradigm of health care for adolescents and women.”²¹⁸ The curriculum is being tested at pilot sites in 20 schools in the U.S., including Malta, New York and Bridgeport, Connecticut; public school districts in Texas and Kansas were expected to adopt the program beginning in fall 2016; and pilot locations for the curriculum were being prepared in Croatia, the Philippines, and South Sudan.

The Alliance’s Annual Report states that it created 21 new chapters in schools and universities worldwide in 2015. The WYA’s Certified Training Program certified 250 young leaders in the program in 2016, and the Alliance conducted Emerging Leaders Conferences in multiple regions in 2015 and 2016, with a total of 440 participants in 2015.²¹⁹

Final note

It is notable that, in terms of anti-rights civil society, the current international human rights landscape is dominated by Christian Evangelical, Mormon, and Catholic CSOs with origins in the global North, with the United States being most visible. Another such organization, the Alliance Defending Freedom, has also increased its engagement not only on the regional level in Latin America, but in UN spaces like the Human Rights Council.

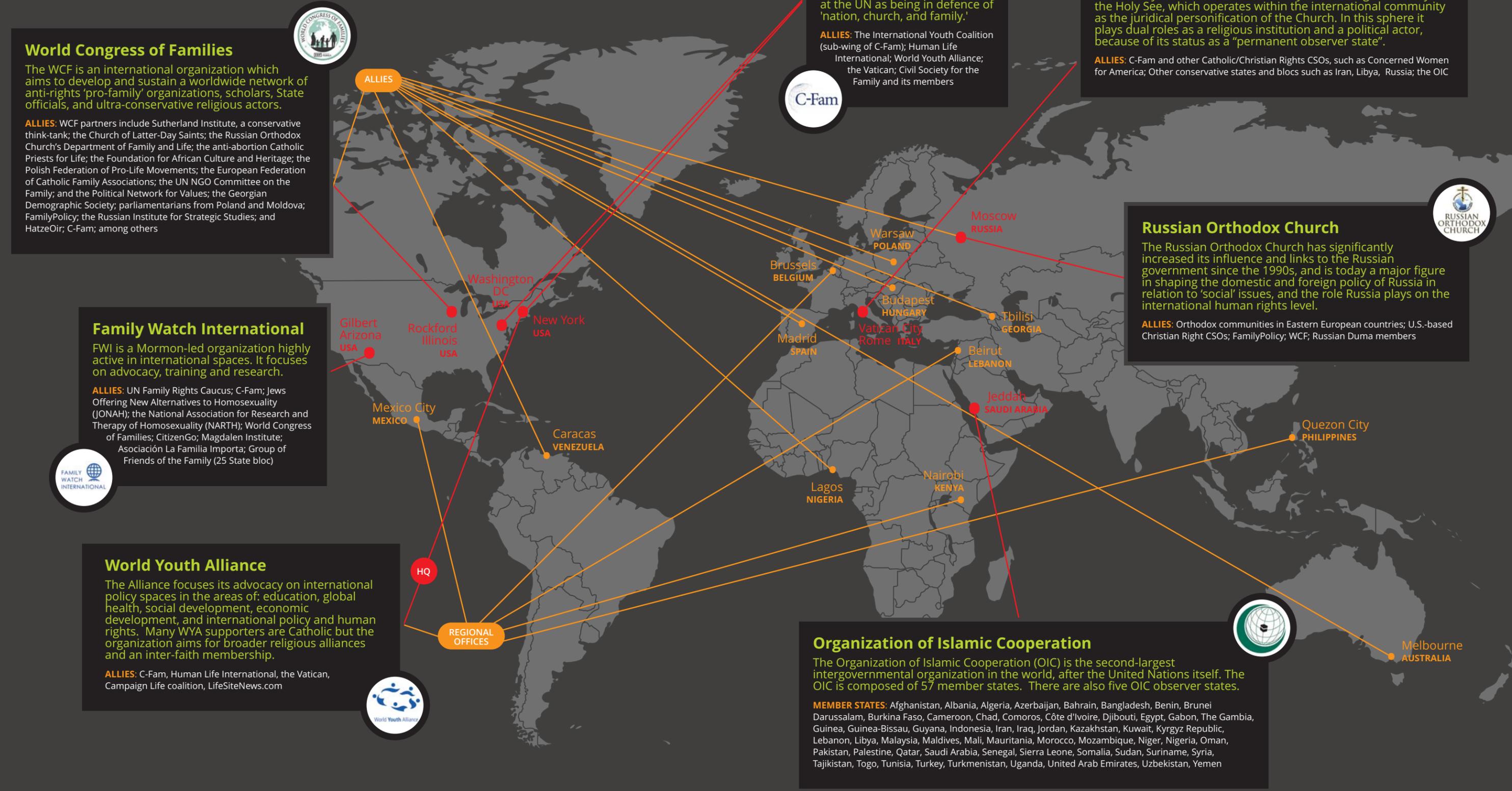
Christian, Evangelical, or Catholic-affiliated NGOs are in the majority amongst faith-defined NGOs with ECOSOC status. In contrast, Muslim or Jewish-affiliated non-governmental actors or Christian-affiliated NGOs from other regions currently play a limited role in lobbying at the UN.²²⁰ This reflects overall CSO trends in which the majority of international non-governmental organizations are based in the global North, and in which a greater percentage of NGOs based in the global South focus on the local/national or regional context.²²¹ It is interesting to note the correlation between both U.S government and CSOs' interests in exporting ideologies and policies worldwide and U.S. Christian-affiliated organizations' higher levels of engagement with and lobbying in the international human rights system to modify its norms and functioning.



In terms of anti-rights civil society, the current international human rights landscape is dominated by Christian Evangelical, Mormon, and Catholic CSOs with origins in the global North

Key Anti-Rights Actors and their Connections

Traditionalist actors from Catholic, Evangelical, Mormon, Russian Orthodox and Muslim faith backgrounds have found **common cause** in a number of shared talking points and advocacy efforts attempting to **push back against feminist gains** at the international level. Regressive actors are organizing **across lines of nationality, religion, sector, and issue**, towards the formation of a **transnational community** of political actors undermining rights related to gender and sexuality.



World Congress of Families

The WCF is an international organization which aims to develop and sustain a worldwide network of anti-rights 'pro-family' organizations, scholars, State officials, and ultra-conservative religious actors.

ALLIES: WCF partners include Sutherland Institute, a conservative think-tank; the Church of Latter-Day Saints; the Russian Orthodox Church's Department of Family and Life; the anti-abortion Catholic Priests for Life; the Foundation for African Culture and Heritage; the Polish Federation of Pro-Life Movements; the European Federation of Catholic Family Associations; the UN NGO Committee on the Family; and the Political Network for Values; the Georgian Demographic Society; parliamentarians from Poland and Moldova; FamilyPolicy; the Russian Institute for Strategic Studies; and HatzeOir; C-Fam; among others



C-Fam (Center for Family and Human Rights)

C-Fam is a Catholic organization that operates primarily in multilateral spaces, with a focus on lobbying, media, and information dissemination. The organization describes its work at the UN as being in defence of 'nation, church, and family.'

ALLIES: The International Youth Coalition (sub-wing of C-Fam); Human Life International; World Youth Alliance; the Vatican; Civil Society for the Family and its members



The Vatican

Vatican City is the world's smallest 'city-state'. It is governed by the Holy See, which operates within the international community as the juridical personification of the Church. In this sphere it plays dual roles as a religious institution and a political actor, because of its status as a "permanent observer state".

ALLIES: C-Fam and other Catholic/Christian Rights CSOs, such as Concerned Women for America; Other conservative states and blocs such as Iran, Libya, Russia; the OIC



Russian Orthodox Church

The Russian Orthodox Church has significantly increased its influence and links to the Russian government since the 1990s, and is today a major figure in shaping the domestic and foreign policy of Russia in relation to 'social' issues, and the role Russia plays on the international human rights level.

ALLIES: Orthodox communities in Eastern European countries; U.S.-based Christian Right CSOs; FamilyPolicy; WCF; Russian Duma members



Family Watch International

FWI is a Mormon-led organization highly active in international spaces. It focuses on advocacy, training and research.

ALLIES: UN Family Rights Caucus; C-Fam; Jews Offering New Alternatives to Homosexuality (JONAH); the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH); World Congress of Families; CitizenGo; Magdalen Institute; Asociación La Familia Importa; Group of Friends of the Family (25 State bloc)



World Youth Alliance

The Alliance focuses its advocacy on international policy spaces in the areas of: education, global health, social development, economic development, and international policy and human rights. Many WYA supporters are Catholic but the organization aims for broader religious alliances and an inter-faith membership.

ALLIES: C-Fam, Human Life International, the Vatican, Campaign Life coalition, LifeSiteNews.com



Organization of Islamic Cooperation

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is the second-largest intergovernmental organization in the world, after the United Nations itself. The OIC is composed of 57 member states. There are also five OIC observer states.

MEMBER STATES: Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Benin, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Gabon, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyz Republic, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Suriname, Syria, Tajikistan, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Yemen



3. State actors

Russian Orthodox Church

BACKGROUND AND LINKS TO THE STATE

The Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) has increased its influence and links to the Russian government significantly since the 1990s. Today it is a major figure shaping the domestic and foreign policy of Russia in relation to ‘social’ issues, as well as the role Russia plays in the international human rights arena. Analysts have argued that after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the ROC and the Russian political regime have worked together in a quest for status at home and abroad. Specifically, the Orthodox Church has capitalized on its State support by promoting “traditional values” to deepen relations with predominantly Orthodox countries.²²²

In the wake of a legitimization crisis in the beginning of the 1990s, a more significant relationship with the Russian Orthodox Church served the Russian government’s desire to strengthen their mandate. Early signs of increased State support for the Church arose in the Religious Freedom Act of 1997, which, in a manner emulated by many anti-rights actors now active at the UN, subverted the language of ‘religious freedom’ to undermine freedom of conscience. The act acknowledged a “special role” for the ROC in Russian society.

In 2009, military chaplains were first introduced in the Russian army. In 2010, a new law on the “Return of Property of a Religious Character Held by the State or the Municipalities to Religious Organizations,” came into force. In 2011, religious faculties and seminars were given governmental accreditation to grant academic degrees. Then, in 2012, Orthodox religion was introduced into school curricula. In mass protests against the national government in the winter of 2011–2012, the Church

provided President Putin with tacit support, a factor that may have led to the warming of relations between Church and State moving forward.

Today the Russian Orthodox Church is a major figure shaping the domestic and foreign policy of Russia in relation to ‘social’ issues, as well as the role Russia plays in the international human rights arena

At the turn of the century, the Russian Federation experienced both a serious socio-economic crisis and an erosion of geopolitical power vis-a-vis the United States and Western Europe marked by the end of the Cold War. It was in this context that religious traditionalism began to grow. This movement coalesced around a new national ideal, one defined in opposition to ‘the West’, with its value deriving from the traditions of the past, and based on a constructed notion of a static, monolithic national culture. A reorientation towards traditionalism benefited both the ROC, through increased social and political power, and the Russian government, which could harness this narrative and bolster its legitimacy through proximity to the symbol of traditional values—the Church.

‘Traditional values’ have a central and broad-based appeal to the Russian Church and State; as such, they have taken on a prominent role in their advocacy regarding international human rights. It also fits into another key trend: the argument of fundamental cultural, social, and civilizational differences from ‘the West’, and an attempted invalidation of universal human rights on those grounds. The revival of ‘tradition’, in turn, is often conflated with conservative religious interpretations and institutions. This can be seen in many of Putin’s speeches,

in which traditional values are conflated with religious values, specifically Russian Orthodoxy.²²³

On the domestic level, the ROC's rising influence, as bound to furthering traditional values, can be traced over the past decade. Regional anti-LGBT propaganda laws were passed as early as 2006.²²⁴ After 11 regional laws had been passed, the federal law prohibiting so-called LGBT propaganda—i.e. showing same-sex relationships as equal to heterosexual relationships—was introduced.²²⁵ Yelena Mizulina, a leading proponent of the law, presented the language of LGBT rights as Western-associated and deviant; she is now the head of the Duma committee on the family.²²⁶

'Traditional values' have a central and broad-based appeal to the Russian Church and State; as such, they have taken on a prominent role in their advocacy regarding international human rights

Similar anti-rights legislation targeting women, girls, and people with non-conforming sexual orientation or gender identity or expression has been successful. In 2010, amendments to the Law on Protection of Children from Information Harmful to their Health and Development restricted information on same-sex relationships that can be included in mass media for children.²²⁷ In 2011, the Russian government began restricting the ability of medical clinics to discuss abortions.²²⁸ The Duma passed a law banning foreign same-sex couples from adopting children in Russia in June 2013, and in February 2014 a government decree banned unmarried individuals from countries where same-sex marriage is legal from adopting Russian children.²²⁹

Following the Pussy Riot protest in the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, in 2012 the federal government passed a law

criminalizing 'offending religious feelings', further consolidating the power of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Unfortunately, similar trends are likely to continue. In September 2016, ROC Patriarch Kirill released a statement relaying that the Church had met with anti-abortion campaigners and signed a petition to be handed to President Putin.²³⁰ The petition called for a total ban on abortion. In February 2017 President Putin signed a bill into law decriminalizing certain forms of domestic violence.²³¹ The author of the anti-LGBT propaganda law (who has strong links to the World Congress of Families), Yelena Mizulina, sponsored the decriminalization bill.²³²

TRADITIONAL VALUES IN ROC DOCTRINE

In developing and refining its traditional values agenda for the international stage, the Russian Orthodox Church has operated as a 'norm entrepreneur' playing a key role in human rights debates.²³³

A number of texts and statements indicate that the Church has moved past a wholesale opposition to the concept of human rights as a Western invention

Reflecting other recent shifts worldwide in conservative opposition to human rights norms, the relationship between the ROC's (and Russian government's) notion of traditional values and human rights has evolved since the early 2000s. A number of texts and statements indicate that the Church has moved past a wholesale opposition to the concept of human rights as a Western invention—although remnants of this earlier approach continue—to co-opting the language of rights to shape them into a regressive conception.

Central to this approach is the Church's focus on article 29 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states:

*in the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.*²³⁴

For example, in 2006 Patriarch Kirill of the ROC declared, "The upholding of moral standards must become a social cause. It is the mechanism of human rights that can activate this return [of spiritual needs to the public realm]." He went on to state, "I am speaking of a *return*, for the norm of according human rights with traditional morality can be found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights."²³⁵

This approach has allowed the Church to position itself as a leader in norm production, as if it were at the vanguard of a novel understanding of human rights which centres on the importance of morality, duties, and community

This approach has allowed the Church to position itself as a leader in norm production as well as in the transmission and support of traditional values, as if it were at the vanguard of a novel understanding of human rights which centres on the importance of morality, duties, and community.²³⁶ This understanding is still defined against a Western conception of human rights—which includes, for instance, the right of non-discrimination against women, girls, and those with

non-conforming sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression—but works within the same framework and aims to make gains for traditionalism in the realm of competing understandings.

The ROC thus argues that the source of human rights is "traditional values rooted in all world religions."²³⁷ This framing allows the ROC to widen its norms leadership beyond Russia—bringing in support from some OIC countries, China, and some countries from the African bloc—and to insert the notion of traditional values into human rights advocacy, promoting a unique form of Russian influence in the international policy sphere. This has led to a series of 'traditional values' resolutions at the Human Rights Council and an ongoing discourse grounded in this framing at the UN.

At the HRC, Russia is also at the forefront in putting forward hostile amendments to progressive resolutions, such as maternal mortality; protection of civil society space; human rights defenders working on economic, social, and cultural rights; the right to peaceful protest; and human rights on the internet.

COORDINATION AND ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHER ANTI-RIGHTS ACTORS

The Russian Orthodox Church has significant and growing links with conservative actors around the world who are employing arguments based on tradition, religion, culture, and national sovereignty. For those familiar with their joint sponsorship of regressive resolutions, Russia's status of an Observer State with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation will not come as an enormous surprise.

The Russian Orthodox Church, supporting Russian objectives to achieve regional influence and dominance, has also boosted its relationships with Orthodox communities in Eastern Europe in particular.²³⁸ Religious fundamentalisms have gained power in countries such

as Poland²³⁹ and Hungary²⁴⁰, creating the basis for greater multilateral collaboration. These changes in national governments have begun to complicate EU bloc positioning in international policy.

Russia still defines itself to some extent in opposition to the United States in international human rights spaces, although it remains to be seen how changes in the U.S. administration in 2017 might shift this dynamic.²⁴¹ There are longstanding connections between many U.S.-based Christian Right CSOs and the ROC and Russian officials. As noted in the section on the World Congress of Families, Alexey Komov, who is connected to the Russian Orthodox Church and founder of the conservative CSO FamilyPolicy, is a board member of the WCF. Komov also co-organized the 2016 World Congress in Tbilisi, Georgia, consolidating connections with the Georgian Orthodox Church.

WCF Managing Director Larry Jacobs made reference to the warm relations between U.S. CSOs and the ROC when he declared in 2013, "The Russians might be the Christian saviors of the world."²⁴² Franklin Graham, a prominent U.S. Evangelical leader, has also recently claimed that Russia is "protecting traditional Christianity."²⁴³ Returning the compliment, Patriarch Kirill of the ROC has argued that U.S. Protestants and Catholics who defend the 'natural family' are "confessors of the faith."²⁴⁴ More broadly, there is increased evidence of warming links between U.S. Evangelicals and the ROC.²⁴⁵

Aside from warm words, relationships between the WCF and its partners and Russian officials are strong enough to withstand domestic U.S. criticism of Russia's military actions in the Ukraine. Rebranded a regional conference on "Large Families: the Future of Humanity," the World Congress VIII went ahead in Moscow with U.S. WCF leaders remaining involved on the organizing committee. Russian oligarchs funded the meeting, and Duma member and author of the federal anti-LGBT 'propaganda' law, Yelena Mizulina, was a featured speaker.

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**These changes
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Chapter Two
**Key opposition
discourses**

Background

Actors using arguments based on anti-rights interpretations of religion, culture, tradition, and rhetoric linked to State sovereignty have made significant strides in implementing and institutionalizing their regressive agenda at the UN in recent years. As any participant or witness of policy negotiations will note, the ‘battle for rights’ is fought in large part on the level of language and rhetoric. Many conservative actors have creatively and effectively regrouped in this area, with increased success towards achieving their goal of undermining rights related to gender and sexuality.

Ultra-conservative actors—civil society, intergovernmental, State and religious institutions—have developed and now employ a range of discourses in international human rights policy spaces. Arguments tend to manipulate concepts related to religion, culture, tradition, and national sovereignty to further their regressive and paradigm-shifting objectives. These misleading discourses run counter to universal human rights standards and are at times internally incoherent. Frequently, the principles they espouse are not even borne out in the domestic policies of sponsoring States. Yet, they are increasingly effective.

In order to bolster their effectiveness and adapt to the international human rights sphere, anti-rights actors have moved away from arguments that are couched explicitly in religious language, and from former blocking tactics—although the latter do persist to some degree. Increasingly we hear conservative actors speaking in the language of human rights, albeit a misleading and innovative co-optation of human rights language and norms. On the domestic and international levels, we are witnessing a rise in development of and recourse to regressive arguments based on so-called social science.

This change in discursive strategy is an example of traditionalist power trying to preserve itself in the wake of changing power relations. Although they refer always

to a pure, monolithic, and unchanging tradition, religious fundamentalisms paradoxically are products of modernity. In the international human rights context, we are now witnessing the way in which religious conservatives, in resisting and organizing against what they perceive as a ‘crisis of the family’ driven by modernity and globalization—as well as their critique of the market side of globalization—in turn become global and modern, operating in international policy spaces and across regional boundaries, and mirroring the movements they seek to counter.

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This tactic of reactive politicization²⁴⁶ lies at the heart of the international religious right’s rhetorical mutations. A slippery engagement with ‘secularized’ language and employment of human rights terminology previously derided is key.

Additionally, in order to build and maintain alliances across regions and religions, anti-rights actors at the UN are generating messaging around shared interests—life, family, and nation—and core concepts and concerns. Key overarching themes include national sovereignty, the family, life, gender, and a particular conception of religious freedom.

To facilitate and foster this collaboration, and have a greater effect upon human rights norms and standards, conservative actors are endeavoring to develop their own holistic and integrated approaches to human rights advocacy, linking many of their arguments into omnibus concepts that comprise multiple elements.

1. Protection of the family

Primary amongst these anti-rights omnibus concepts is 'protection of the family'. This discourse has emerged in force as a unifying theme amongst conservative actors at the UN, particularly over the past three years, and looks likely to remain present for some time. It is a strategic and useful framework to house multiple patriarchal and anti-rights positions, where the framework, in turn, aims to justify and institutionalize these positions. The overarching concept of protection of the family has often been used successfully, especially at the Human Rights Council in Geneva. This discourse is a key example of the religious right's move towards holistic and integrated advocacy, binding together disparate narratives, histories, themes, and rights-foci under a seemingly innocuous umbrella term.

The family narrative put forth in international human rights debates has bound together conservative actors who are collaborating across regional, religious, and institutional boundaries. Civil society organizations, such as Family Watch International, the UN Family Rights Caucus, C-Fam, Civil Society for the Family, CitizenGo, the World Youth Alliance, and the World Congress of Families are prominent in production and dissemination of related talking points, campaigns, and convenings. Indeed, its focus on the 'traditional family' has enabled the U.S. Christian Right to forge global alliances with other conservative religious movements.²⁴⁷ On the State level, the 25-member Group of Friends of the Family, launched in February 2015, is devoted explicitly to furthering the interests of 'the family' in international human rights negotiations and to mainstreaming this restrictive, patriarchal, and heteronormative conception of family through UN processes. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation is a major proponent of the 'traditional family' and the current discourse owes much to the Holy See's valorization of the 'natural family' over the years.

Although they refer always to a pure, monolithic, and unchanging tradition, religious fundamentalisms paradoxically are products of modernity

The family narrative put forth in international human rights debates has bound together ultra-conservative actors who are collaborating across regional, religious, and institutional boundaries

The notion of protection of the family found its institutional inspiration and grounding in the organizing around the tenth anniversary of the UN Year of the Family in 2004. As noted above, both the U.S. religious right and the Holy See have frequently situated their opposition to rights related to gender and sexuality within a larger aim of protecting the so-called natural family. Far from a celebration of the diverse forms of families around the world, this form of ‘pro-family’ politics at the domestic and international level centres on a very particular form of family—a father, a mother, and their children—with a clear hierarchy and power structure.

The language of the resolutions thus affirms a unitary, non-inclusive, hierarchical, and traditional conception of the family that discriminates against family forms which fall outside these rigid boundaries

The anniversary of the International Year of the Family (IYF + 10) provided the first clear opportunity for anti-rights actors to advance this platform on the global stage and to further coalition-building. Filling the vacuum left by the general disinterest in the anniversary on the part of the UN and NGO communities, conservative Mormon NGOs led the IYF + 10 Committee. The Mormon NGOs worked with the government of Qatar to host a conference in celebration of the occasion at the invitation of Ambassador Al-Nassar, who had heard of U.S. NGO advocacy at a summer training session for UN delegates run by the World Family Policy Center, a precursor to FWI’s annual trainings.²⁴⁸ Qatar was the head of the G-77 bloc at the time, which broadened opportunities for network-building amongst conservative activists during the planning process.

The planning process resulted in the Doha International Conference for the Family in November 2004, and was also preceded by additional networking opportunities in the shape of two regional dialogues in Geneva and Kuala Lumpur, intended to build consensus amongst ‘pro-family’ advocates.²⁴⁹ The conference issued the first of many transnational documents on the family, called the Doha Declaration.²⁵⁰

Fast forward to the conversation on protection of the family today, and the concept has taken hold. It has now been the subject of a series of Human Rights Council resolutions in 2014, 2015, and 2016. This discourse is antithetical to human rights norms and standards in several ways. The language of the resolutions, in particular, operates to shift the subject of human rights to already powerful institutions, namely the family rather than individual family members. The resolutions, which are theoretically intended to protect international human rights, do not recognize the rights of vulnerable family members to non-discrimination, autonomy, and freedom from violence in the context of family relations. Nor do they recognize that families and family life must be free from coercion.

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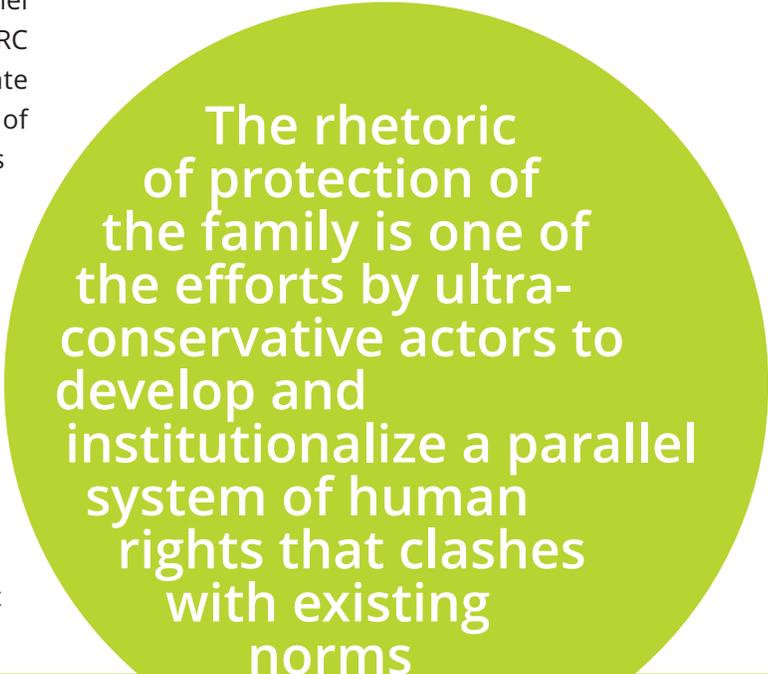
State sponsors of the resolutions have pushed back attempts to define the family in line with agreed language on the diversity of families. The language of the resolutions thus affirms a unitary, non-inclusive, hierarchical, and traditional conception of the family that discriminates against family forms which fall outside these rigid boundaries.

The rhetoric, and these resolutions, repeatedly affirm the role of the family in social cohesion and in preserving morality, religious and cultural traditions, without regard to these traditions and norms' consistency with international human rights legal standards.²⁵¹ Another theme is the exclusion—or instrumentalization, as in the 2016 HRC resolution focusing on disability²⁵²—of the rights of marginalized groups and communities from this protective framework.

In brief, this discourse is framed to endow patriarchal institutions and regressive traditions with human rights protections. The rhetoric is opposed to human rights standards and the universality of rights in a number of ways: violating rights to anti-discrimination and to equality; rights to freely consent to and choose one's marriage partner; the right to marriage for all on the basis of non-discrimination; the principle of the diversity of family structures worldwide; the right to bodily autonomy and protection from intimate partner and domestic violence, including child abuse; State obligations to respond to and prevent all forms of harmful practices, and to eliminate gender stereotypes; and the elimination of discrimination against women in all matters relating to family relations.²⁵³

Many of these serious issues have been raised by Member States, UN experts, and even by the very panel and OHCHR report called for in the 2014 and 2015 HRC resolutions; however, they have been ignored by State sponsors in negotiations. The rhetoric of protection of the family is one of the efforts by conservative actors to develop and institutionalize a parallel system of human rights that clashes with existing norms and standards, including in the areas of gender-based violence and child rights.

Meetings, declarative statements, and advocacy employing this discourse have multiplied over the past three years. The HRC resolutions progressed from procedural to substantive from 2014 to 2015 and 2016, growing significantly in length, scope, and number of operational paragraphs. They represent



The rhetoric of protection of the family is one of the efforts by ultra-conservative actors to develop and institutionalize a parallel system of human rights that clashes with existing norms

evolving attempts by anti-rights actors to mainstream or embed the protection of the family rhetoric in multiple spaces, and in connection with a number of rights foci. Led by Belarus, the Group of Friends of the Family and non-State allies sought—less successfully—to force an acknowledgement of the role of the family in 2015 General Assembly resolutions on youth and the SDGs. In addition, multiple events at the CSW have highlighted interconnections between family and sustainable development, which was also the focus of the 2015 Council resolution.

In June 2016 the sponsors of the Human Rights Council resolution—without any substantive consultation with disability rights groups—focused on disability rights in the resolution, positing that human rights for persons with disabilities are promoted by “policies and measures to protect the family.”²⁵⁴ As with ongoing interconnections made with rights discourses on violence against women, the right to development, and trafficking, this was an example of anti-rights actors’ attempts to foster linkages with existing rights discourses to further the reach and attractiveness of the regressive language included therein.

This discourse is gaining traction in international human rights policy spaces, in large part due to its innocuous and emotive framing. The 2016 Council resolution received substantially more State support than in 2015, with 32 votes in favour, 12 against, and three abstentions. Reports indicate that several Latin American delegations have said they cannot vote against the resolution despite their concerns about the rhetoric, as a vote against family would be criticized on the domestic level. After years in which language on a unitary concept of ‘the family’ was knocked out during negotiations, in 2016 a reference to the family made it to the final text of the Agreed Conclusions at the CSW, which was then promptly referenced as agreed language by sponsors of the 2016 Council resolution.

Conservative actors have developed and shared numerous training materials and talking points employing this discourse to support advocacy, including the Civil Society for the Family’s “Articles on the Family”²⁵⁵, the World Congress of Families’ “World Family Declaration”²⁵⁶, the Group of Friends of the Family’s statement in support of the family²⁵⁷, and multiple policy briefs from Family Watch International and the UN Family Rights caucus, including “Various Forms of the Family”²⁵⁸ and “Binding Obligations on States to Protect the Family.”²⁵⁹

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Next on the horizon was an intersessional seminar²⁶⁰ launched by the 2016 HRC resolution. In order to continue regular engagement and dialogue at the Council on the topic of protection of the family, the resolution called for a one-day intersessional seminar on “the impact of the implementation by States of their obligations under relevant provisions of international human rights law with regard to the protection of the family on the role of the family in supporting the protection and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities,” and to “discuss challenges and best practices in this regard.”²⁶¹ The resolution further requested that the High Commissioner for Human Rights present a report on the seminar at its 35th session in June 2017.²⁶²

2. Right to life

The right to life is a non-derogable human right, expressed in various customary, binding, and soft international human rights law²⁶³ instruments. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) represents the primary binding variant. Article 6(1) reads, “Every human being has the inherent right to life. This right shall be protected by law. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life.”²⁶⁴

As noted above, the Holy See and a number of U.S. Christian Right organizations have described their primary human rights foci as life, family, and nation. As such, these actors seek to appropriate the right to life in service of an anti-abortion mission. In this rhetorical move, the Vatican attempts to couple the right to life set out in the ICCPR and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights²⁶⁵ with its own doctrinal caveat that human life begins at the moment of conception.²⁶⁶

The Vatican mission at the UN has doubled down on this misleading discourse, claiming that “no compromise can be made with a person’s right to life itself, from conception to natural death,” and that these ethical values are fundamental, the “common patrimony of universal morality.”²⁶⁷

Allied organizations, such as Family Watch International, parrot this revisionist interpretation, including in efforts to influence the UN Human Rights Committee. They have argued (without substantiation) that “the human rights of the unborn child were clearly recognized in the foundation of modern international human rights law,”²⁶⁸ citing the UDHR article 3, ICCPR article 6(1), and the mirror clause in the International Covenant on Persons with Disabilities,²⁶⁹ alongside protections included in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). FWI argues that CRC’s right of every child to life²⁷⁰, and the preambular comment that the child needs special safeguards before as well as after birth²⁷¹, should be read



These actors seek to appropriate the right to life in service of an anti-abortion mission

together with the UDHR's right to life clause, and in light of the prohibition of abortion by some States to imply that the right to life begins at conception.²⁷²

The right to life is a strategic site from which to attempt to ground an anti-abortion norm, as it cannot be violated under any circumstances and is a binding legal standard. However, the notion that the right to life begins at conception has no support outside of some doctrinal texts and Christian Right talking points. The Human Rights Committee has no jurisprudence or interpretive texts that extend the right to life before birth. Moreover, the preparatory documents for the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights demonstrate that article 6 was not intended to extend its protections prior to birth²⁷³, and regional human rights jurisprudence also suggests that a fetus does not enjoy the right to life.²⁷⁴

Additionally, no universal human rights instrument has provided that a right to life applies before birth. In contrast, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights," where preparatory materials indicate that 'born' was used intentionally to confirm that the rights set forth in the UDHR are inherent from the moment of birth.²⁷⁵

3. Sexual rights

Comprehensive sexuality education

Anti-rights actors employ various rhetorical devices in their campaign to undermine sexual rights, commonly suggesting: that they do not exist; that they are new rights that have no foundation in the UDHR; that they cause harm to children and society; or that they are in opposition to culture, tradition, or national laws. A major target of their discursive attack on rights related to gender and sexuality is comprehensive sexuality education.

Conservative actors engaged in advocacy at the UN claim that CSE violates 'parental rights', harms children, and is not education but ideological indoctrination

Conservative actors engaged in advocacy at the UN attack the right to comprehensive sexuality education from several directions, with fairly unified and consistent messaging. They claim that CSE violates 'parental rights', harms children, and is not education but ideological indoctrination. They also claim that comprehensive sexuality education is disguised as real education and that it is pushed on children, parents, and the United Nations by powerful lobbyists seeking to profit from services they provide to children and youth, i.e. that the motivation for CSE is mercenary.

For example, the StopCSE campaign²⁷⁶ argues that "in order to protect children we must protect the rights of parents to guide their children's education including sexuality education," and that "if the vast majority of

parents understood what CSE programs contained, they would never allow their children to be exposed."²⁷⁷ This framing is in line with the anti-rights prioritization of parental authority figures over the rights of children, as understood and upheld by the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

When speaking of so-called harm to children through exposure to comprehensive sexuality education, conservative advocates argue that children are at inevitable risk from CSE because it: teaches children to masturbate; promotes 'high risk sexual behaviours'; promotes sexual pleasure and 'promiscuity'; encourages acceptance and exploration of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities; promotes condoms to children "without informing them of their failure rates"; promotes abortion as safe "and without consequences"; and promotes "disrespect for parents and religious and cultural values."²⁷⁸ Furthermore, anti-CSE materials claim that "one of the main goals of CSE is to radically change the gender and sexual norms of society and to establish rights for children as sexually autonomous beings" and CSE serves to indoctrinate children in "radical sexual ideologies and behaviours that conflict with the religious and cultural values of most people."²⁷⁹

Anti-rights activists further attempt to push the panic button by arguing that this form of education is forced through by "the paid lobbyists of multi-million dollar organizations and businesses"²⁸⁰—Planned Parenthood is a frequent target—driven by the profit impulse to force CSE on children. Conservative groups and delegates also employ 'slippery slope' arguments to imply that access to comprehensive sexuality education leads inevitably to sexual exploitation, family breakdown, and various forms of involvement with pornography.



Opposition to rights related to sexual orientation and gender identity has proliferated

Sexual orientation and gender identity

Opposition to rights related to sexual orientation and gender identity has proliferated. A common argument against SOGI is that of invalidation, i.e. that equal human rights do not extend to all persons; that application of long-standing human rights principles and law on this issue constitutes the creation of 'new rights'; and that the meaning of rights should vary radically because they should be interpreted through the lens of 'culture' or 'national particularities.'

In part, this discourse is founded on the arguments that same-sex attraction is a) morally wrong; b) not genetically fixed or unchangeable; c) dangerous to one's sexual and physical health²⁸¹; and d) best 'fixed' through sexual orientation change efforts, or 'conversion therapy',²⁸² as it is a deviation caused by some rupture or abuse in a child's formative stages. To attempt to substantiate these arguments, anti-rights actors scour social science sources for misleading language to support these claims, create their own pseudo-science journals,²⁸³ and develop relationships with conservative think tanks, often based in religious U.S. colleges.²⁸⁴

The recent slew of hostile amendments proposed in response to the 2016 SOGI resolution at the Human Rights Council illustrates dominant narratives used at the UN by regressive opposition.²⁸⁵ Taken together, the proposed amendments represent these tropes: arguments based on national sovereignty and reference to national laws, arguments based on cultural and religious values or "sensitivities," the argument of coercion, and most centrally, the argument of non-universality.²⁸⁶

With respect to the former, for example, one hostile amendment stated that the resolution on sexual orientation and gender identity should be implemented, "while ensuring respect for the sovereign right of each country as well as its national laws." Amendments also

called for "respect for...the various religious and ethical values and cultural backgrounds of its people," and calling on the "importance of respecting regional, cultural and religious value systems as well as particularities." Pakistan, on behalf of the OIC, highlighted the "fundamental importance of respecting relevant domestic debates at the national level" with reference to "historical, cultural, social and religious sensitivities."

As part of the invalidation thesis, the amendments reflect a trend that flips the concept of universality on its head, in effect co-opting the principle of universality to mean the converse. In this rhetoric, 'universal' or 'fundamental' is used not to highlight the full applicability of all human rights standards to all human beings as upheld in the Vienna Declaration and a multiplicity of binding human rights standards, but to demarcate a limited subset of rights that are 'truly' universal, relegating all others to the realm of subjectivity and cultural relativism.²⁸⁷ The hostile amendments, for instance, employ this second usage when they call for "full conformity with universally recognized international human rights," and take this a step further in arguing that:

[A]ny attempt to undermine the international human rights system by seeking to impose concepts or notions pertaining to social matters... that fall outside the internationally agreed human rights legal framework...taking into account that such attempts constitute an expression of disregard for the universality of human rights.²⁸⁸

4. Reproductive health and rights

Population control

In the name of promoting reproductive health... the proposed UN policy amounts to nothing less than the foreign imposition of a radical Western agenda on the poorest and most vulnerable members of society, and a blatant attempt to interfere with the national sovereignty of developing countries.

– Population Research Institute²⁸⁹

Christian Right organizations, largely based in the United States, have been mobilizing against reproductive rights and health alongside the Holy See and other anti-rights allies for several years. Their campaign against bodily autonomy and integrity has a number of faces. One popular rhetorical move—familiar to many who have attended these events at the Commission on the Status of Women—is the argument that reproductive rights are at heart a form of Western-imposed population control over countries in the global South. At the same time, this claim often originates from U.S. and Western Europe-affiliated actors, many of whom are active in messianic endeavors to export their fundamentalist discourses and policies to States in the Caribbean and Africa, for instance. This is another example of the appropriation of anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism by anti-rights forces at the UN. In turn, the co-optation of these arguments renders the work of global South sexual rights activists who support anti-imperialist struggles much more difficult.

Anti-rights actors argue that the fulfillment of reproductive rights is at root about the imposition of an imperialist Western policy of population reduction on the global South, where the former impose “their own misguided worldview on developing nations by denigrating marriage and



Anti-rights actors argue that the fulfillment of reproductive rights is at root about the imposition of an imperialist Western policy of population reduction on the global South

families, and encouraging promiscuous behavior.”²⁹⁰ The Population Research Institute, for example, claims that “today’s feminist jargon” hides a “New Global Racism” focused on reducing population in developing regions.²⁹¹

Conservative lobbyists present the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and reproductive rights activists and organizations as a sinister cabal motivated by racism, as above, as well as an urge towards Western dominance by artificial suppression of fertility rates in the global South,²⁹² and a mercenary interest, i.e. benefiting from the “lucrative population control agenda.”²⁹³

This presents a compelling narrative: feminists and family planning advocates are invalidated by their racism and self-interest, and it is argued that they work not on behalf of all women, but for Western women, while global South women’s wants, needs, and rights are sacrificed to their feminist social policy.²⁹⁴ In this way, Christian Right actors argue that theirs is a more progressive, authentic, and compassionate stance. In addition, the intermingling of this narrative with the question of development assistance and the right to development (versus reproductive rights) as an either-or proposition presents religious right actors as more sympathetic to global South human rights interests and concerns. This intermingling of discourses broadens inter-regional and interfaith alliances amongst the religious right.

Use of scientific discourses and data on the impact of abortion

As mentioned above, a dominant narrative around abortion led by the Holy See is to argue that it violates the right to life, and that a prenatal right to life exists. Christian Right activists are deeply invested in opposing abortion, and their advocacy at the UN includes additional tropes. Dominant among these is the reliance on ‘scientific’ arguments from ultra-conservative think tanks, and from sources that rely on unsound research methodologies, suggesting abortion causes an array of

psychological, sexual, physical, and relational side effects. According to one organization’s talking points, “abortion is not a reproductive right, it’s a reproductive wrong.”²⁹⁵

The ‘Abortion is the UnChoice’ campaign claims, for instance, that suicide rates are six times higher amongst girls and women who have had an abortion.²⁹⁶ Based on misleading quotes and framing and dubious science, anti-rights activists claim that teens who have had an abortion are more likely to be admitted to a mental health hospital; are more likely to seek help in the future for psychological and emotional problems; and are more likely to abuse alcohol or cocaine.²⁹⁷

According to one organization’s talking points, “abortion is not a reproductive right, it’s a reproductive wrong”

Conservative actors in human rights spaces claim that abortion poses significant health risks, including complications during the procedure, and that abortion increases the risk of cancer and long-term damage to reproductive organs. In CSO and delegate trainings, online, and in pamphlets and fliers distributed during UN events, anti-abortion activists disseminate a regular, detailed stream of misinformation about the impact of abortion on women and girls.

5. Protection of children and parental rights

Anti-rights actors have developed a discourse that seeks to pit “parental rights” and the “protection of children” against sexual and reproductive rights. In anti-CSE fear mongering at the UN, the overarching narrative is flexible enough to embed defence of the ‘traditional family’ and mitigate against children’s rights to autonomy and protections from violence and abuse.

Similar to its opposition to the category of women’s rights, the Christian Right and Holy See, among others, are opposed to children’s rights as protected in binding legal standards. This is because they perceive them as threatening to their hierarchical and traditional concept of the family. In this view, child rights undermine the rights of parents—particularly fathers, who are considered the head of the family.

Just as the religious right is attempting to construct a new category of ‘protection of the family’ in the human rights world, it is also attempting to construct a new category of ‘parental rights,’ which has no support in existing human rights standards. Paradoxically, it endeavours to use the rights protections with which children are endowed, as articulated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to support the rights of parents to control their children and delimit their rights.

The UN Family Rights Caucus statement, entitled “A Declaration on the Rights of Children and their Families”²⁹⁸ argues that “every child has the right to the protection and guidance of their parents,”²⁹⁹ while structuring its argument to undermine the rights of children—i.e. that violations of child rights under the CRC are instead the fulfillment of a child’s right to parental protection. Notably, this clause does two things: 1) present a misleading and skewed interpretation of the



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rights standards it cites; and 2) attempt to erode the rights of children, to the extent of openly limiting their rights to State protection in cases of abuse.

The Declaration states, “Only in cases of extreme abuse or neglect shall the State have the right to intervene in the parent/child relationship,” referring to article 9 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Declaration as a whole—and the concept of parental rights in general—ignores the existence of children’s rights as protected in the Convention, which are based on the primary principle of the “best interests of the child,”³⁰⁰ and on the overriding framing of responsibilities, rights, and duties of parents and guardians as only existing “consistent with the evolving capacities of the child.”³⁰¹ Further, the misinterpretation of article 9 to attempt to support the alarming proposition above is striking in its bad faith. Article 9(1) reads:

States Parties shall ensure that a child shall not be separated from his or her parents against their will, except when competent authorities subject to judicial review determine, in accordance with applicable law and procedures, that such separation is necessary for the best interests of the child. Such determination may be necessary in a particular case such as one involving abuse or neglect of the child by the parents, or one where the parents are living separately and a decision must be made as to the child’s place of residence.

This text has been interpreted by opposition actors to suggest that parents have rights and control over their children except for cases of “extreme abuse.”

Anti-rights actors also co-opt the category of child rights to bolster their protection of the family agenda, arguing that the rights of children can only be achieved in a traditional family setting.³⁰² They have also been developing a related discourse on the ‘protection of children’. The premise is that “sexual rights activists are deliberately and aggressively targeting our children”³⁰³ to

“sexualize the next generation at a young age” and manipulate them into embracing “radical sexual ideologies” with the long game of “completely changing the sexual and gender norms of society.”³⁰⁴

Anti-rights actors also co-opt the category of child rights to bolster their protection of the family agenda, arguing that the rights of children can only be achieved in a traditional family setting

Anti-rights activists suggest a distinction between bad and good categories of human rights for children, i.e. protection rights, which are “essential for the well-being of children and should be secured and promoted,” as compared to ‘autonomous rights’, which are used to “sexualize children and to indoctrinate them in radical ideologies and behaviors.”³⁰⁵ In essence, the religious right’s position on children and human rights is quite clear: they do not have any, and attempts to enforce or advocate for the rights of children are an active attempt to advance harmful ideologies or a slippery slope to exploitation.

Despite regular and misleading citation of the CRC to justify a regime of so-called parental rights, conservative actors frequently criticize the binding treaty, arguing that it disrespects parental rights because of its progressive views on the maturity of children. In another rhetorical move, criticizing the CRC treaty monitoring body’s interpretations of its standards, anti-rights activists argue that rights to confidentiality and privacy ultimately lead to the exploitation of children. Their logic holds that the shield of confidentiality and privacy from parents or guardians would allow children into harmful sexual education, health services, or medical decisions.³⁰⁶ The Holy See in particular strongly critiqued the concluding observations from its review by the CRC treaty monitoring body in February 2014, which highlighted ongoing and

widespread abuse of children by Catholic clergy, rather than taking responsibility and decisive action to protect the rights of children.³⁰⁷

6. Violence against women

Increasingly, anti-rights actors are attempting to infiltrate and subvert not only human rights norms, but also standards and discourses developed by women human rights defenders in particular. Recently, and very visibly in spaces devoted to women's rights, such as the Commission on the Status of Women, religious right alliances have been appropriating human rights language on violence against women (VAW), including sexual violence and violations in the context of conflict.

This infiltration employs two major discursive moves: the same focus on protection with respect to the rights of children, and the use of VAW as a sympathetic conceptual space in which to embed anti-reproductive rights arguments.

The second approach is one example of a broader discourse and strategy: the development and articulation of an 'alternative' feminism or conception of women's rights and/or equality.³⁰⁸ The Holy See played an early role in this conversation. Today, policy documents, UN events, and statements from the OIC's Women Development Organization also speak in this tenor: women's rights are not criticized for being women's rights. Instead, conservative actors portray feminist activists as advocates of a self-serving, Westernized, sexualized form of radical ideology, and themselves as advocates for 'real' women around the world, protecting their dignity and links to family and the home. In this way, they cast the feminist movement as a 'radical feminist agenda' versus anti-rights actors, who are portrayed as the true saviors of women's rights, and in some cases, of feminism.



Increasingly, anti-rights actors are attempting to infiltrate and subvert not only human rights norms, but also standards and discourses developed by women human rights defenders

This trend is reflected by non-State actors, such as REAL Women of Canada,³⁰⁹ which have long been involved to some extent at the international policy level. In the past year, new organizations with a friendlier face also have started to play a visible role. Big Ocean, a membership organization with a youth orientation, which describes itself as an “international and interfaith network,” was founded by Mormon women affiliated with the Church of Latter-Day Saints in 2015.³¹⁰ They have been active at the CSW, the World Congress of Families, and the Habitat III conference in Quito. Big Ocean’s messaging is emblematic of this rebranding exercise; they describe themselves as “maternal feminists,” responding to a “small group of liberal feminists” making decisions to “move away from faith and family, and speaking as if for all women.”³¹¹ Their stated goal is to create a “massive grassroots movement” of maternal feminists who believe in “faith, family, and motherhood.”³¹²

Conservative actors portray feminist activists as advocates of a self-serving, Westernized, sexualized form of radical ideology, and themselves as advocates for ‘real’ women

On VAW and gender-based violence, CSW events and pre-Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) lobbying from religious rights groups have infused the discourse with anxiety about the future of families. At “Protecting Women and Girls in Developing Countries from Violence in the Post-2015 Agenda,” at the 2015 CSW (organized by the Forum Azzahrae for Moroccan Women, with speakers from Family Watch International) aside from a description of different forms and impacts of VAW in the Moroccan and Caribbean contexts, the conversation centred on what is allegedly missing from VAW prevention. FWI argued that a major preventative vehicle against violence is missing from the SDGs, i.e. ‘the family.’

Explicitly recruiting attendees to the UN Family Rights Caucus, Annie Franklin of FWI argued that ‘unstable’ (read: not traditional) families are the source of violence against women and children, and that fathers play a necessary and protective role in preventing violence in families. Conversely, she argued that intimate partner relationships outside the sphere of heterosexuality are risk factors for violence. The conversation included a critique of comprehensive sexual education and pornography as contributing to exploitation, trafficking, and sexual violence.

Their stated goal is to create a “massive grassroots movement” of maternal feminists who believe in “faith, family, and motherhood”

These arguments recur in the context of goal 5 (on gender equality) of the SDGs, e.g. in *Family Capital and the SDGs*, a nearly 300-page book published in 2016 by the World Congress of Families, United Families International, and the Sustainable Families Group.³¹³ Speaking of SDG target 5.2, “Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation,” the co-chair of the UN NGO Committee on the Family, Lynn Walsh, argues that in achieving this target, “[p]revention within the family is key—the family is the strategic point of entry for eradicating multi-generational repetition of behaviors and beliefs found at the root of violence.”³¹⁴

Walsh reiterates many of the same talking points in substantial detail for ‘pro-family’ advocates engaged in Agenda 2030, arguing that marriage and fathers are crucial to the prevention of VAW. She also cites notions of fixed gender roles and the importance of motherhood, claiming that although fathers are bulwarks against

future violence, that they cannot replace a mother's 'special role,' as "like yin and yang, the complementarities of mothers and fathers best nurture the whole child...the evidence is robust that children benefit the most" when raised by their "happy, married, biological mother and father."³¹⁵

Increasingly, anti-rights actors are using conversations on sexual violence in conflict at the UN to forward anti-abortion arguments. For example, both in "Hidden Victims of Sexual Violence: Children Born of War," hosted by C-Fam, and the Lila Rose/Holy See/International Youth Coalition event at the 2015 CSW, speakers claimed that access to safe abortion was in opposition to women's right to protection from violence, as abortion constituted another form of violence following the initial instance of sexual violation. At the Hidden Victims event, speakers also argued that the availability of abortion services post-conflict perpetuates stigmatization of children born in the context of war.

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7. Gender and 'gender ideology'

For many years³¹⁶, and today regarding a widening array of issues and rights protections, the religious right has had 'gender anxiety.' This most commonly manifests itself in UN negotiations through coordinated lobbying to remove any mention of gender in final documents, such as the Agreed Conclusions of the CSW or CPD.

The Holy See—including under Pope Francis, who described gender as "ideological colonization" in August 2016³¹⁷—has set off a massive critique of gender, 'gender ideology', 'gender radicals,' and gender theory. Allied State blocs, who read the term as code for LGBTQ rights, and Christian Right non-State actors active at the UN have echoed these critiques. The term is used by the religious

right as an omnibus concept that links together most, if not all, of their campaigns, and behind which they can rally. For example, one organization recently decried “a new radical gender ideology that is being pushed... through comprehensive sexuality education and in universities through gender studies...creating gender chaos everywhere.”³¹⁸ The notion of gender ideology is used as a broad-based tool to critique feminists, progressives, and the applicability of human rights standards to all on the basis of non-discrimination. Increasingly, the hysteria on this subject fixates on gender identity and trans rights.

The Holy See has set off a massive critique of gender, ‘gender ideology’, ‘gender radicals,’ and gender theory

The Holy See has argued that an agenda to redefine gender “calls into question the very foundation of the human rights system.”³¹⁹ The Vatican spokesman at the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar has called on bishops to resist vigorously the “imposition by Western NGOs, the UN and the EU of gender theory,” describing it as an “intellectual virus” which leads to war between the sexes, the devaluation of motherhood, promotion of contraception and abortion, acceptance of homosexual partnerships and parentage, and the decline of marriage.³²⁰

The discourse emphasizes both that the religious right sees gender as an elastic and broad term that can be employed by progressives, and that anti-rights actors see an opportunity in the term under which they can shelter their sustained opposition to women’s human rights, sexual and reproductive rights, LGBTQ rights, and their argument that the traditional family is under attack and in need of dedicated rights protections. Regarding the

latter, we see Pope Francis warning in October 2016 that gender theory is part of a “global war out to destroy marriage...not with weapons but with ideas” and—again (mis)using anti-colonialist discourses—that “we have to defend ourselves from ideological colonization.”³²¹

Over the past two years, a major target of this critique of gender and ‘gender ideology’ has shifted to the rights of trans individuals, and human rights protections around gender identity. The Pope’s comments in August comparing so-called gender ideology to a form of colonization were in reference to education on trans issues being made available to children.³²² Polish bishops recently launched a campaign against gender ideology, which they argue is used to promote acceptance of same-sex relationships and the notion that “a person can voluntarily decide for themselves whether they are a man or a woman.”³²³ Gabriele Kuby, who is linked to this campaign, has argued that this trend is walking the world towards a future of statist totalitarianism.³²⁴

These arguments have started to make their way more explicitly into UN spaces. Speakers at the 2016 CSW event co-sponsored by C-Fam and REAL Women of Canada, “Political Correctness and Gender Ideology,” used similar slippery slope to totalitarianism language. They argued that anti-discrimination measures for trans individuals violate rights to freedom of expression, i.e. the right to decry these protections. Further, they argued that concepts of gender fluidity and the existence of trans people are so far from reality and our understandings of the world that in order to enforce this gender ideology the State necessarily would take on the role of thought police to control and repress cognitive dissonance amongst its citizenry. From these grave beginnings, heavy steps would bring us all, rights restriction after rights restriction, in the service of bending citizens to gender ideology’s will, to the knees of totalitarianism.

8. Complementarity and human dignity

Complementarity of the sexes is a foundational discourse today employed by a range of ultra-conservative actors and developed partially in response to feminist claims for equality.³²⁵ Its rhetoric is structured around an assumption of difference: men and women are meant to have differing but complementary roles in marriage and family life, and with respect to their engagement in the community and political and economic life.

This construction of and reference to 'natural' roles is meant to fundamentally reject universal human rights to equality and non-discrimination. It is also used to justify State and non-State violations of these rights, and non-compliance with respect to State obligations to eliminate prejudices and practices based on stereotyped roles for men or women.³²⁶ A similar discursive strategy emphasizes equity rather than equality.³²⁷

The Vatican has led attempts to embed this gender essentialist and heteronormative discourse in international policy spaces. In the context of the Commission on the Status of Women, for instance, the Holy See has argued that it supports the improvement of the status of women, *if* related international commitments are consistent with their notion of the unique role of women as mothers and/or wives. This unique role is as helpmeet and care-taker; the Vatican states that women achieve their "deepest vocation" by "placing themselves at the service of others."³²⁸ This is derived from the essential feminine and masculine traits, such as "the physical strength and focused rationality" of men, and the "emotional acuity and generosity of women,"³²⁹ where it is only "through the duality of the 'masculine' and the 'feminine' that the 'human' finds full realization."³³⁰

They argued that anti-discrimination measures for trans individuals violate rights to freedom of expression

This construction of and reference to 'natural' roles is meant to fundamentally reject universal human rights to equality and non-discrimination

The Holy See also engages in interfaith efforts to consolidate the power and reach of this problematic discourse. Indeed, in late 2014 the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith³³¹ co-hosted a colloquium with the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue on the “Complementarity of Men and Women in Marriage,” followed in September 2015 by a book inspired by the proceedings, *Not Just Good, but Beautiful: The Complementary Relationship between Man and Woman*.³³² Amongst the participants at this event were Henry B. Eyring, the First Counselor in the Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Russell Moore, president of the public policy arm of the Southern Baptist Convention; U.S. evangelical pastor Rick Warren; and Nicholas Okoh, Anglican Archbishop of Nigeria.³³³

The Vatican claims that complementarity entails that men and women have “equal dignity as persons,” but that this equal human dignity is *premised on and manifested in* complementary “physical, psychological, and ontological” differences

Several States also employ the complementarity discourse in international human rights spaces, such as country reviews by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee). Among others, Egypt, Malaysia, Pakistan, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have justified differential treatment of women and men under their interpretations of sharia, arguing for differing and reciprocal obligations, e.g. pointing to the responsibility of a man to support his family as justifying unequal national laws on inheritance.³³⁴ Countries, such as Saudi Arabia, have also justified policies permitting polygamy under the principle of essential difference, reasoning for instance, “[a]s

everyone knew, some men had stronger desires than their wives could meeting [sic]; they must be able to take additional wives so that they would not be tempted to satisfy their needs outside of marriage.”³³⁵

Notably, the Holy See has mobilized the complementarity discourse to subvert the concept of human dignity. In international human rights law, human rights are owed to all individuals—human rights are universal—in part on the basis of our equal and (equally) inalienable human dignity. So, the principle of human dignity has been used to demonstrate the necessity of universal rights to non-discrimination.

In contrast, the Vatican claims that complementarity entails that men and women have “equal dignity as persons,” but that this equal human dignity is *premised on and manifested in* essential and complementary “physical, psychological, and ontological” differences.³³⁶ In this way, this discourse attempts to reverse the meaning of the human rights principle of human dignity—to justify difference and stereotyping rather than equality and freedom. Along with the Vatican, U.S.-originating Christian Right organizations, such as the World Youth Alliance, also work to co-opt the principle of human dignity³³⁷, arguing that human dignity arises from the moment of conception and that abortion is therefore a violation of dignity.

The Russian Orthodox Church has also focused significant attention towards a re-appropriation of the concept of human dignity, as mentioned above. Clarification and definition of the concept were a central focus of the Moscow Patriarchate’s engagement with human rights and development of its human rights doctrine in 2008.³³⁸ The ROC’s “Basic Teaching on Human Dignity, Freedom and Rights” states that “a human being preserves his God-given dignity and grows in it *only if* he lives in accordance with moral norms.”³³⁹

The Teaching goes on to say that “there is a direct link between human dignity and morality” and that the

“acknowledgment of personal dignity implies the assertion of personal responsibility” because moral norms express the “primordial and therefore authentic human nature not darkened by sin.”³⁴⁰ The direct link established between human dignity and morality, and relatedly, to personal responsibility (i.e. to live a ‘moral life’), provides a discursive vehicle for anti-rights actors to define the fulfillment of rights related to gender and sexuality as immoral and thus incompatible with human dignity and universal human rights.

9. National sovereignty and anti-imperialism

Urged on by wealthy elites, western powers...demand that nations change their laws and policies in profoundly unwise and dangerous ways to embrace the agenda of the secular left—abortion on demand, an abandonment of marriage, acceptance of polygamy, normalizing pedophilia, transgenderism, stripping children of their inherent right to a mother and a father, etc.

– World Congress of Families³⁴¹

A host of anti-rights actors regularly use references to national sovereignty at the UN as part of an attempt to push back against the universality of human rights, and limit State responsibility to respect, protect, and fulfill rights. Ultra-conservative State and non-State actors also attempt to appropriate discourses of anti-imperialism in international policy spaces to strengthen their legitimacy and appeal and widen their base. Ironically, as indicated above, the majority of religious right CSOs active in the international sphere which employ this rhetoric are based in North America and work to export hate worldwide.³⁴²

Ultra-conservative State and non-State actors also attempt to appropriate discourses of anti-imperialism in international policy spaces to strengthen their legitimacy and appeal and widen their base

The discourse of citing national sovereignty as an opt-out clause³⁴³ is a key feature of anti-rights actors' strategy. As part of its outreach and training, for example, U.S.-based Family Watch International circulates a policy brief entitled "Threats to National Sovereignty: UN Entities Overstepping Their Mandates."³⁴⁴ Human rights norms, processes, and activists are framed as fundamentally elitist and/or Western in this rhetoric. Furthermore, they argue that national governments are at risk of being undermined by "rogue UN agencies, Special Rapporteurs and treaty monitoring bodies...attempting to create new rights to which UN Member States have not consensually agreed."³⁴⁵

This discourse suggests that national governments are being unjustly targeted—"unwarranted intervention in [our] domestic affairs"³⁴⁶—by UN bodies, and by other States acting through the UN. As in many arguments employed by anti-rights actors at the international level, this is an attempt to shift the subject of human rights from the individual or marginalized community to a powerful and/or regressive institution or superstructure. In this way, ultra-conservative actors sometimes frame this dynamic as *a State's right* of national sovereignty, which is imperiled by multilateral processes and bodies.

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According to this construct, the threatened national government and State representative-determined 'values' are at risk and in need of protection; this stands in contrast to the State bearing responsibility to protect and implement the rights of individuals and affected groups within their jurisdiction. Thus, a clash of civilizations framing is consciously wielded in international policy

circles. This has the dual effect of replicating geopolitics and holding fundamental rights and freedoms hostage to power plays between States, whilst the rights of individuals and marginalized communities are sacrificed. In short, the State is strengthened at the expense of its citizens' rights.

A number of anti-rights actors attempt to bolster their arguments for national sovereignty through references to colonialism. In this way, actors based in the global North working to export their ideologies and policies worldwide³⁴⁷, and often authoritarian governments, cynically appropriate the language of anti-imperialist movements to limit rights. The Vatican, for example, describes gender ideology as ideological colonialism, backed by "very influential countries."³⁴⁸

10. Religious freedom

Mirroring recent developments in several national contexts, anti-rights actors in international human rights spaces have taken up the discourse of freedom of religion in order to justify violations of rights related to gender and sexuality, and violations of the universality of rights. Yet, ultra-conservative actors refer to religious freedom in a way that directly contradicts the purpose of this human right and fundamentally conflicts with the principle of the universality of rights.

The argument is that religious liberty is threatened and undermined by outside forces and other human rights, particularly those related to gender and sexuality. Under this theory, protecting, promoting, and fulfilling rights to non-discrimination block the right to religious freedom. For instance, with respect to a UN Declaration condemning discrimination and violence on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity, the Vatican spokesperson to the UN stated, "[T]his could clearly become an instrument of pressure or *discrimination*,"

against those who believe that marriage between a man and a woman is “the fundamental and original form of social life, and...that it should have a privileged place.”³⁴⁹ Neatly put, condemnation of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity is tantamount to discrimination against religion or the religious.

At the UN, States have manipulated allusions to religion in an attempt to limit rights protections, especially for religious minorities, women, and girls, and those with non-conforming gender or sexuality. Reservations to The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and Member State responses to the CEDAW Committee’s reviews regularly employ references to religion to justify non-compliance, especially with regard to equitable family laws.³⁵⁰ Further, the focus of the defamation of religion resolutions at the Human Rights Council, sponsored by the OIC, was to protect religion from harm done by freedom of expression in the same manner as national-level blasphemy laws—and as such, to limit that right. These resolutions argued that “respect of religions and their protection from contempt is an essential element” of the right to “freedom of thought, conscience and religion,”³⁵¹ i.e. that the right of freedom of religion entails protection of and respect for religion as such.

These are examples of a deep and persistent reframing and co-optation of the existing human right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. While at times the anti-rights discourse posits a ‘right’ to oppress—i.e. that the requirement not to discriminate against others is in itself discriminatory—as central to their presentation of religious liberty, the central move is to suggest that the right to freedom of religion is intended to protect a religion rather than those who are free to hold or not hold different religious beliefs. As the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion and belief has expressed on multiple occasions, the right protects believers, not beliefs:



The focus of the defamation of religion resolutions at the Human Rights Council, sponsored by the OIC, was to protect religion from harm done by freedom of expression in the same manner as national-level blasphemy laws

In line with the human rights approach in general, and article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in particular, freedom of religion or belief always protects human beings in their freedom and equality in dignity and rights...freedom of religion or belief protects “believers rather than beliefs.”³⁵²

Indeed, the human right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion includes the right not to profess any religion or belief³⁵³, or to change one’s religion or belief.³⁵⁴ Human rights law further holds that freedom to manifest one’s religion is subject to limitations, including those that are necessary to protect the “fundamental rights and freedoms of others.”³⁵⁵ The right to freedom of religion in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights was expressly determined not to be relied

The human right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion includes the right not to profess any religion or belief, or to change one’s religion or belief

upon to justify discrimination against women.³⁵⁶

In many ways, the anti-rights discourse on freedom of religion represents a familiar gambit: co-opting human rights language to shift the subject of rights and endow already powerful States and ideologies with more power. When confronted with these persistent acts of reappropriation, it is relevant to recall that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights state that no rights included in these instruments shall be interpreted as implying for any State, group, or person any right to engage in any activity aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms recognized therein.³⁵⁷

11. Right to culture and traditional values

The deployment of references to culture and tradition to undermine human rights, including the right to equality, is a common tactic amongst anti-rights actors at national, regional, and international levels. Culture is considered monolithic, static, and immutable; further, culture is often presented as characteristic of non-Western persons rather than a universal phenomenon, or in opposition to ‘Western norms.’ With respect to human rights, this conception of culture is held up in opposition to the rights of women and individuals with non-conforming genders or sexualities: cultural rights as an obstacle to rights related to gender and sexuality.

Culture is considered monolithic, static, and immutable; further, culture is often presented as characteristic of non-Western persons rather than a universal phenomenon

Allusions to culture by anti-rights actors in international policy debates generally aim to undermine the universality of rights, arguing for cultural relativism that trumps or limits rights claims. In the 2016 Human Rights Council resolution on sexual orientation and gender identity, for example, several States pushed amendments:

Reiterating the importance of respecting regional, cultural and religious value systems as well as particularities in considering human rights issues...

and,

Underlining the fundamental importance of respecting relevant domestic debates at the national

level on matters associated with historical, *cultural, social and religious sensitivities*.³⁵⁸

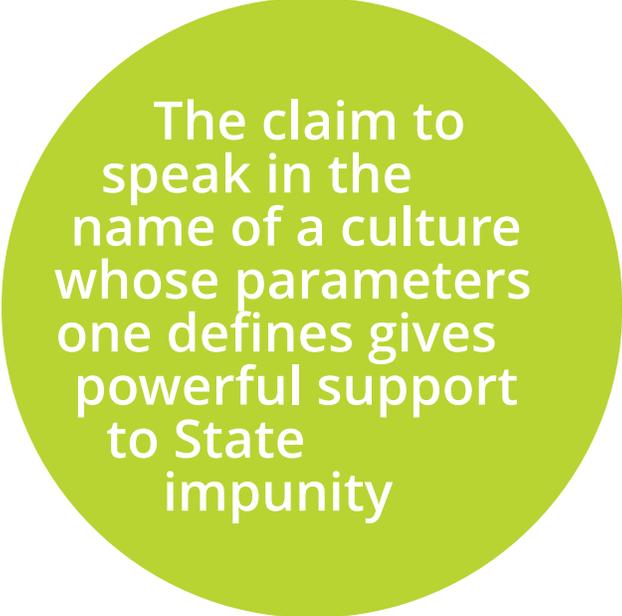
The emphasis on a monolithic conception of culture was especially clear in the 2016 Protection of the Family resolution at the Human Rights Council, which stated:

*The family plays a crucial role in the preservation of cultural identity, traditions, morals, heritage and the values system of society.*³⁵⁹

In this discourse culture is represented as something rigid and of a fixed nature: how else can it be preserved? Member States are left to interpret the definition, content, and breadth of what is referred to as cultural identity and traditions, cultural sensitivities, and cultural value systems. The claim to speak in the name of a culture whose parameters one defines (as patriarchal, heteronormative) gives powerful support to State impunity. It also claims that gender stereotyping and discriminatory practices and policies are justified in the name of culture.

The resolutions and rhetoric around traditional values at the UN pushed this discourse further, calling for human rights not only to be limited by culture, but for traditional values to operate by 'guiding the interpretation' of human rights. While the former move functions to create ostensibly justified opt-outs and derogations from fundamental human rights, the latter attempts to ground all rights in a conservative framework.

Spearheaded by Russia, a series of resolutions on traditional values were passed by the UN Human Rights Council in 2009, 2011, and 2012. Resolution 16/3³⁶⁰ called for a reinterpretation of human rights in accordance with traditional values and for setting up an Advisory Committee to make recommendations to the Council in a study "on how a better understanding and appreciation" of traditional values could "contribute to the promotion and protection of human rights."³⁶¹ As mentioned above, rhetoric around traditional values was



The claim to speak in the name of a culture whose parameters one defines gives powerful support to State impunity

central to the Russian Orthodox Church's nascent co-optation of the language of rights, grounding human rights in traditional morality and arguing that the source of human rights is "traditional values rooted in...world religions."³⁶²

The 2012 resolution, for example, stated that "a better understanding and appreciation of traditional values" would "contribute to promoting and protecting human rights...worldwide;"³⁶³ that traditional values "can be practically applied in the promotion and protection of human rights;"³⁶⁴ and that traditional values have a role in the "development of human rights norms and standards."³⁶⁵

This discourse was criticized by treaty bodies, Special Procedures mandate holders, and the OHCHR. In addition, the Advisory Committee study flagged several ways in which it was incompatible with international human rights:

[P]erceptions of what constituted 'traditional values' were highly subjective and dependent on societal power structures...some practices and attitudes at odds with human dignity were derived from traditional values. Tradition is often invoked to justify maintaining the status quo, failing to take into account the reality that traditions, cultures and social norms have always evolved...a human-rights approach, by contrast, often requires changes to the status quo in order to ensure compliance with international human rights standards.³⁶⁶

The Advisory Committee went on to highlight:

Those who benefit most from the status quo are more likely to appeal to tradition to maintain power and privilege, and also to speak on behalf of tradition, while those most marginalized and disenfranchised have the most to lose from a traditional values approach to human rights.³⁶⁷

Ultimately, the traditional values and cultural rights discourses employed by anti-rights actors operate to crush dissent and dynamism, justify human rights violations, and promote discrimination through strategic ambiguity and appropriation of human rights language.

Those who benefit most from the status quo are more likely to appeal to tradition to maintain power and privilege, and also to speak on behalf of tradition

Yet international human rights law clearly demonstrates that invocations of culture or tradition cannot justify violations of human rights, including rights related to gender and sexuality. The Human Rights Committee stresses, "State Parties should ensure that traditional, historical, religious or cultural attitudes are not used to justify violations of women's right to equality."³⁶⁸ Both the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (VDPA) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action hold that "it is the duty of States, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems, to promote and protect *all* human rights and fundamental freedoms."³⁶⁹ What's more, as the Advisory Committee flagged, States have a positive obligation to take "sustained and systemic action to modify or eliminate stereotypes and negative, harmful and discriminatory practices justified by traditional values."³⁷⁰ This obligation is mirrored in the VDPA and called for by article 5 of the CEDAW Convention.³⁷¹

It is also significant that anti-rights actors' evocation of cultural rights is founded on a *purposeful misrepresentation* of the content of human rights related to culture. According to the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, cultural diversity can be protected only when fundamental freedoms are guaranteed³⁷², rather than eroded or derogated, and no one may invoke cultural

diversity to infringe upon human rights nor to limit their scope.³⁷³

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights³⁷⁴ and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights³⁷⁵ both recognize the right to take part in or participate in cultural life. In a similar move to the discourse on religious freedom, ultra-conservative actors portray cultural rights as protecting an immutable culture rather than individual and marginalized communities' access to and participation in cultural life. The subject of the right is not (a monolithic understanding of) culture, and all individuals have the right to take part in or participate in cultural rights on a basis of equality³⁷⁶ and non-discrimination. Individuals have the right to participate in all aspects of social and cultural life³⁷⁷ and the right of access to cultural life.

The right to take part in cultural life in international human rights law can be characterized as a freedom. For this right to be ensured, it requires positive action from the State party, i.e. ensuring preconditions for participation, facilitation, and promotion of cultural life, and access to and preservation of cultural goods. Further, "cultural life" in the context of this right refers to "culture as a living process, historical, dynamic, and evolving."³⁷⁸

Rather than operating as a block on rights related to gender and sexuality, human rights law calls for the equal enjoyment of cultural rights, including by women, religious, and racial minorities, and those with non-conforming gender and sexuality. It is essential for States to ensure that they have access to, participate in, and contribute to all aspects of cultural life, as the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights emphasizes³⁷⁹. This includes the right to actively engage in identifying and interpreting cultural heritage and to decide which cultural traditions, values, or practices are to be kept, reoriented, modified, or discarded.³⁸⁰



Ultra-conservative actors portray cultural rights as protecting an immutable culture rather than individual and marginalized communities' access to and participation in cultural life

12. Universal or fundamental human rights

Ultra-conservative actors also attempt to use the language of universality to subvert its principles. The universality of rights is a fundamental principle of international human rights law. As the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action states:

*All human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent and interrelated. The international community must treat human rights...in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing, and with the same emphasis.*³⁸¹

As noted above, the Vienna Declaration demonstrates that the universality of rights cannot be undermined by limitations justified by reference to culture or religion, i.e.

*[I]t is the duty of States, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems, to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms.*³⁸²

However, anti-rights actors in international policy spaces increasingly manipulate references to universal or fundamental human rights to reverse the meaning of the universality of rights; indeed, this central discourse underpins several of their initiatives. As noted briefly above, these terms are then used to describe not the entirety of indivisible and interrelated human rights, to be treated equally and with the same emphasis, but to delineate and describe a subset of human rights as *truly* fundamental, whilst other rights are framed as subject to State discretion, 'new' or optional. This discourse is especially powerful, as their category of the truly universal remains unarticulated and ambiguous. In this way, regressive actors can exclude anything from the unknown black box of fundamental human rights once they see it conflicting with their agenda.

At the negotiations on the Agreed Conclusion of the 2015 Commission on the Status of Women, for example, the Holy See repeatedly suggested the use of the word fundamental before any mention of human rights, and has previously used the same approach with the term universal.³⁸³ The intention in this context is to attempt to exclude human rights norms and instruments that recognize a range of sexual and reproductive rights. Word play with terms deriving from universality recently featured in a number of negotiations. The hostile amendments to the resolution on sexual orientation and gender identity at the Human Rights Council in 2016³⁸⁴ notably employed this language to chip away at the universality of rights. Pakistan, on behalf of the OIC States aside from Albania, proposed 11 amendments to the SOGI resolution, including the following two, which were among those retained in the final text:

*Concerned by any attempt to undermine the international human rights system by seeking to impose concepts or notions pertaining to social matters, including private individual conduct, that fall outside the internationally agreed human rights legal framework, and taking into account that such attempts constitute an expression of disregard for the universality of human rights.*³⁸⁵

And,

*...[T]he present resolution should be implemented while ensuring respect for the sovereign right of each country as well as its national laws...the various religious and ethical values and cultural backgrounds of its people, and should also be in full conformity with universally recognized international human rights.*³⁸⁶

The latter amendment brings in common anti-rights discourses on sovereignty, culture, and religion, and attempts to use 'universally recognized' to limit the set of rights under discussion. The former amendment takes

the co-optation of universality further, suggesting first that attempts are being made to impose concepts and norms that fall outside of the human rights framework, and second that the imposition of new rights in itself constitutes a violation of the universality of human rights. This is an attempt to reinvent the very meaning of universality.

Ultra-conservative actors also attempt to use the language of universality to subvert its principles

A number of different actors employ this discursive strategy on the international stage, and feature it prominently as part of anti-rights training. Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) International, for instance, recently circulated a white paper entitled “The Rise of Faux Rights: How the UN went from recognizing inherent freedoms to creating its own rights,” which includes amongst its plan of action to “ensure that the OHCHR, treaty bodies, and the Universal Periodic Review focus exclusively on universally agreed, fundamental rights.”³⁸⁷



Ultra-conservative actors also attempt to use the language of universality to subvert its principles.

The background is a solid orange color. It features several large, white, curved shapes that resemble thick, stylized letters or abstract forms. One large shape on the left side is partially cut off by the edge of the page. Another large shape is at the top, and a third is at the bottom. The text is positioned in the lower right quadrant of the page.

Chapter Three
**Key opposition
strategies and
tactics**

Background

Influence and impact are not won by rhetoric alone. Anti-rights actors are making inroads into our human rights standards not only because of their increased numbers and networks, or their imaginative and sustained re-conceptions of what human rights norms should and do mean. The success of any movement is also integrally driven by its organizing tactics.

Like their shifts and feints in discursive strategy, the religious right active in international human rights policy spaces has not remained static in their organizing

Like their shifts and feints in discursive strategy, the religious right active in international human rights policy spaces has not remained static in their organizing. This landscape reflects several overarching trends: learning from their opposition, namely feminists and other progressives and their strategies at United Nations conferences in the 1990s; mirroring successful tactics developed in partnership with powerful elites from the domestic level to the international; and moving from a paradigm of symbolic protest to 'insiders', with the attendant changes in opportunity mapping and approach.

In early engagement at the international policy level, anti-rights actors were often explicit in their blocking strategies, carrying out symbolic protests and tactics of intimidation. To some extent ultra-conservative actors continue this approach through procedural tactics, and at the CSW. Recent examples include: chasing some feminists down the hall and angrily questioning why they didn't participate in a standing ovation for anti-abortion activists; battles of fliers; anti-rights actors' attempts to infiltrate side-bar negotiation discussions; and parallel

and side events turning hostile and accusatory during the question and answer period. Overall, however, the larger picture has shifted.

Religious right actors are no longer merely on the defensive or reactive; they are strategic and proactive. They do not only attempt to tinker at the edges of agreements and block certain language, but to transform the framework conceptually and develop alternative and parallel tracks of influence, standards, and norm production. This reflects a higher level of engagement and long-term investment in the UN as an institution, and the building of organizing strategies to further this change.

They do not only attempt to tinker at the edges of agreements and block certain language, but to transform the framework conceptually and develop alternative and parallel tracks of influence, standards, and norm production

Today, the global right working in international human rights policy spaces employs a number of tactics to bring their movement together; build networks and interlinkages; access existing forms of social and economic power; leverage links to religious institutional missions and figures active on the domestic level worldwide; cultivate relationships and direct connections with blocs of delegates; organize with an eye to the future; create and disseminate alternative forms of knowledge; and creatively boost their messaging.

Anti-rights actors at the UN, despite their conservatism and rigidity in matters of doctrine and worldview, have demonstrated an openness to building new kinds of strategic alliances, organizing techniques, and forms of

rhetoric. As a result, their power in this space has increased. We shall examine this spectrum of involvement in greater detail below.

1. Civil society training of UN delegates

GLOBAL FAMILY POLICY FORUM

For years, conservative actors at the UN have worked to initiate and build on their relationships with State delegates through regular training opportunities. The former World Family Policy Center Forum, which is based at the Mormon Brigham Young University (BYU) Law School in Utah, United States, was established in 1999. This yearly training meeting for “concerned United Nations diplomats, opinion leaders, and scholars” focused on the ‘pro-family’ movement, i.e. “on international family policy issues.”³⁸⁸ The three-day conference on “emerging trends” on the ‘natural family’, human rights, marriage, gender, children’s rights, and national sovereignty took place each July in the United States. It is estimated that between seventy and a hundred of the UN diplomatic corps, largely from Catholic, Christian Evangelical-majority, and Muslim-majority countries, attended these meetings each year.³⁸⁹ Financial assistance was available for participants.

For years, conservative actors at the UN have worked to initiate and build on their relationships with State delegates through regular training opportunities

Speakers at these meetings included senior advisers to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the former prime minister of Finland, and the ambassador of Qatar, who was then the head of the G-77 bloc at the General Assembly. As mentioned above, this training session facilitated connection with Qatar and the bloc, leading to collaboration towards the anniversary of the Year of the Family, and follow-up steps at the UN over the years.

Family Watch International claimed that “for many of these diplomats, this was their first exposure to the scientific and clinical evidence that proves homosexuality is not genetically determined and fixed”

The Forum run out of BYU has since closed, but a similar yearly training program continues until today, building on a number of similar initiatives that focus on the local level.³⁹⁰ Family Watch International stepped into the gap in January 2011 with their first hosting of the Global Family Policy Forum near Phoenix, Arizona.³⁹¹ This first two-day all expenses paid retreat to learn about “how to advance language and human rights protections for the traditional family at the UN” and how to “resist UN initiatives on sexuality” allegedly hosted 26 State officials from 23 countries.³⁹² The conference was co-hosted with the Foundation for African Cultural Heritage, an organization with strong links to the World Congress of Families—its head, Theresa Okafar, won WCF ‘Woman of the Year’ in 2015 and is the group’s African representative—and significant engagement as a Christian Right organization active at the CSW. In addition to the financial incentives to attend, the yearly conference is billed as a friendly family affair, with the option of homestays with ‘genuine’ U.S. families.³⁹³

Family Watch International claimed that “for many of these diplomats, this was their first exposure to the scientific and clinical evidence that proves homosexuality is not genetically determined and fixed” and that this information will “pay huge dividends as UN delegates confront the anti-family” activists on the international level. The 2013 training meeting hosted over 120 delegates, conservative CSO members, and research ‘experts’.³⁹⁴

Delegates and other participants also receive training in negotiating techniques and talking points, and access to a host of training materials

These meetings, held in January of each year, provide an opportunity to preach developing anti-rights discourses, as above, to UN delegates. In 2015, for instance, Gabriele Kuby spoke about her critique of gender ideology at the conference.³⁹⁵ They aim to share new discourses, ‘scientific’ and statistical information, research, and resources with delegates to inform upcoming debates and negotiations regarding international human rights. They also provide a discrete opportunity in which to share tactics and collectively strategize on ways in which to “ensure that the institution of the family is recognized and respected” in specific UN fora and meetings. Delegates obtain access to a password-protected searchable database of UN documents³⁹⁶ and are trained to use this database during negotiations to quickly “find prior consensus language on relevant topics.”³⁹⁷

Delegates and other participants also receive training in negotiating techniques and talking points, and access to a host of training materials that can be more widely disseminated, such as the detailed UN Resource Guide described above. Not only do these regular trainings foster collaboration and proactive strategizing at the UN,

the systematic and consolidated transmission of specific talking points explains in part why State delegates taking conservative positions in international human rights debates so often do so in contradiction with their own domestic legislation and policies.³⁹⁸

WORLD CONGRESS OF FAMILIES

As detailed above, the World Congress of Families plays a significant role in creating and developing networks amongst anti-rights actors working on human rights at the international level. Its yearly and regional convenings act as de facto training opportunities.

In addition, Family Watch International has begun to host a dedicated pre-World Congress training meeting. Prior to the 2015 WCF in Salt Lake City, for instance, FWI hosted a Leadership Summit for approximately 130 participants.³⁹⁹ The organizers used the opportunity to disseminate an updated version of the UN Resource Guide and other training materials on negotiating tactics, ‘scientific’ data and talking points, including “Protecting Children from the Sexual Rights Revolution.” Topics covered at the Summit included “Pushing Back Against the Transgender Movement,” “Addressing Sexual Orientation,” and “Fighting Comprehensive Sexuality Education.”⁴⁰⁰ Aside from the United States, participants hailed from India, Australia, Mexico, Nigeria, and Morocco.

2. International/ cross-regional convenings

Convening, networking, and the development of personal connections and strategic alliances is a powerful strategy, and key to building and sustaining movements. Anti-rights actors continue to build a regional and international web of meetings that help foster closer links between conservative CSOs, States and State blocs, and with powerful intergovernmental bodies and tapping into existing religious institutional networks around the world.

In many cases, the cross-thematic and cross-regional nature of these convenings has promoted anti-rights politics at the United Nations and other human rights spaces. Supplementing religion or region-specific meetings and conferences, there is a drive towards transnational and trans-religious relationship-building around issues of shared interest.

Arguably, the regularity and scale of cross-thematic and transnational connection between conservative advocates have fostered the space to develop a more proactive approach and new strategies. The dynamism of these alliances has allowed them to develop a more holistic, intersecting, cross-issue focus and set of asks at the international policy level. While players at the State level sometimes fade in and out of relative engagement due to changes in domestic politics, there is a strong support network at the UN not only on isolated issue areas, but sub-foci united by the umbrella of 'life, family, nation.' This enables them to take a more coordinated approach to joint initiatives, with a broader base of support amongst advocates: CSO, State, and intergovernmental.



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nation'**

The prime example of this tactic, as organized and led by non-State actors, is the World Congress of Families. We have examined their multiple projects and key actors above. It continues to grow as a powerful networking entity that weaves together a web of regressive leaders working at multiple levels.

Another key player recently emerging with respect to convening power is the Political Network for Values (PNV), which is particularly active at the regional level in the Americas, but has impact on the international policy level as well. The PNV describes itself as a global platform and resource for legislators and political representatives to network among each other on a local and global level “actively defending and promoting the values of life, marriage, family and fundamental freedoms.”⁴⁰¹ The network hosted a Transatlantic Summit as part of its formal launch at the United Nations in 2014, hosted by the Permanent Missions of Hungary, Belarus, the Holy See, and Qatar.⁴⁰² The PNV’s initial goals were to push for family as a stand-alone goal in the SDGs⁴⁰³ and to bring together at the UN policy makers from around the world, whose shared vision is to “preserve and strengthen the family, as well as to promote core moral, social and political values.”⁴⁰⁴

The Political Network of Values’ unique value is its facilitation of international collaboration between anti-rights CSOs and parliamentary actors

The Political Network of Values’ unique value is its facilitation of international collaboration between anti-rights CSOs and parliamentary actors. It centres and brings in a much greater number of domestic political actors from around the world to link up towards ‘family-friendly’ policies at the local, regional, and international levels in connection with conservative non-State actors.

Alliances not only with State actors working at the UN level, but those domestic parliamentarians who influence foreign (and domestic) policy, are key to wielding real influence at the international policy level. The network and summit create a formalized site for backdoor negotiations to push back rights related to gender and sexuality.

The Transatlantic Summit issued an open letter from parliamentarians from 11 countries around the world. The letter is explicit with respect to two key conservative discourses: strategic recourse into development arenas and areas in order to water down human rights commitments, and opposition to reproductive rights. The letter urged UN leaders not to allow the post-2015 agenda to be “sidetracked by promotion of contentious and divisive issues as ‘rights’”—invalidating human rights *in total* as contentious—and to ask them to object to inclusion of any terminology “that promotes abortion.” This move reflects a broader anti-rights tactic: appealing to diplomats under the rhetoric of “avoiding conflict” or “privileging consensus.”

The Summit also concluded by issuing a Declaration on the Rights of the Family⁴⁰⁵, signed by more than 250 parliamentarians, which was to be submitted to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon⁴⁰⁶. The Declaration claims that marriage is recognized under international law solely as between a man and a woman, and signatories commit to enacting domestic ‘pro-family’ and anti-LGBTQ laws and policies. The network also issued a list of ten commitments—the ‘Decalogue of Commitments for Human Dignity and the Common Good’⁴⁰⁷—for its members, which include opposition to abortion, the defence of religious freedom, conscientious objection, and parental authority over children.

The PNV followed up with a September 2015 Regional Summit of the Americas in Washington, D.C.,⁴⁰⁸ which opened with an inter-parliamentary panel on “promoting fundamental values in a globalized political context.” The summit, bringing together more than 70 policy makers

from across Latin America, the Caribbean, Spain, Hungary, Kenya, and the United States, focused on three areas of common concern: human dignity and the “value of life and motherhood;” the “redefinition of marriage and the family as a challenge to fundamental freedoms;” and the protection of freedom of conscientious objection in the context of education.⁴⁰⁹

Key non-State actors involved in the network include the Institute for Family Policy (Spain), the European Christian Political Movement, the Alliance Defending Freedom (U.S.), Red Familia (Mexico), CitizenGo (Spain), the Be Woman project, and Future and Family (Ecuador).⁴¹⁰

3. State reservations

Conservative actors at the United Nations, specifically States and State blocs, have historically sought to undermine international consensus or national accountability under international human rights norms through reservations to human rights agreements, directly threatening the universal applicability of human rights. This practice is particularly common with respect to binding treaties or covenants, as a State reservation from the text is intended to remove the State Party from binding human rights responsibilities under the specified section.

By far, the greatest number of reservations to an international human rights treaty has been to The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).⁴¹¹ While several States have withdrawn all or part of their reservations since ratification (or accession) of the treaty, a number remain. The majority are to all or parts of article 2, the obligation to review and change discriminatory constitutions, laws, and policies; article 5, the abolition of discriminatory customs and traditions and gender stereotyping; article



By far, the greatest number of reservations to an international human rights treaty has been to The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

7, on participation in public life; article 9, on the right to nationality; article 15, the right to legal capacity, including choice of domicile; and article 16, equality in the family.

This trend continues, although it is well-established international human rights law that evocations of tradition, culture, or religion cannot justify violations of human rights

States Parties have justified reservations based on a domestic policy to leave issues of personal status or family law to ethnic and religious communities. The largest number of reservations to CEDAW, however, are because of an alleged conflict with religious law or a State Party's constitution, that enshrines religious law, or held subject to religious law. During country reporting to the CEDAW Committee, States Parties then refer to their reservations as justification for the non-compliance of human rights obligations under the treaty.

However, State Party reservations to an international treaty are not automatically valid. The Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties provides that reservations may not be made that are "incompatible with the object and the purpose of the treaty."⁴¹² The bulk of reservations to the CEDAW Convention go to the heart of State accountability for the obligation to eliminate discrimination against women, and are as such incompatible with the object and purpose of the treaty, as the CEDAW Committee repeatedly has affirmed. Yet reference to existing reservations to the CEDAW Convention is continually used by States to dodge their human rights responsibilities to eliminate discrimination.

The State practice of issuing a reservation on UN agreements—and the specific pretext of incompatibility with religious, cultural, or traditional norms—is ongoing, and has spread to non-treaty fora. This trend continues,

although it is well-established international human rights law that evocations of tradition, culture, or religion cannot justify violations of human rights. This is echoed by agreed language in text after text, articulated in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action⁴¹³, and upheld in the binding International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.⁴¹⁴

'Reservations' to UN documents and agreements that are not formal treaties are also on the rise. States and intergovernmental or religious bodies like the OIC and the Holy See now issue reservations and statements of disassociation with Human Rights Council and General Assembly resolutions. And several Member States issued reservations to the report of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Government Goals⁴¹⁵, to the final Agenda 2030,⁴¹⁶ and upon the occasion of adoption of the 2030 Agenda at the General Assembly in September 2015.⁴¹⁷

While many of these have minimal legal effect, the goals of these reservations are political and symbolic

While many of these have minimal legal effect, the goals of these reservations are political and symbolic: to undermine the principle of the universality of rights; to attempt to undermine consensus on human rights standards; to create a freezing effect on the progressive interpretation of human rights language; and to try to mark out a space as a persistent objector to an emerging human rights norm so as not to be held accountable under that norm. Unsurprisingly, many State reservations to the SDGs focused on references to sexual and reproductive rights, sexual orientation, and the definition of the word 'family.'

4. Development and promotion of a parallel human rights framework

In a sense, almost all of the trends explored in the section on discourses feed into an overall strategy. Through the i) co-optation and subverting of existing human rights standards and ii) campaigns to develop and obtain consensus on agreed language that is in content deeply anti-rights, regressive actors at the United Nations are first developing and then promoting a parallel human rights framework.

The goal is not only to erode our existing human rights protections and weaken language at UN conferences, but more proactively to create and propagate language in international human rights spaces that validates patriarchal, hierarchical, discriminatory, and culturally relativist norms.

One step towards this end is the drafting of declarative texts that pose as soft human rights or a persuasive encapsulation of existing standards; broad dissemination and sign-ons to these declarations from multiple civil society, State, and institutional actors; and their use as a basis for advocacy and lobbying.

The list of such texts, and the numbers of their signatories, has exploded of late. Key declarations recently formulated, launched, and disseminated include:

The Declaration on Rights of Children and their Families, which includes:

“Each child has the right to a married mother and father...[w]e call upon States Parties and the United Nations system to discourage sexual relations and childbearing outside of the marital bond, and to promote the institution of marriage as the best environment for children.”⁴¹⁸



The goal is to create and propagate language in international human rights spaces that validates patriarchal, hierarchical, discriminatory, and culturally relativist norms

"Each child has the right to innocence and childhood...[n]oting, with alarm, the increasing international trend to grant autonomous adult rights to children prematurely...and being greatly concerned by the increase of sexual education programs that encourage children and youth to experiment and engage in sexual behavior; [w]e call upon States Parties and the United Nations System to respect the right of parents to guide the sex education of their children."⁴¹⁹

Any mention of the family in UN resolutions and conference outcomes can only be interpreted in reference to a man and a woman united in marriage

"The protection of children requires the protection of the family...[r]ecognizing that for the full protection of the rights of the child and the family enumerated in this declaration, all governments must fulfill their legal obligation to protect the institution of the family...therefore we call upon all UN Member States and the United Nations system to mainstream a family perspective in all laws, policies and programs, and to ensure the rights of parents are recognized in all governmental actions impacting their children."

The Family Articles, which includes:

"Relations between individuals of the same sex and other social and legal arrangements that are neither equivalent nor analogous to the family are not entitled to the protections singularly reserved for the family in international law and policy."⁴²⁰

"The international community has repeatedly rejected attempts to redefine the family in international law and policy. Any mention of the family in UN resolutions and conference outcomes can only be interpreted in reference to a man and a woman united in marriage, and relations that are equivalent or analogous, including single parent families and multigenerational families."⁴²¹

The World Family Declaration, which includes:

"The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State." Hence the family exists prior to the State and possesses inherent dignity and rights which States are morally bound to respect and protect... [w]e declare that the family, a universal community based on the marital union of a man and a woman, is the bedrock of society, the strength of our nations, and the hope of humanity."

The Declaration on the Rights of the Family, which includes:

"We, democratically elected Members of Parliament worldwide, solemnly reaffirm what has long been acknowledged in international law, namely that the family, based on marriage between one man and one woman, is the natural and fundamental unit of society entitled to protection by society and the State."

"Through inter-generational solidarity and the transmission of proven cultural values and practices, as well as religious traditions, [the family] assists its members to...cultivate a greater sense of responsibility towards future generations, while ensuring that the inherent dignity of the human person is respected."

The Decalogue of Commitments for Human Dignity and the Common Good, which includes:

“The defense of life should begin from its moment of conception, when the human being is most vulnerable and defenseless. The destruction of human embryos, cloning, genetic manipulation and surrogacy are practices that we must reject.”⁴²²

“Marriage is an institution between a man and a woman in which each one makes a different and simultaneously complementary contribution to the process of family formation. It is therefore vital to promote this institution at the civic level.”⁴²³

“It is the right of parents to decide the education of their children according to their moral, religious, philosophical and pedagogical convictions, which constitutes a central element to the defense of the dignity of the person. The State cannot and should not replace parents in this task.”⁴²⁴

“It is essential to emphasize the value of duties as an element that dignifies people. Relativism is an ideology that is driving our culture to demand more and to create false new rights that abolish duties, especially the duty of caring for the most vulnerable in our society, the elderly, children and unborn human beings.”⁴²⁵

“The defense of the right to conscientious objection in every sphere, especially in the field of health care, against the tyranny of relativism constitutes a demand and commitment we must make.”⁴²⁶

The San Jose Articles, which include:

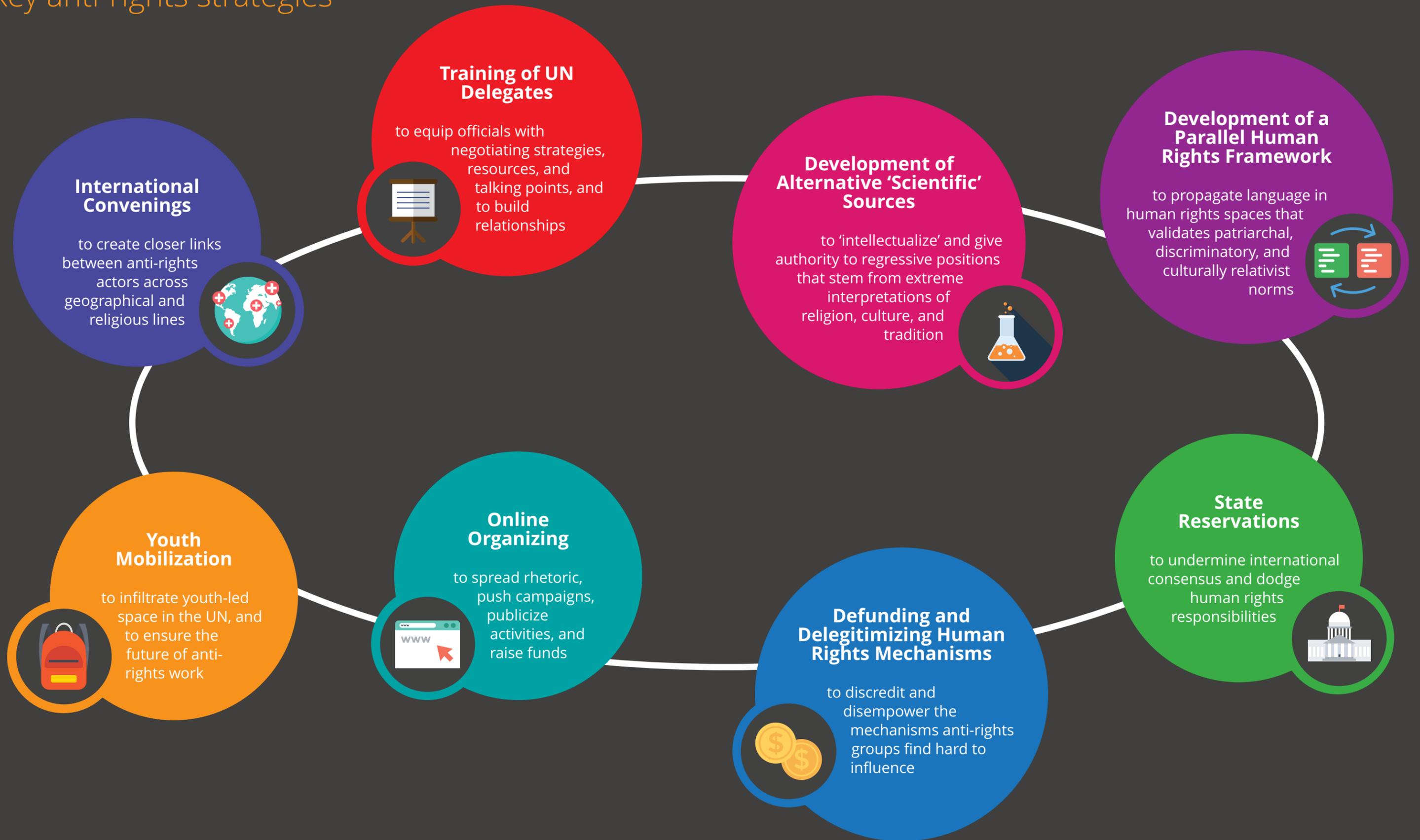
“As a matter of scientific fact a new human life begins at conception⁴²⁷...[t]here exists no right to abortion under international law, either by way of treaty obligation or under customary international law. No United Nations treaty can accurately be cited as establishing or recognizing a right to abortion.”⁴²⁸

“Assertions by international agencies or non-governmental actors that abortion is a human right are false and should be rejected. There is no international legal obligation to provide access to abortion based on any ground, including but not limited to health, privacy or sexual autonomy, or non-discrimination.”⁴²⁹

“Under basic principles of treaty interpretation in international law, consistent with the obligations of good faith and *pacta sunt servanda*, and in the exercise of their responsibility to defend the lives of their people, States may and should invoke treaty provisions guaranteeing the right to life as encompassing a State responsibility to protect the unborn child from abortion.”⁴³⁰

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Key anti-rights strategies



5. Development and citation of alternative 'scientific' sources

As part of the strategic shift towards use of secularized discourses—or those that appear to speak in the language of human rights and international policy—anti-rights actors have made a significant investment in the development of their own 'social science' think tanks. Their articles, reports, and other findings are then widely disseminated and form the basis for advocacy on human rights at the international level.

Anti-rights actors have made a significant investment in the development of their own 'social science' think tanks

A large part of this development and production is led by U.S.-based Christian Right organizations, often in connection with religiously-affiliated academic centres. Policy papers from conservative think tanks are picked up and given oxygen by the growing alternative conservative media, and anti-rights CSOs regularly share updates through their membership and list serves.

This strategy has been described as the intellectualization of the religious right.⁴³¹ While the goals, motivation, and preoccupation of conservative actors are linked to their extreme interpretation of religion, culture, and tradition, the language employed in international policy debates reinforces and reproduces these regressive arguments through a proliferation of studies that claim scientific and academic authority.⁴³² In this way a counter-discourse is produced through a heady mix of traditionalist doctrine and social science.

The Howard Center for Family, Religion and Society,⁴³³ which as noted is affiliated with the World Congress of Families, is one example of an anti-rights actor modeling itself as a think tank. It publishes *The Family in America: A Journal of Public Policy*⁴³⁴, which sends out a steady stream of academic articles and featured new research arguing for the social and personal ill-effects of divorce and same-sex partnerships and parenting, the positive effects of the traditional family, complementary gender roles, and so on.

In this way a counter-discourse is produced through a heady mix of traditionalist doctrine and social science

The World Congress of Families and Global Family Policy Forum, among others, expose a wider array of anti-rights actors to pseudo-scientific arguments and advocacy talking points substantiated with reference to such studies and papers. Many policy briefings refer to statements and articles by conservative academics based in Mormon and Catholic colleges, and right wing advocacy groups with mainstream branding like the American College of Pediatricians.

Among other anti-rights actors, Family Watch International also scours the academic and policy literature on divorce, comprehensive sexuality education, sexual orientation, and gender identity for any references to physical or psychological impact. Quotes from sources such as the American Psychological Association, the U.S. Center for Disease Control, the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, and the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association, are then framed misleadingly and repackaged in support of a regressive anti-rights agenda in detailed negotiation guides and briefings to UN delegates and conservative lobbyists.

6. Youth mobilization

Participants at the Commission on the Status of Women have noticed a key trend of late. When it comes to anti-rights voices during events at the CSW, the most visible and aggressive today are often young women. This represents one of the most effective strategies employed by the religious right. Tapping into Catholic youth networks around the world, and prioritizing the development of youth leadership and engagement in Christian Right organizations, conservative actors have successfully mobilized a growing number of activists under the age of thirty to push for a regressive agenda at the world stage.

Youth organizations like the International Youth Coalition and the World Youth Alliance go back over a decade, and the current landscape has emerged from a long history of religious right relationship-building and empowerment of young people. Youth recruitment and leadership development—starting with churches, college campuses, and local-level initiatives—are a priority for many conservative actors active in international policy work.⁴³⁵ This allows for infiltration of youth-specific spaces at the United Nations, a strong counterpoint to progressive youth networks and organizations, and represents a major investment in the future of anti-rights organizing.

Many conservative CSOs run specialized training programs for youth. The U.S.-based anti-rights litigation and advocacy organization Alliance Defending Freedom runs their (Christian) Areté Academy to “engage and equip the next generation of leaders throughout the world” with separate centres in Europe, Latin America, and the United States.⁴³⁶ The week-long, all expenses paid training “combines biblical worldview training with specialized professional development.”⁴³⁷ The International Youth Coalition, an initiative of C-Fam mentioned above, runs an internship program and blog for students.⁴³⁸



Conservative actors have successfully mobilized a growing number of activists under the age of thirty to push for a regressive agenda at the world stage

The anti-rights World Youth Alliance provides a broad set of membership and training activities for youth around the world. WYA runs a multi-pronged internship program making links at different levels. They offer on-campus internships in North America for college students to “gain first-hand training and experience in networking” and managing community-level implementation of the Alliance’s “global project.”⁴³⁹ Student interns must complete WYA’s specialized Certified Training Program,⁴⁴⁰ and are expected to recruit other students to “join the mission of bringing WYA to campus” and establish WYA as an official chapter on campus. Student interns also receive training in fundraising and opportunities to meet and network with other youth members. Alliance chapters have thus far been established in several high schools and universities, including at the University of the Philippines–Vasavas, Seton Hall, Rutgers University, the University of Toronto, Georgia State University, LSPR Jakarta, etc.⁴⁴¹

The Alliance trains hundred of young people around the world each year in the service of their conservative agenda

The Alliance builds its youth network abroad through internships affiliated with their regional offices, based in Europe, Africa, North America, Latin America, the Middle East, and Asia Pacific. In 2015 the Alliance received funding from the UN Democracy Fund to launch a two-year “Emerging Leaders of the Arab Region” program.⁴⁴² Finally, the Alliance bolsters its operations at the UN in part through its international advocacy internship and fellowship program, based in New York. Both fellows and interns are required to first complete WYA’s specialized training, and the Alliance actively recruits participants with advanced degrees, particularly in law and international relations.⁴⁴³

The Alliance’s Certified Training Program is the entry point into the WYA’s many networking and policy tracks, covering issues of ‘human dignity’, culture, international law, and human rights with a specialized lens.⁴⁴⁴ The World Youth Alliance also runs book clubs, summer camps, and a UN leadership training program. All WYA members are invited to the International Solidarity Forum, an annual training event at the UN in New York, which features “lectures and discussions on topics relevant to ongoing international policy debates.”⁴⁴⁵ Finally, the Alliance runs Emerging Leaders Conferences out of each of its regional offices yearly, hosting 440 participants in 2015.⁴⁴⁶ Altogether, the Alliance trains hundred of young people around the world each year in the service of their conservative agenda.

As above, the World Congress of Families also prioritizes youth training. World conferences include an ‘Emerging Leaders’ track, with approximately 500 trainees attending the 2015 conference in Salt Lake City.⁴⁴⁷

7. Delegitimization and defunding of UN agencies, Special Procedures, and treaty monitoring bodies

In large part, anti-rights non-State actors active at the international human rights level focus their attention on political mechanisms,⁴⁴⁸ where their goal has been to foster and influence a base of State missions large enough to break consensus or push through new language. Conservative CSOs and other actors, in contrast, are skeptical of their influence with authoritative expert mechanisms like the UN Special Procedures and treaty monitoring bodies (TMBs), and the operative bodies (UN agencies) like the United Nations Population Fund. As such, they adopt multiple blocking and invalidating strategies in relation to each of these bodies’ work.

Generally speaking, ultra-conservative actors aim to invalidate UN agencies by arguing that they are overstepping their mandates and by targeting their funding. They seek to undermine treaty monitoring bodies by suggesting that TMBs have no authority to interpret their respective treaties, and by lobbying friendly governments to nominate experts with anti-rights views for these bodies. And they aim to undercut the Special Procedures by describing them as partisan experts whose work is largely irrelevant to international human rights, and advocating against the renewal of their mandates or for sharp limitation of their purview by describing their work as *ultra vires* or duplicative of the work of other UN bodies.

Anti-rights actors have described UN agencies like the World Health Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) as anti-family and as population ideologues.⁴⁴⁹ In many of their briefings, Family Watch International hones in on this tactic, describing UN entities "overstepping their mandates" as a major threat to national sovereignty: "the right of UN Member States to national sovereignty is increasingly being undermined by the actions of rogue UN agencies." In addition, C-Fam maintains a regular series of 'exposes' of the work of UN agencies through its Friday Fax, and the San Jose Articles dwell on this framing at length.

When targeting Special Rapporteurs and treaty monitoring bodies, FWI and others argue that they "are attempting to create new rights to which UN Member States have not consensually agreed."⁴⁵⁰ The San Jose Articles state that the CEDAW Committee and other treaty monitoring bodies "have no authority" to interpret treaties "in ways that create new State obligations or that alter the substance of the treaties," and that any such interpretation constitutes an "*ultra vires* act"⁴⁵¹ that does not create any legal obligations on States Parties, nor contribute to the formation of new customary international law.⁴⁵²



Ultra-conservative actors aim to invalidate UN agencies by arguing that they are overstepping their mandates and by targeting their funding

As part of this strategy, anti-rights actors attempt to frame the authoritative interpretations of treaty monitoring bodies as “creating new rights,” and to thus invalidate altogether the work of TMBs and Special Procedures mandate holders. Ultra-conservative CSOs and others propagate a convoluted and inaccurate reading of international law that claims that only consensus language originating from the UN General Assembly can develop “new human rights.”⁴⁵³ While this is misleading and sidesteps realities of the creation and interpretation of international human rights law and the nature of binding treaties and development of customary law, it is a flattering and appealing argument for some Member States.

Anti-rights actors attempt to frame the authoritative interpretations of treaty monitoring bodies as “creating new rights”

Grounding the invalidation of UN mechanisms in arguments of national sovereignty gives ammunition to governments who are reviewed by treaty monitoring bodies and advised by Special Procedures for their compliance to human rights standards. This line of argumentation also allows them to defend and continue their human rights violations with impunity on the basis that the reviewing mechanism is itself faulty. This strategy has far-reaching implications for State accountability. In 2015 and 2016 several Member States were highly critical of thematic reports from the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women and the Working Group on Discrimination against Women, arguing, for example, that their reports took insufficient account of religious and cultural difference.

At the same time, anti-rights actors, proceeding from their arguments that UN mechanisms are biased and anti-family, have worked to defund UN agencies that focus on rights related to gender and sexuality. Less than 4% of the overall UN budget is allocated to human rights,⁴⁵⁴ even though human rights form one of the three pillars of the UN, and Special Procedures mandate holders must work on a voluntary basis and are severely understaffed. This persistent lack of funding undermines an enabling environment for human rights. Where the UN’s institutions dealing with human rights are chronically underfunded, they are left even more exposed to ultra-conservative attacks. For example, U.S.-based Christian Right organizations like the Population Research Institute and C-Fam have long lobbied to cut U.S. funding to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA),⁴⁵⁵ and successfully cut all funding to the UN agency under the Kemp-Katsen amendment from 2001-2008.⁴⁵⁶ In April 2017, the new U.S. administration under Trump and the vehemently anti-abortion Vice President Pence decided to eliminate all funding for UNFPA, resulting in the loss of \$32.5 million for the agency.⁴⁵⁷

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Together, these tactics put pressure on UN agencies and limit their ability to work in the most essential of ways: by depriving them of funds and by attempting to shape their agendas through fear of defunding. Feminist activists have argued that the constant pressure on the CEDAW Committee and UNFPA, for instance, has led them to be more cautious about their engagement with rights related to gender and sexuality.

8. Online organizing

Anti-rights actors increasingly supplement their strategies and lobbying efforts by mobilizing online. Linked up through regular newsletters and networks online, conservative non-State actors use social media—especially twitter and Facebook—in similar ways as progressive activists, to promote their activities and messaging and to share reports and briefings from international human rights spaces more quickly and widely.

Anti-rights actors increasingly supplement their strategies and lobbying efforts by mobilizing online

Christian Right CSOs also attempt to mobilize their audiences for calls to action online, importing the model of letter-writing campaigns, and online petition platforms like MoveOn.org. As detailed above, Family Watch International has supplemented its lobbying at the CSW and Human Rights Council with online letter writing campaigns that target State delegates at the UN, and government officials working at the domestic level.

CitizenGo,⁴⁵⁸ the Spanish organization which works closely with the World Congress of Families and has supported campaigns by FWI, the UN Family Rights Caucus, and C-Fam, markets itself as the conservative version of online platforms, such as Change.org. The platform, which targets national and global audiences, was founded by Ignacio Arsuaga, as noted, also the founder of the organization HazteOir⁴⁵⁹. The latter organization came into prominence through its mobilization against a 2010 bill to liberalize abortion laws in Spain, and hosted the 2012 World Congress of Families in Madrid.

In order to increase engagement, profile, and funding, CitizenGo operates as a membership platform, raising money through member donations. It is estimated that the organization raises at least EUR 30,000 – 40,000 monthly from its membership,⁴⁶⁰ which has climbed since 2013 to over EUR 4.7 million.⁴⁶¹ The platform currently offers online campaigns in seven languages (English, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Italian, German, and Polish), and has plans to add Chinese and Arabic. CitizenGo also has ties to the U.S. National Organization for Marriage, with President Brian Brown on the board of directors.

A September 2016 petition to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon calling on him to oppose the establishment of a UN international day on safe abortion has gathered over 172,000 signatures

In addition to its national-level online campaigns—for instance, against ‘transgender ideology’ in the United Kingdom,⁴⁶² and against ‘abortion tourism’ in Norway,⁴⁶³—a number of international campaigns targeting human rights have been launched and promoted on the platform. A November 2016 online petition targeting the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for its “indoctrination” of children with “LGBT propaganda worldwide” has nearly 70,000 signatures.⁴⁶⁴ A September 2016 petition to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon calling on him to oppose the establishment of a UN international day on safe abortion has gathered over 172,000 signatures.⁴⁶⁵ And an ongoing online petition was launched in November 2016 calling on the UN General Assembly to block the new mandate holder on sexual orientation and gender identity has reached nearly 96,000 signatures,⁴⁶⁶ after CitizenGo’s June 2016 campaign on the related Human Rights Council SOGI resolution, targeting State delegates at the Council.⁴⁶⁷

The background is a solid red color. Overlaid on this are several thick, white, curved shapes that resemble segments of a large circle or stylized letters. One large white shape on the left side curves from the top left towards the bottom left. Another white shape at the top right curves from the top edge towards the center. A third white shape at the bottom right curves from the bottom edge towards the center. These shapes are arranged in a way that they seem to be part of a larger, partially visible circular structure.

Chapter Four

**Key impacts on the
international
human rights system**

Background

Anti-rights actors' discourses and strategies have had a substantive impact on our human rights framework and the progressive interpretation of human rights standards, and especially rights related to gender and sexuality.

Over 2015 and 2016, we have witnessed the watering down of existing agreements and commitments; deadlock and conservatism in negotiations; sustained undermining of UN agencies, treaty monitoring bodies, and special procedures; and success in pushing through regressive language in international human rights documents.

When it comes to the impact of conservative actors in international policy spaces, the overall picture today is of stasis and regression. Agreed conclusions and resolutions are embattled, the rhetorical and/or financial weakening of progressive UN mechanisms continues apace, and a rejuvenated and coordinated set of traditionalists are undermining human rights protections for all through new language in the human rights framework.

When it comes to the impact of conservative actors in international policy spaces, the overall picture today is of stasis and regression

At the same time, progressive activists continue to respond to these attacks on the universality of rights. Language on intimate partner violence; comprehensive sexuality education; domestic violence; child, early and forced marriage; and violence against women is continually challenged, but have also advanced due to their efforts.

1. Commission on the Status of Women

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, supported by UN Women. The CSW issues Agreed Conclusions—reached by consensus—on a priority theme each year to further the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

The CSW and the CEDAW Committee have long been two of the most contested and active sites in the UN system for anti-rights actors

However, the CSW and the CEDAW Committee have long been two of the most contested and active sites in the UN system for anti-rights actors—following on from a history of conservative engagement at conferences and their symbolic value as “women’s rights” spaces.

2015

In March 2015, the Commission on the Status of Women conducted its 20-year review of implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, adopting a Political Declaration and Working Methods resolution⁴⁶⁸. Markedly, even before negotiations and events began, the impact of anti-rights actors was apparent in the decision not to use this opportunity for a follow-up Fifth World Conference on Women, because of fears of erosion of the commitments made in the Fourth World Conference held in Beijing over two decades ago.

The outcomes of the 2015 Commission were undermined early on, as UN Women made the decision to hold negotiations (conducted by mission staff) on the Declaration in the weeks before the CSW, prior to the arrival of national delegations. This process was a particularly striking example of the overall trend of shrinking space for civil society at the UN. The Declaration was issued on the first day of the conference, to substantial critique from feminist groups and civil society.

The context of these unique negotiations exacerbated conservative regressions in the text, with women's rights activists largely shut out of any engagement with the process. The first draft of the Declaration was a pallid and unambitious text, at best reaffirming existing commitments from Beijing, and its language was undermined further in the days leading to the CSW. The newly formed Group of Friends of the Family⁴⁶⁹ coordinated in large part with the Holy See, CARICOM, and the African Group⁴⁷⁰ to exclude references in the text to the human rights basis of the international framework on gender equality and women's empowerment. On the CSO side, C-Fam, the UN Family Rights Caucus, the International Youth Coalition, and Family Watch International were active in lobbying.

In the end, very few references to States' international human rights commitments and principles remained in the Declaration. Russian delegates argued for the removal of references to human rights in the text altogether. The OIC made a statement trying to limit the universal applicability of human rights standards, arguing in one instance that "human rights for all women and girls," should be amended to remove "all." The Holy See, using a tactic it uses on several fronts, continued to suggest that the word fundamental be placed before any mention of human rights. In this way, as explored above, it aimed to delimit the sphere of applicable human rights standards and undermine the principles of universality and indivisibility.



In the end, very few references to States' international human rights commitments and principles remained in the Declaration

Several State representatives admitted to activists that they were loathe to support direct references to human rights in the Declaration because anti-rights efforts have convinced them that *any* citation of human rights reflects a subtle attempt on the part of other States to imply sexual and reproductive health and rights in the agreement. Most references to human rights were thus culled, both from objections to those included in the original draft, as well as language brought forward by some States during closed-door negotiations. In the end, human rights were mentioned only three times in the Declaration (in the preambular section and in reference to previous agreements), with no affirmation of human rights as the basis of the gender equality and women's empowerment agenda in the operational paragraphs.⁴⁷¹

That Member States considered it appropriate to develop the future mechanisms and processes of the Commission without real input from civil society underlines the impact of anti-rights actors' work

Anti-rights actors at the session were also successful in removing references to feminist organizations—which had featured in the Beijing Platform—and Women Human Rights Defenders from the final text. The African Group played a key role in their removal, and the OIC also made a push against this language, stating, “We don't know what feminist groups might get up to or what they do.”

Ultimately, references to decent work for women; grassroots groups; an inclusive definition of women and girls ‘in all their diversity’; almost all references to gender-based violence; and specific protected grounds for discrimination, including disability and HIV status, made their way off the table. The Declaration makes no reference at all to women's sexual and reproductive

health and rights. Anti-rights delegations moved against its inclusion, arguing that SRHR language would connote support for sexual orientation and gender identity, which they opposed.

Several State missions, including the United States, worked to water down language on gender and the post-2015 development agenda significantly. This was part of a theme of resistance by several global North States during the talks to links between development and human rights, and to inclusion of economic, social and cultural rights language overall.

The majority of negotiations on the Working Methods resolution at Beijing + 20⁴⁷² also took place prior to the CSW, and were finalized in the second week of the Commission. That Member States considered it appropriate to develop the future mechanisms and processes of the Commission without real input from civil society, including women's rights, and feminist groups, underlines the impact of anti-rights actors' work.⁴⁷³ At the end of negotiations, language on civil society engagement at the Commission was limited, with no reference to women's and feminist group's involvement in negotiations at the CSW.

2016

The 60th Commission on the Status of Women, in March 2016, again issued a watered down Agreed Conclusions text after intensive negotiations.

Conservative impact was again evident at an early stage. Before the formal opening of the Commission, UN Women hosted a Youth Caucus for activists below the age of thirty. It was the first event in what is intended to become a regular track at the Commission. In an example of the penetration of anti-rights activists into multiple levels of the work of the CSW, participants and organizers at the Caucus were taken by surprise by the presence of a vocal anti-abortion and anti-SRHR presence.

Progressive youth organizations reported being outnumbered at the events, and encountered blocking and intimidation tactics, with some teams shouted down by anti-rights actors in attendance. The World Youth Alliance had prioritized the Youth Caucus as a new space in which to make inroads. As a focus on youth engagement is expected to be a continuing interest for UN Women at the CSW, it is useful to call attention to the ways in which anti-rights actors are treating this emerging space as an opportunity for their advocacy.

Conservative actors had a number of direct impacts on the Agreed Conclusions at CSW 60. Direct references to comprehensive sexuality education were ultimately deleted from the text, and also from the HIV/AIDS resolution issued by the Commission. References to sexual and reproductive health and rights did not make their way through to the final draft, and despite strong organizing amongst feminist civil society, references to sexual orientation and gender identity were also removed.

The final draft included language affirming several States' push for national relativism. The Agreed Conclusions stated that implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development should take into account "different national realities, capacities and levels of development" and "respecting national policy space."

Finally, in a regression ecstatically hailed by Christian Right NGOs, the final draft of the Agreed Conclusions included a reference to 'the family'. Historically, proposed references to the unitary (and implicitly traditional and natural) family have been removed during the course of negotiations at the CSW. This year, however, the alternative text of "various forms of the family" brought forward in an amendment did not make it to consensus. States agreed to delete "various forms" in return for a deletion of "sustainable" before development in the following clause: "recognize the family as a contributor to development, including in the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals for women and girls."



Progressive youth organizations reported being outnumbered at the events, and encountered blocking and intimidation tactics

This reference to 'the family' was subsequently cited as agreed language in the 2016 Protection of the Family resolution at the 32nd session of the Human Rights Council in June.

2. Human Rights Council

The Human Rights Council has been the scene of several high-profile anti-rights moves at the international policy level in recent years. As the intergovernmental body responsible for the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe, the mechanism is a key entry point for conservative actors in their campaigns to erode and shape human rights protections. At the same time, in recent years the HRC has been the site of the most overall progress on SRHR.

June 2015: 29th session of the HRC

Several resolutions and reports from Special Procedures during the June/July sessions of the Human Rights Council focus on rights related to gender and sexuality. These include a resolution on the elimination of discrimination against women, which is sponsored annually by Colombia and Mexico in relation to the work of the UN Working Group on Discrimination against Women in law and practice.

The 2015 *resolution on discrimination against women*⁴⁷⁴ focused on discrimination against women in cultural and family life, based on the bold thematic report of the Working Group⁴⁷⁵ issued at the same session. The report received significant and pointed criticism from several States during the session, particularly from Member States of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation led by Egypt. During negotiations several States again strongly criticized the Working Group report and clauses from the resolution, alleging they were offensive with respect to

culture and religion. The draft text of the resolution was shaped by this opposition: as part of a general trend, the resolution merely 'notes' the report from the Working Group.

The Human Rights Council has been the scene of several high-profile anti-rights moves at the international policy level in recent years

The discrimination against women resolution was adopted by consensus and was co-sponsored by 60 countries. Ultimately, the text included some strong language in support of the right to equality and against forced marriage. However, key provisions from the Working Group's report and the initial draft of the resolution were removed, including: women's and girls' right to have control over their sexuality, sexual and reproductive health, and reproductive rights; the need to repeal laws which perpetuate the patriarchal oppression of women and girls in families, those criminalizing adultery or pardoning marital rape; and the importance of comprehensive sexuality education in addressing gender inequalities.

Following negotiations, the final text of resolution 29/4 was a significantly watered down version of the Working Group's report. The resolution did not call for equal division of family property in the event of divorce or widowhood, or equality for women and girls in inheritance rights. Nor did the resolution call on States to enshrine women's right to equality in constitutions and laws of any kind, applying to every area of life and with primacy over all customary or religious laws, norms, codes, and rules; or call for the elimination of early, forced, polygamous, and temporary marriages. However, references to intimate partner violence and comprehensive sexuality education were ultimately

included in the text – for the first time in a UN resolution - as well as the promotion and protection of reproductive rights, and the right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to sexuality. The final version of the text also urged States to support civil society initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality and addressing domestic violence, including those undertaken by women’s organizations and women human rights defenders.

The second HRC *resolution on family* was also issued at the 29th session. The resolution, entitled “Protection of the family: contribution of the family to the realization of the right to an adequate standard of living for its members, particularly through its role in poverty eradication and achieving sustainable development,” was brought forward by a core group of 12 States, including Egypt, Bangladesh, Belarus, China, Cote d’Ivoire, El Salvador, Mauritania, Morocco, Qatar, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, and Tunisia. This was the first substantive resolution on the theme—elaborating on norms and standards—following the largely procedural 2014 resolution on protection of the family⁴⁷⁶, and the OHCHR discussion and report⁴⁷⁷ called for in that resolution.

This resolution was marked by the harmful rhetoric and language noted above in the section on protection of the family. During negotiations, the core group continuously refused to include language highlighting the human rights of individual family members, including their rights to safety from abuse, violence, and discrimination, and their rights to bodily autonomy. The core group also refused to include language from multiple human rights sources stating that around the world, various forms of the family exist, continually referring to a unitary conception of the family and its protection as an institution.



During negotiations, the core group continuously refused to include language highlighting the human rights of individual family members, including their rights to safety from abuse, violence, and discrimination

Given this deadlock, several States tabled amendments to the text.⁴⁷⁸ Pakistan brought forward a hostile amendment that sought to insert a new paragraph in the resolution to read, “[r]ecognizes that men and women of full age...have the rights to marry and to found a family, bearing in mind that marriage is a union between a man and a woman.”⁴⁷⁹ Once a proposal on diversity of family forms was voted down, Pakistan withdrew the amendment.

The resolution, with much of its problematic language intact, ultimately was voted in with 29 in favour

Brazil, Chile, South Africa and Uruguay brought another amendment seeking to insert a new paragraph recognizing “that in different cultural, political and social systems, various forms of the family exist.”⁴⁸⁰ A no-action motion was called, which passed by one vote⁴⁸¹; consequently, no further discussion could take place on the content of this amendment.

An amendment from Albania, Ireland, and Norway suggested the deletion of “the family plays a crucial role in the preservation of cultural identity, traditions, morals, heritage and value system of the society” from the text.⁴⁸² However, this amendment failed when put to a vote.⁴⁸³ An amendment from Belgium, Luxembourg, and Uruguay⁴⁸⁴ with improvements on language related to the rights of the child was accepted by the core group, but a subsequent amendment brought forward by Albania, Denmark, and Norway which called for inserting “and its members” after “family” through the resolution, and for deletion of the family as “the natural and fundamental group unit of society” was defeated by a vote.⁴⁸⁵ The resolution, with much of its problematic language intact, ultimately was voted in with 29 in favour, 14 against, and four abstentions.

March 2016: 31st session of the HRC

Anti-rights actors hoping to further limit civil society space mobilized against a resolution on human rights defenders at the 31st session of the Human Rights Council. However, in this case their efficacy was limited, due in part to a strong mobilization of progressive human rights activists.

The *resolution on ‘Protecting human rights defenders addressing economic, social and cultural rights’*⁴⁸⁶ was adopted by a vote in March 2016. Following contentious negotiations, a group of States led by Russia, China, Egypt, Cuba, and Pakistan proposed 30 different amendments in an attempt to deeply undermine the language and objectives of the resolution. The amendments called to remove any reference in the text to the term ‘human rights defenders,’ to deny the legitimacy of the work of human rights defenders, and to both dilute and regress from language and terminology from past human rights defenders resolutions.

The amendments attempted to weaken protections against, and accountability for intimidation and reprisals against human rights defenders

It is striking that, in the immediate wake of the murder of indigenous Woman Human Rights Defender Berta Caceres, the amendments attempted to weaken protections against, and accountability for intimidation and reprisals against human rights defenders; to remove acknowledgement of the specific risks and violations faced by women, indigenous, and land and environmental rights defenders, their families, and communities; and to refuse to condemn the assassination of human rights defenders.

The amendments proposed by the hostile States⁴⁸⁷ can

be seen as linked to the context of systematic efforts currently underway in a number of these States and others to restrict and criminalize the dangerous and important work of human rights defenders in violation of human rights protections. Several of the States sponsoring the hostile amendments are also active in intimidation and blocking of NGO engagement at the United Nations, and were named in allegations of intimidation or reprisals in both the UN Secretary-General's report and the joint communications report of Special Procedures on this subject.

A group of 180 CSOs worldwide issued a call to action, urging Member States to vote against the hostile amendments and support the resolution.⁴⁸⁸ All 30 amendments were rejected upon voting, and the resolution passed with 33 in support, six against, and eight abstentions. States that voted no on this resolution were Burundi, China, Cuba, Nigeria, Russia, and Venezuela. Abstentions were lodged by Bolivia, El Salvador, Kenya, Namibia, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Vietnam.

June–July 2016: 32nd session of the HRC

The June–July 2016 Human Rights Council session was particularly contentious and the site of a number of struggles over human rights language. In large part, this was due to the unusually high number of resolutions proposed both in general and focusing on rights related to gender and sexuality.

Among other resolutions, the 32nd session adopted texts on youth and human rights,⁴⁸⁹ trafficking in persons,⁴⁹⁰ civil society space,⁴⁹¹ elimination of female genital mutilation,⁴⁹² protection of the family,⁴⁹³ women's equal nationality rights,⁴⁹⁴ elimination of discrimination against women,⁴⁹⁵ protection against violence and discrimination based on SOGI,⁴⁹⁶ the impact of racism on the human rights of girls,⁴⁹⁷ and the elimination of violence against women, including



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indigenous women and girls.⁴⁹⁸ As is standard during the June session of the HRC, a number of reports were also adopted, including those of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women and the Working Group on Discrimination against Women, and the thematic report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of assembly and association on fundamentalisms and their impact.⁴⁹⁹

The final draft of the HRC's *resolution on violence against women*, an annual resolution led by Canada, contained some good language, including references to comprehensive sexuality education⁵⁰⁰, intimate partner violence⁵⁰¹, women human rights defenders, and women's rights to have control over all matters related to their sexuality. Push-back from several States during negotiations - and a lack of significant consultation with indigenous women's groups prior to the first draft - resulted in a final draft with more limited language reflecting the specific contexts and rights violations experienced by indigenous women and girls, and structural changes needed.

The resolution was ultimately adopted by consensus. However, Russia introduced 11 hostile amendments to the text

The resolution was ultimately adopted by consensus. However, Russia introduced 11 hostile amendments to the text, seven of which it withdrew before voting. The amendments sought to remove a reference to the Security Council,⁵⁰² delete language referring to intimate partner violence,⁵⁰³ remove the reference to human rights defenders,⁵⁰⁴ and delete the reference to comprehensive sexuality education.⁵⁰⁵ On a positive note, the final four amendments were defeated in the vote. Several countries then noted their reservations to the text, including Paraguay, Saudi Arabia (on behalf of the Gulf Cooperation Council), Togo, and China.

The *annual resolution on discrimination against women in law and practice*⁵⁰⁶, linked to the Working Group's (WG) thematic report, was also adopted at the Council during the 32nd session. The resolution focused on the theme of the WG's report, on the right to health and safety. The final resolution contained robust language on sexual and reproductive health and rights, financial and social barriers to women's health, and women's rights to bodily autonomy. However, the human rights language and recommendations of the Working Group report were significantly diluted in both the first draft of the resolution and the final negotiated draft, including the role of the instrumentalization of women in denial of health and safety rights.

One of the objectives of the resolution was to renew the mandate of the Working Group for another three years, which became a site of conflict and a bargaining chip in negotiations. Several States argued against renewal and stronger human rights language was eroded in the search for consensus. Once again, despite the resolution's integral connection to the WG's report, several States refused to welcome the report on health and safety, with the final draft merely noting the text, signifying their disapproval and attempting to distance the resolution from the content of the report.

The final draft of this resolution was adopted by consensus, and included a renewal of the Working Group's mandate. Russia, again, introduced hostile amendments to the text, calling to remove references to human rights defenders,⁵⁰⁷ the Security Council,⁵⁰⁸ and a human rights based approach.⁵⁰⁹ These amendments were ultimately defeated in the vote. Several States again noted reservations to this resolution⁵¹⁰, including Ecuador, Paraguay, El Salvador, Russia, Saudi Arabia, and China.

The *annual resolution on civil society space*,⁵¹¹ based in 2016 on the UN High Commissioner's recent report on the same subject, was sponsored by a core group of States, including Chile, Ireland, Japan, Sierra Leone, and

Tunisia. Despite strong facilitation from the core group, the text of the resolution and its protections and calls for positive measures to promote and protect civic space, came under sustained assault by States, such as India, South Africa, Russia, Egypt, and Iran. The resolution is historically adopted by consensus, but a vote on the draft was called by Russia and China.

The Russian Federation tabled 15 amendments to the text of this resolution in an effort to drastically undermine its object and purpose, to justify illegitimate restrictions on CSOs, and to erode human rights protections for civil society around the world. Among other moves, the amendments sought to remove reference to human rights defenders (HRD) and previous HRC language supporting their human rights; to the gravity of threats faced today by civil society, including restrictions to their rights to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful association, and reprisals against those HRDs seeking to engage with the UN and other international human rights bodies; remove or limit civil society's right to access resources for its work and to be free of arbitrary registration and reporting requirements that seek to hinder this work; and reject the recommendations of the UN High Commissioner for States to ensure a supportive legal framework for civil society, including full access to justice, a supportive public and political environment, access to information, human rights education, and public participation of civil society actors.

Two hundred forty-four progressive CSOs issued a letter to all Member States of the Council with respect to the threats entailed by these amendments.⁵¹² It is heartening that all of Russia's hostile amendments lost the vote at the HRC, and the resolution was subsequently adopted by 31 in favour, nine against, and seven abstentions.

The 32nd session of the Council also brought forward a *resolution on 'protection against violence and discrimination on the basis of SOGI,*⁵¹³ presented by Mexico, Argentina,



The Russian Federation tabled 15 amendments to the text of this resolution to justify illegitimate restrictions on CSOs, and to erode human rights protections for civil society around the world

Brazil, Uruguay, and Colombia. The resolution sought to establish a new Independent Expert on sexual orientation and gender identity, i.e. to assess the status of implementation of international human rights law to overcome violence and discrimination on the basis of SOGI, research and report to the Council on the root causes of violence and discrimination on this basis, and to engage with States and other stakeholders on this issue. This resolution was the focus of substantial conversation and debate, organizing, and opposition before, during, and following the Council session.

The text of the SOGI resolution now includes language undermining the universality of rights, upholding national exceptions and relativism

Negotiations on the resolution were marked by a lack of debate, as several States—including Russia, most African States, and all Member States of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation aside from Albania—chose to boycott the process. Instead, these actors focused on different strategies to attempt to block and/or undermine the text of the resolution and its goal of establishing an Independent Expert. Saudi Arabia put forward a no-action motion on the whole resolution, which was defeated in a vote. Russia, and Pakistan on behalf of the OIC (aside from Albania), then put forward a set of 11 hostile amendments to change the focus of the resolution from SOGI, insert culturally and religiously relativist language, make harmful references to sovereignty to erode State accountability, and to strike out the mandate of the Independent Expert.

The nature and content of these amendments are discussed in more detail above.⁵¹⁴ While the establishment of the new mandate holder was upheld by the HRC, seven hostile amendments were ultimately passed, such that the (preambular) text of the SOGI

resolution now includes language undermining the universality of rights, upholding national exceptions and relativism.⁵¹⁵

Finally, anti-rights actors focused much of their attention again on a third *'protection of the family' resolution*⁵¹⁶ at the Human Rights Council. This year's resolution purported to focus on "the role of the family in supporting the protection and promotion of human rights of persons with disabilities," although as aforementioned the resolution sponsors did not engage in any significant way with disability rights groups, or consult with the treaty monitoring bodies or Special Procedures with a focus on the rights of persons with disabilities.

The text was presented by a core group consisting of Egypt, Bangladesh, Belarus, China, Cote d'Ivoire, El Salvador, Mauritania, Morocco, Qatar, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and Uganda. The resolution repeated the same problematic themes as in previous years. The text again sought to elevate the family at the expense of the human rights of individual family members, did not recognize the diversity of families or that families can be the site of oppression and violence for vulnerable individuals and groups, including persons with disabilities.

During the course of negotiations, the core group once again was unwilling to accept any changes to key weaknesses in the text. In a move towards future and deeper embedding of the family discourse in the human rights framework and in State responsibilities, the 2016 resolution called for a one-day intersessional seminar on the role of the family in supporting the protection and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities and to discuss challenges and best practices.

Unfortunately, the 2016 resolution on protection of the family received less push-back during negotiations from States supportive of human rights protections—although Switzerland and Norway, for example, were outspoken opponents to the regressive language outlined above. It

appears that the concentrated focus on the embattled SOGI resolution diverted both State⁵¹⁷ and progressive CSO attention, organizing, and coalition-building away from engagement with the family resolution this session.

In an attempt to improve the text, three amendments were put forward by the United Kingdom and one amendment by Switzerland and Norway, calling for inclusion of ‘various forms of the family’,⁵¹⁸ a change in language from ‘family’ to ‘families’ in the main text of the draft resolution⁵¹⁹, the addition of “supporting members of the family,”⁵²⁰ and the addition of ‘families’ to the title of the resolution.⁵²¹ All of these amendments were defeated in a vote, and the resolution as a whole was adopted by a vote of 32 in favour, 12 against, and three abstentions. As such, the 2016 protection of the family resolution passed by a greater majority than previous resolutions, increasing its yes vote count by three countries since 2015.

This Council session concluded with a filibuster and controversy led by Russia on the appointment of Special Procedures mandate holders. The Russian Federation objected to the appointment of the nominee for the extrajudicial executions mandate; while Russia’s human rights record had been criticized previously by this nominee, Russia refused to be explicit about the basis for its objections at the Council. Amidst comments about the divisiveness of the Human Rights Council, this led to the adoption of the entire list of new mandate holders being blocked. Following hours of debate, the 32nd session of the Human Rights Council was adjourned without reaching a decision, to be resumed at a later stage.

September 2016: 33rd session of the HRC

The September 2016 session of Human Rights Council indicated an increasing interest in the work of the HRC on the part of anti-rights actors, now focusing on the theme of maternal mortality and morbidity.



Unfortunately, the 2016 resolution on protection of the family received less push-back during negotiations from States supportive of human rights protections

The Council adopted its biannual *resolution on preventable maternal mortality and morbidity*, which was the subject of an unprecedented level of opposition. While the final draft of the resolution included some advances on women's and girls' rights, negotiations were tense, with Russia bringing forward 14 amendments to undermine the protections in the text significantly, five of which went to a vote.

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The amendments attempted to remove references to General Comment 22 on the right to sexual and reproductive health⁵²² from the Committee on the Covenant on Economic, Cultural, and Social Rights⁵²³, the treaty monitoring body for the binding international covenant. The General Comment discusses States' obligations to prevent unsafe abortion and provide post-abortion care without listing exceptions or limitations to specific circumstances.⁵²⁴ They also attempted to delete references to General Comment 3⁵²⁵ on women and girls with disabilities—which includes progressive language on the sexual and reproductive health of women with disabilities—from the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD),⁵²⁶ which monitors implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons of Disabilities. States also proposed amendments that targeted the resolution's call for States to remove third party authorization for health services. This proposed deletion was of language that had been agreed upon in the June 2016 resolution on discrimination against women.

The five amendments brought to a vote by Russia were passed by a majority of States in the Council.

3. Human Rights Committee

Anti-rights actors at the United Nations are proactively seeking new spaces in which to attempt to further their subversion of fundamental human rights. In 2015, a number of religious right organizations targeted the Human Rights Committee in an attempt to cement their misleading 'right to life' discourse into human rights language.

The UN Human Rights Committee,⁵²⁷ which is the treaty monitoring body for the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,⁵²⁸ regularly reviews States Parties' compliance with the treaty. It also reviews individual complaints and issues jurisprudence with respect to States which have ratified the First Optional Protocol,⁵²⁹ and issues General Comments as part of its expert role in interpreting the content of the binding human rights provisions protected under the Covenant.

In 2015, a number of religious right organizations targeted the Human Rights Committee in an attempt to cement their misleading 'right to life' discourse into human rights language

Historically, anti-rights actors active in international policy spaces have been highly critical of the work of the Human Rights Committee and other treaty monitoring bodies, particularly the CEDAW Committee. Conservative groups have repeatedly attempted to undermine and invalidate the work of the treaty monitoring bodies, as mentioned above, characterizing their authoritative interpretations of binding human rights language as biased or activist.

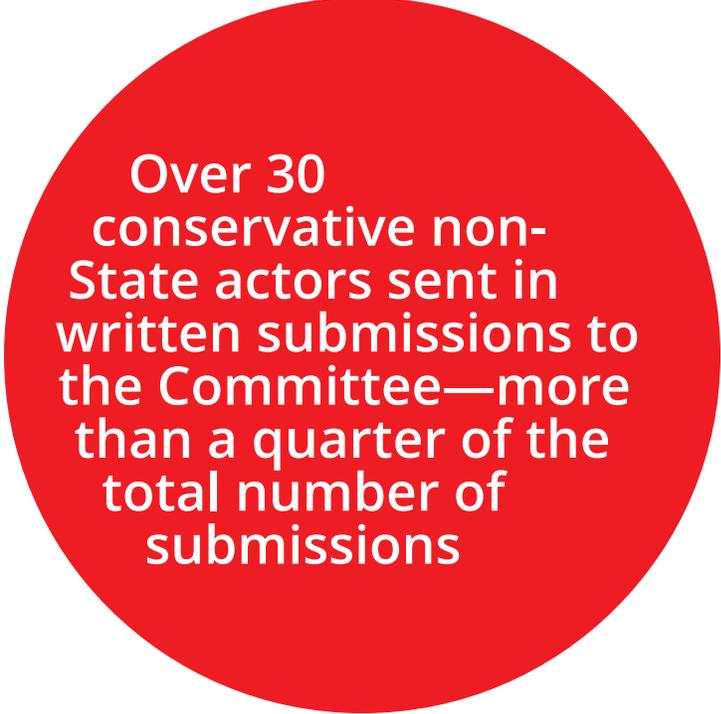
It was thus an interesting shift in approach—or more likely, evidence of a newly multi-layered strategy—when

a number of conservative actors descended upon the Committee following its public announcement that it would be developing a new General Comment (GC) interpreting the right to life in article 6 of the ICCPR.⁵³⁰ The purpose of this GC will be to “provide appropriate and authoritative guidance” to States Parties and other actors on the measures necessary to “ensure full compliance with the rights protected under this provision.”⁵³¹

The Committee held a half-day of general discussion, as per its standard procedure, in preparation for the GC during its 114th session in July 2015. In advance of the meeting, the Human Rights Committee issued an invitation to interested civil society, national human rights institutions (NHRIs), and academia to participate in person and/or provide written information on the subject. Over 30 conservative non-State actors sent in written submissions to the Committee⁵³²—more than a quarter of the total number of submissions received—articulating and advocating the anti-abortion right to life discourse (i.e. that life begins at conception) for inclusion in the Committee’s interpretation of article 6. If successful, this would provide support for an anti-abortion stance under one of the key binding international human rights treaties.

On the half-day of discussion, anti-abortion actors again turned out in force to participate actively in the conversation. Representatives from the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children, the Association of the Catholic Doctors of Bucharest, C-Fam, Autistic Minority International, Priests for Life, Canada Silent No More, Family & Life, WOOMB International, ADF International, and the National Right to Life Educational Trust Fund were present, as well as a coalition of anti-abortion Latin American NGOs⁵³³.

Two members of the Committee subsequently shared the first draft of the General Comment,⁵³⁴ and have been engaged in regular discussions to develop the GC in subsequent sessions. Following the significant focus at the half-day of discussion, abortion continues to receive



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significant attention - the first draft, for example, states that, “the Covenant does not explicitly refer to the rights of unborn children, including their right to life.”⁵³⁵

The first draft GC also notes that any legal restrictions on the ability of women to seek abortion must not jeopardize their lives or subject them to “severe physical or mental pain or suffering.” The GC goes on to state that where abortion is currently illegal, the government must maintain legal exceptions for therapeutic abortion, and must not regulate pregnancy or abortion in a manner that would “compel women to seek clandestine illegal abortions that could endanger their lives.”⁵³⁶ The first draft GC also states that, “the duty to protect the lives of women against the health risks associated with the termination” of pregnancies requires States to “provide women, and, in particular, adolescents, with information about reproductive options, with access to contraception” and with “access to adequate prenatal health care.”⁵³⁷

However, the first draft makes reference to regional language that does mention life beginning at conception. It goes on to say, “States Parties may choose to adopt measures to protect the life, potential for human life or dignity of unborn children, including through recognition of their capacity to exercise the right to life,”⁵³⁸—albeit only when this does not result in violation of other rights under the Covenant, such as the right to life of pregnant mothers and the prohibition against exposing them to cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment.

The Human Rights Committee continues to discuss and develop the draft Comment, while some past conversations within the Committee around the provisions on abortion and the right to life have been mixed.⁵³⁹

4. Sustainable Development Goals negotiations and agenda 2030

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which include a set of goals, indicators, and targets, were determined through a series of intergovernmental negotiations, culminating in the adoption of 17 goals as Agenda 2030 in September 2015. The Goals replace the previous Millennium Development Goals and seek to frame the agendas of Member States to meet the urgent environmental, political, and economic challenges facing the world today.

Conservative actors then pivoted to another strategy, making reservations to the Goals

Anti-rights actors were involved in lobbying towards the development of the new Sustainable Development Goals through fall 2015. The Group of Friends of the Family continues to be active at the General Assembly, but was first launched by Belarus and Qatar with the goal of mainstreaming the family in the SDGs, and pushing for a stand-alone goal on the family.

Conservative actors focused on rights related to gender and sexuality received less traction and success in influencing Agenda 2030 than in several other UN spaces. Their cornerstone ask of a stand-alone family goal did not come to fruition, and no regressive references to the family made it into the final text.

However, in the end, the Goals did not move the line with regards to abortion. The final draft outcome does not specifically call for an end to all forms of violence and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity worldwide. The final draft of the Goals did not include references to sexual rights, with “sexual and

reproductive health and rights” falling off the table during negotiations, and failed to include comprehensive sexuality education.

Anti-rights actors had some impact on the affirmation of human rights in the Agenda. An earlier draft of paragraph 19 of the Political Declaration included a strong recognition that the realization of all human rights is a principal aim of sustainable development, and a clear commitment to non-discrimination for all.⁵⁴⁰ The paragraph stated that “this is an Agenda which seeks to respect, protect and fulfill all human rights” and that it would “work to ensure that human rights and fundamental freedoms are enjoyed by all without discrimination” on multiple grounds, including social origin and “other status.”

The African Group and the Arab Group raised robust objections to this phrasing and called for the removal of “other status” in the anti-discrimination clause, and dilution of the call to hold States fully accountable to all of their human rights commitments. Several Member States also objected to the phrase “all social and economic groups” elsewhere in the document, apparently to block reference to and protections for people who are non-conforming with respect to sexual orientation and gender identity.

In the end, the Declaration adopted a paragraph from the Rio+20 outcome document with weaker language, swapping “respect, protect and *fulfill all* human rights” with “respect, protect and *promote* human rights” — softening State responsibilities, and by excluding ‘all’, undermining the universality of rights—and narrowing the list of subjects of the non-discrimination clause.⁵⁴¹

Conservative actors then pivoted to another strategy, making reservations to the Goals. As noted above, several States issued reservations at the end of the Open Working Group process, upon finalization of the draft SDGs in August 2015. Then, at the September



The Group of Friends of the Family continues to be active at the General Assembly, but was first launched by Belarus and Qatar with the goal of mainstreaming the family in the SDGs

2015 session, the General Assembly convened to formally adopt the resolution pertaining to the Agenda in advance of the Summit.

Amongst the above, Qatar made reservations to the term “early marriage,” or the marriage of children, and made reservations to all points in the document dealing with reproductive health, which “might run contrary to sharia law.” Qatar also stated that any use of the term gender in the Agenda designated a man or a woman. Senegal stated that it did not consider the term “other status,” which remained in paragraph 19 of the Declaration, as relating to LGBT persons. On behalf of the African Group, Senegal stated, “The African States would therefore implement the goals in line with the cultural and religious values of its countries.” Senegal also made reservations indicating that the term ‘family’ refers only to a man and a woman, and against any right to abortion.

Iran also made reservations, stating that, “nothing in the document should override national priorities,” which includes “national understandings on the terms ‘other status,’ ‘other groups,’ ‘sexual and reproductive health and rights’ and ‘the family.’” Ecuador made reservations to the text on the basis that the Constitution of Ecuador “recognized that life began at conception.” Egypt reserved, stating that the content of the Agenda “must be implemented in line with national legislation and priorities, as well as with cultural and religious values.” It went on to state that education should be chosen by parents, and that “references to sexual health and services did not imply any right for adolescents to access services not in line with national laws and values.”

Sudan also issued reservations, stating among them that “no ideas or concepts should be imposed upon States which ran counter to their cultural values.” Chad reserved, arguing that “some of the issues in the outcome document” are not “in line with universally recognized international laws.” Chad also stated that the provisions of the Agenda must not “undermine the responsibility of parents in educating children, and the reference to sexual

education should not necessarily lead to the right to abortion.” The country also echoed other reservations claiming that marriage is a union between a man and a woman.

Egypt reserved, stating that the content of the Agenda “must be implemented in line with national legislation and priorities, as well as with cultural and religious values”

The Holy See also issued reservations, and stated that it was “confident that the related pledge ‘no one will be left behind’ would serve as the perspective through which the entire Agenda would be read” in order to protect “the right to life of the person, from conception until natural death.” The Holy See also stated that use of the term gender in the agreement was “grounded in the biological sexual identity that was male or female” and that any reference to sexual and reproductive health or reproductive rights in the Goals did not refer to abortion.

Some States went a step further. In October 2015, Saudi Arabia’s foreign minister declared that the country would not follow any international rules relating to the Sustainable Development Goals that reference sexual orientation or gender identity,⁵⁴² describing them as running “counter to Islamic law.” Direct references to individuals with non-conforming gender identity or sexual conduct being removed from the text during negotiations notwithstanding, the Minister expressed concern that “sexual health” could be used to read in this language, and stated that “mentioning sex in the text, to us, means exactly male and female” and that family “means consisting of a married man and woman.”⁵⁴³

5. General Assembly

Anti-rights actors also increasingly engage with and have made headway at the UN General Assembly (GA), particularly in the Third Committee. While the GA as a whole is a key deliberative, policymaking, and representative organ of the United Nations, the Third Committee of the GA deals with agenda items relating to a range of social, humanitarian affairs, and human rights issues. Each year it discusses and issues resolutions on issues including the advancement of women, the protection of children, family, and youth.

In November 2015, at the 70th session of the GA, a proposed *resolution on Human Rights Defenders*⁵⁴⁴ was the scene of substantial push-back from States including Russia and China. Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, and Myanmar also opposed the resolution, and a record of 39 hostile amendments to the text were proposed by the African Group. These amendments aimed to remove references to the legitimacy of the work of human rights defenders, and to weaken or remove language citing the need for their protection.⁵⁴⁵ Opponents of the text also proposed deletion of a call for the release of defenders who are arbitrarily detained or imprisoned for the exercise of their human rights and fundamental freedoms, and to eliminate language on adequate procedural safeguards in judicial proceedings for HRDs and the need to combat impunity for human rights violations against independent civil society.

Instead of being agreed upon by consensus, as has been the history of human rights defenders resolutions at the General Assembly over the past 16 years, a vote was called on the resolution. While Nigeria stated that they saw “no need” for the resolution, China argued in advance of the vote that it had “no choice” but a vote against since allegedly “certain Western countries” employ the protection of defenders to “interfere in the internal affairs of developing countries and disrupt their social stability.”



A proposed resolution on *Human Rights Defenders* was the scene of substantial push-back from States including Russia and China

The text ultimately passed with 114 votes for, 14 countries against,⁵⁴⁶ and 40 States abstaining. While the amendments from the African Group were ultimately withdrawn, the final text was weakened in attempts to negotiate a consensus document. Among other concessions, a reference to the responsibility of business enterprises to respect the rights of HRDs to life, liberty, and security of person was deleted; and the call for States to respond favourably to visit requests of the Special Rapporteur on HRDs was limited.

In 2016, the General Assembly was the scene of feverish anti-rights organizing in opposition to the new mandate holder created by the Human Rights Council resolution on sexual orientation and gender identity in June 2016

At the 71st session in 2016, the General Assembly—in the Third Committee, the plenary of the GA, and the Fifth Committee, which is responsible for administration and budgetary matters—was the scene of feverish anti-rights organizing in opposition to the new mandate holder created by the Human Rights Council resolution on sexual orientation and gender identity in June 2016: the Independent Expert on SOGI. Four separate attempts were made at the General Assembly to block the mandate.

In November 2016—after the Independent Expert on SOGI had been appointed by the Human Rights Council, following the creation of the new mandate through resolution 32/2 at the Council in June 2016—the African Group introduced a hostile resolution at the Third Committee seeking to undermine the SOGI mandate.⁵⁴⁷ The resolution attempted to “defer consideration of and action on” the HRC resolution that created the mandate, “in order to allow time for further consultations to

determine the legal basis upon which the mandate of the special procedure established therein will be defined.”⁵⁴⁸ In essence, the General Assembly resolution⁵⁴⁹ sought to indefinitely defer the new mandate in the same manner as a no-action motion, even though the HRC had previously rejected a no-action motion brought by Saudi Arabia on resolution 32/2.

Several Latin American and Caribbean countries introduced an amendment to the Third Committee resolution requesting deletion of the paragraph requesting deferral of the SOGI mandate. The amendment ultimately passed narrowly, with 84 in favour of the amendment, 77 against, and 17 abstentions. Organizing next shifted to the General Assembly plenary, where the African Group and State supporters sought to again introduce the clause on deferral of the HRC SOGI resolution. This resolution was also narrowly defeated, with a final vote count of 77 for, 84 against, and 16 abstentions.

Anti-rights actors aimed to directly target the autonomy and powers of the Human Rights Council, in an effort to undermine its authority

The attempts in the General Assembly to retroactively block the creation of a mandate brought forward by the Human Rights Council represented a new and troubling tactic. The Council is not a subsidiary body of the Third Committee, it makes decisions rather than recommendations, and the creation of special procedures mandates falls within the jurisdiction of the Human Rights Council.⁵⁵⁰ Anti-rights actors aimed to directly target the autonomy and powers of the Human Rights Council, which is the primary UN body charged with the protection and promotion of human rights, in an effort to undermine its authority respective to the General Assembly.

A third vote was held on this issue at the Fifth Committee, where in an unprecedented move a number of States, including China, Russia, and Belarus, attempted to block the funding of UN human rights experts⁵⁵¹, including the new Independent Expert (IE) on sexual orientation and gender identity, through a resolution dealing with finance and budgetary issues. This novel attempt to cripple the work of the Human Rights Council (and IE on SOGI) was defeated but maintained significant support, the resolution failing with 82 against, 65 in favour, and 16 abstentions. Finally, the proposal to defund the work of the new mandate was raised in the General Assembly plenary, where it was defeated with 81 against, 65 in favour, and 16 abstentions.

While these multiple efforts were unsuccessful in administratively blocking the creation and continuation of the new mandate, the significant support they received, the novel strategizing employed, and the strong alliances built and fostered along regional lines through negotiations point to difficulties ahead.

6. Other UN spaces and mechanisms

In another recent example of the impact of anti-rights State actors in excluding some civil society from international human rights spaces, in advance of the *UN High Level Meeting on Ending AIDS* in June 2016, a group of States, including Russia, Cameroon, Tanzania, and 51 Member States of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, attempted to block participation of 39 organizations in total.

Egypt, writing to the General Assembly President on behalf of the OIC, first objected to the inclusion of 11 non-governmental organizations at the meeting.⁵⁵² Tanzania and Cameroon pushed to reject nine NGOs working with LGBTQ individuals in some capacity in their



Tanzania and Cameroon pushed to reject nine NGOs working with LGBTQ individuals in some capacity in their respective countries

respective countries. Russia blocked two Russian groups who work with drug users and advocate harm reduction methods like needle exchange.

Any General Assembly member country currently has the ability to veto the participation of any non-governmental organization in the three-day meeting at the GA without providing a reason.⁵⁵³ The group of excluded CSOs, many of whom work towards LGBTQ rights, appealed to the President of the General Assembly.

President Lykketoft (of Denmark) of the General Assembly stated that his office had negotiated with Member States to remove other objections, reducing the number of groups blocked from the conference from 39 to the final tally of 22.⁵⁵⁴ He expressed his regret at the exclusion, stating that “we have done whatever we can within and outside our actual authority,” and that under the current General Assembly rules and procedures “we have no possibility to overrule the objections in spite of the fact that I personally regret them.”⁵⁵⁵

Despite strong lobbying from States and State blocs—such as the European Union, Canada and the United States—and civil society, these organizations remained barred from participation in the formal events, although some excluded NGO staff could attend when registered by other organizations.

Anti-rights actors were also active and influential at another UN conference in 2016. Organizations like Family Watch International, United Families International, and Big Ocean have been engaged in lobbying Member States towards negotiations on the United Nations’ New Urban Agenda.

The Agenda, an agreement that aims to address the challenges of growing cities globally and which sets out guidelines for sustainable urban development over the next 20 years,⁵⁵⁶ was adopted at the *Habitat III conference* in Quito in October 2016. United Families International and Big Ocean sent delegates to the meeting.

Over the past year, several delegations—including Mexico, Argentina, Canada, the European Union, the United States, and Colombia—had pushed for the inclusion of LGBTQ people in the anti-discrimination and anti-violence clause of the Agenda, under the list of “vulnerable groups.” However, a group of 17 countries led by Belarus effectively blocked this language,⁵⁵⁷ removing the reference to individuals who engage in same-sex sexual conduct. The blocking group of States included Russia, Egypt, Qatar, Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, and Iran.

Conclusion

As we have seen, the universality of human rights is under attack by an increasingly coordinated and agile set of anti-rights actors operating in the international human rights sphere. This mirrors trends at the national and regional levels.

In recent years, feminists and other progressive activists have taken bold action to hold our ground and to push back against these hostile initiatives in order to protect and further our rights. Important progressions in human rights norms and language - including on rights related to gender and sexuality - have occurred in recent years as a result of this sustained action.

The OURs initiative aims through this report (the first of a yearly series) to further our collective advocacy as we go forward through a sharper understanding of the anti-rights actors, discourses, strategies and impacts that aim to chip away at and appropriate our human rights. We hope that by building on this knowledge, we can organize creatively and strategically together to maintain and continue developing human rights standards to reclaim our rights, hold our governments accountable for their rights violations, and protect the fundamental principle that human rights are universal, inalienable, indivisible, interdependent, and interrelated.

Feminists and other progressive activists have taken bold action to hold our ground and to push back against these hostile initiatives

We hope that by building on this knowledge, we can protect the fundamental principle that human rights are universal, inalienable, indivisible, interdependent, and interrelated

- ¹ FRIDA & AWID. *Brave, Creative, Resilient: The Global State of Young Feminist Organizing*. September 2016. Available at http://youngfeministfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/frida-awid_research_summary.pdf.
- ² AWID. *New Insights on Religious Fundamentalisms: Research Highlights*. September 2009. Available at https://www.awid.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/new_insights_on_religious_fundamentalisms.pdf.
- ³ Allan Carlson, *The New Agrarian Mind: The Movement toward Decentralist Thought in Twentieth-Century America*, 2000.
- ⁴ Jennifer Butler, *For Faith and Family: Christian Right Advocacy at the United Nations*, The Public Eye, Summer 2000, <http://www.politicalresearch.org/2000/09/01/for-faith-and-family-christian-right-advocacy-at-the-united-nations/#sthash.hLDnUKqW.dpbs>
- ⁵ Catholics for Choice, *The Catholic Church at the United Nations: Church or State?*, Washington, DC, 2013, http://www.catholicsforchoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/CFC_See_Change_2013.pdf
- ⁶ *ibid*
- ⁷ Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States, Dec. 26, 1933; for more information see, The Holy See at the United Nations, An Obstacle to Women's Reproductive Health And Rights (New York: Center for Reproductive Law and Policy, 2000), https://www.reproductiverights.org/sites/crr.civicactions.net/files/documents/pub_bp_holyseeattheun.pdf
- ⁸ The status of a Permanent Observer is based purely on practice (or 'custom'), and there are no provisions for it in the United Nations Charter.
- ⁹ Catholics for Choice, *Press release* (2014), <http://www.catholicsforchoice.org/campaign/global-interfaith-secular-alliance/the-vaticans-obstructionism-on-womens-rights-and-reproductive-rights-at-the-un-forced-a-response-from-international-ngos/>
- ¹⁰ The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (General Assembly resolution A/RES/54/263 of 25 May 2000, entry into force 12 February 2002), and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (General Assembly resolution A/RES/54/263 of 25 May 2000, entered into force on 18 January 2002).
- ¹¹ Center for Reproductive Rights, *The Holy See at the United Nations: Briefing Paper*, August 2000.
- ¹² UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), *Concluding observations on the second periodic report of the Holy See*, 31 January 2014, CRC/C/VAT/CO/2 For more information, see also the comments of the Holy See on the Concluding Observations at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/secretariat_state/2014/documents/rc-seg-st-20140205_concluding-observations-rights-child_en.html
- ¹³ Eric Hanson, *The Catholic Church in World Politics*, 1987.
- ¹⁴ See for example, Pontifical Council of the Family, *The Meeting Point: Project for Affective and Sexual Formation*, 2016, <http://www.educazioneaffettiva.org/?lang=en>, and Pontifical Council for the Family, *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality: Guidelines for Education Within the Family*, 1995, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/family/documents/rc_pc_family_doc_08121995_human-sexuality_en.html.
- ¹⁵ John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution, Pastor Bonus (28 June 1988) in AAS, article 141.
- ¹⁶ *New Vatican Document Highlights Church Teachings on Life and Family*, National Catholic Register, June 2006, http://www.ncregister.com/site/article/new_vatican_document_highlights_church_teachings_on_life_and_family.
- ¹⁷ The XIV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, "The vocation and mission of the family in the Church and in the contemporary world": *The final report of the Synod of Bishops to the Holy Father, Pope Francis*, October 2015, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20151026_relazione-finale-xiv-assemblea_en.html.
- ¹⁸ Ann Schneible, Catholic News Agency, June 4, 2016, <http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/pope-approves-new-vatican-department-for-the-laity-family-and-life-27040/>
- ¹⁹ For more information on the Institute and its affiliates worldwide, please see <https://www.johnpaulii.edu/about/the-institute-worldwid>
- ²⁰ The Holy See based its objection on an equation of emergency contraception to abortion, which it refutes in all circumstances, including rape. In the past, Pope John Paul II stated that women raped in war should "accept the enemy" and make him "flesh of their own flesh."
- ²¹ Center for Reproductive Rights, *The Holy See at the United Nations: Briefing Paper*, August 2000.
- ²² This misleading discourse is discussed in more detail below.
- ²³ Thomas Reese, *Inside the Vatican: The Politics and Organization of the Catholic Church*, 1996.
- ²⁴ *ibid*.
- ²⁵ *ibid*.
- ²⁶ Amy L Coates, Peter S Hill, Simon Rushton & Julie Balen, *The Holy See on sexual and reproductive health rights: conservative in position, dynamic in response*, *Reproductive Health Matters*, 22:44, 114-124 (2014).
- ²⁷ Old age support rates relate to the number of individuals who can provide economic support to the number of older people that may be materially dependent on the support of others.
- ²⁸ It is also likely that internal clashes between the traditionalist Opus Dei and Pope Francis are contributing to the reinforcement of the Vatican's traditional positioning in policy spaces in recent years, signaling unity and continuity.
- ²⁹ The norm of diversity of families, for instance, has been multiply reaffirmed by the United Nations, including in the General Assembly resolution 65/277, and the Human Rights Council resolution 7/29.
- ³⁰ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), article 16(3)
- ³¹ http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/secretariat_state/documents/rc_seg-st_doc_11021999_forum-aia_en.html

- ³² Statement before the Plenary of the 59th General Assembly on Item 45: 10th Anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development. 14 October 2004. <http://www.holyseemission.org/statements/statement.aspx?id=282>
- ³³ Statement at the 18th Session of the Human Rights Council on item 3: Maternal mortality: practices in adopting a human rights-based approach to eliminate preventable maternal mortality and human rights., 15 September 2011. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/secretariat_state/2011/documents/rc_seg-st_20110915_mortalita-materna_en.html
- ³⁴ The Holy See often misleadingly and selectively refers to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in its arguments for sweeping 'parental rights'.
- ³⁵ See for example, Doris Buss and Didi Herman, *Globalizing Family Values: The Christian Right in International Politics*, 2003.
- ³⁶ Gracie Hsu, *Population Imperialism: The Growing Backlash against U.S. Policy*, *Family Policy* 10, no. 4.
- ³⁷ See for example, Larry B. Stammer, *Religious Right Dispatches Its Missionaries to Beijing*, *Los Angeles Times*, September 1995. During this period, Evangelical Christianity also began to increase respective to Catholicism in the Latin American region, which may have contributed to the increased presence of Evangelical-associated organizations at the international level alongside the Holy See.
- ³⁸ Doris Buss and Didi Herman, *Globalizing Family Values: The Christian Right in International Politics*, 2003.
- ³⁹ Russia joined as an observer state of the OIC in 2005. The others—Thailand, Northern Cyprus, the Central African Republic, and Bosnia and Herzegovina—joined between 1979 and 1998.
- ⁴⁰ The Consultative Assembly of Saudi Arabia, also known as the Shura Council, is the formal advisory body to the monarch.
- ⁴¹ The Hajj is the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca, an annual event which brings over 2–3 million people to Saudi Arabia each year.
- ⁴² *Saudi secretary-general of Organization of Islamic Cooperation resigns*, *Hurriyet Daily News*, November 2016, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/saudi-secretary-general-of-organization-of-islamic-cooperation-resigns.aspx?pageID=238&nID=105608&NewsCatID=352>.
- ⁴³ See *OIC Secretary-General Iyad Madani Resigns Citing Health Reasons*, *Al Arabiya*, October 2016 (<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2016/10/31/OIC-Secretary-General-Iyad-Madani-resigns-.html>) and *Yusuf Al-Othaimen Elected as OIC Secretary General*, *Qatar News Agency*, November 2016 (<http://www.qna.org.qa/en-us/News/16111801030081/Yusuf-Al-Othaimen-Elected-as-OIC-Secretary-General>).
- ⁴⁴ In addition to the significantly different structure and history of the OIC respective to the Holy See, Islam also has no equivalent to the Pope in terms of an institutionalized and centralized authority figure.
- ⁴⁵ The full text of the CDHRI is available at <http://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/FMRpdfs/Human-Rights/cairo.pdf>
- ⁴⁶ That it was the OIC's political intent to posit the Declaration as an 'Islamic' alternative to Western human rights discourse, so as to present the organization as standing in opposition to the liberal West, and to undermine the claim of universality of human rights, is evident from its inclusion in a controversial resolution sent to the World Conference on Human Rights. The resolution in question copied heavily from the Bangkok Declaration on Human Rights, released three weeks earlier to broad international controversy. The sections included along with the Cairo Declaration echoed the Bangkok document's emphasis on the primacy of national sovereignty and the principle of non-interference; the need for human rights to be upheld universally, criticizing double-standards in their implementation; the requirement for the 'universal' nature of human rights to be mediated by national and regional particularities and/or through historical, cultural or religious backgrounds; and the interdependence and indivisibility of all rights, not just civil and political rights.
- ⁴⁷ Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), *Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam (CDHRI)*, 5 August 1990, article 1.
- ⁴⁸ CDHRI, preamble.
- ⁴⁹ CDHRI, article 1.
- ⁵⁰ CDHRI, article 2.
- ⁵¹ *ibid*
- ⁵² CDHRI, article 5.
- ⁵³ CDHRI, article 20.
- ⁵⁴ CDHRI, article 19.
- ⁵⁵ CDHRI, article 15.
- ⁵⁶ CDHRI, article 18.
- ⁵⁷ CDHRI, article 7.
- ⁵⁸ CDHRI, article 13.
- ⁵⁹ CDHRI, article 17.
- ⁶⁰ UDHR, 16(2).
- ⁶¹ CDHRI, article 25.
- ⁶² *ibid*. Shariah is nowhere defined in the Declaration, nor is there any indication of any sources of interpretation, applicable schools of Islamic law, State law or otherwise. In contrast to other purportedly 'Islamic' human rights documents such as the Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights, the CDHRI never directly refers to the Quran or any doctrinal text, and refers only once to a concept derived from traditional Islamic law ('riba' or usury in Article 14).
- ⁶³ The term recurs in articles 2a, 2c, 2d, 7b, 7c, 12, 16, 19d, 22a, 23b, 24 and 25.
- ⁶⁴ CDHRI, article 6(a), referring to women's "own rights to enjoy as well as duties to perform." The document does not make a parallel reference to men's duties.
- ⁶⁵ CDHRI, article 6(b).

- ⁶⁶ See also Turan Kayaoglu. "A Rights Agenda for the Muslim World? The Organization of Islamic Cooperation's Evolving Human Rights Framework." Brookings Doha Center, 2013 <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2013/01/08-oic-human-rights-kayaoglu..>
- ⁶⁷ Influential, but not binding.
- ⁶⁸ The full Covenant is available online at <http://www.oic-oci.org/english/convention/Rights%20of%20the%20Child%20In%20Islam%20E.pdf>
- ⁶⁹ Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), *Covenant on the Rights of the Child in Islam*, June 2005, article 4.
- ⁷⁰ See also Turan Kayaoglu. "A Rights Agenda for the Muslim World? The Organization of Islamic Cooperation's Evolving Human Rights Framework." Brookings Doha Center, 2013.
- ⁷¹ Anthony Tirado Chase, *The Organization of Islamic Cooperation: A Case Study of International Organizations' Impact on Human Rights*, Danish Institute for Human Rights, 2015.
- ⁷² UN Human Rights Council, Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence, and violence against persons based on religion or belief : resolution / adopted by the Human Rights Council, 12 April 2011, A/HRC/RES/16/18.
- ⁷³ Turan Kayaoglu, *The OIC's Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission: An early assessment*, Danish Institute for Human Rights, 2014.
- ⁷⁴ OIC Secretary General opens 4th Session of IPHRC, February 2014, http://www.oic-oci.org//topic/ampg.asp?t_id=8848&t_ref=3549&lan=en
- ⁷⁵ *ibid.*
- ⁷⁶ See also Anthony Tirado Chase, *The Organization of Islamic Cooperation: A Case Study of International Organizations' Impact on Human Rights*, Danish Institute for Human Rights, 2015.
- ⁷⁷ So-called blasphemy laws, at the national level, prohibit and punish perceived 'insults' to religion, which may include religious figures, customs and/or beliefs. As of 2014, 26% of the world's countries or territories had anti-blasphemy laws or policies in place; see e.g. Pew Research Center, Which Countries Still Outlaw Apostasy and Blasphemy? <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/07/29/which-countries-still-outlaw-apostasy-and-blasphemy/>
- ⁷⁸ The Plan is available online at http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Opinion/SeminarRabat/Rabat_draft_outcome.pdf (UN Human Rights Council, Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights : Addendum, Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the expert workshops on the prohibition of incitement to national, racial or religious hatred, 11 January 2013, A/HRC/22/17/Add.4).
- ⁷⁹ Article 19, *UN HRC adopts resolution on combating religious intolerance, but test remains in implementation*, March 2015 , (<https://www.article19.org/resources.php/resource/37919/en/un-hrc-adopts-resolution-on-combating-religious-intolerance,-but-test-remains-in-implementation>).
- ⁸⁰ Quoting then-Secretary General Madani, http://www.oic-oci.org/oicv3/topic/?t_id=11338&t_ref=4456&lan=en
- ⁸¹ *ibid*
- ⁸² The amendments tabled were L.71 to L.81.
- ⁸³ See also ARC International, *Understanding the SOGI Resolution 2016*, <http://arc-international.net/global-advocacy/human-rights-council/32nd-session-of-the-human-rights-council/appointing-an-independent-expert-on-sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity-an-analysis-of-process-results-and-implications/iii-understanding-the-sogi-resolution-2016/>
- ⁸⁴ Amendments L.75, L.76, L.77 and L.78, see also *ibid*
- ⁸⁵ Amendment L73.
- ⁸⁶ While there is a documented increase in numbers of ultra-conservative CSOs active at the United Nations, it is also important to note that many of their claims in terms of attendance and dissemination are not externally corroborated and may be inflated.
- ⁸⁷ At present, 4,507 NGOs worldwide enjoy consultative status with ECOSOC, which coordinates the work of the United Nations. NGOs which receive ECOSOC accreditation may engage in formal UN proceedings. For more information, see <http://csonet.org/index.php?menu=134>.
- ⁸⁸ Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), *Lobbying for Faith and Family: A Study of Religious NGOs at the United Nations*, 2013, <https://www.norad.no/globalassets/import-2162015-80434-am/www.norad.no-ny/filarkiv/vedlegg-til-publikasjoner/lobbying-for-faith-and-family.pdf>.
- ⁸⁹ The term was introduced in the U.S. domestic context in 'Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America,' by the sociologist James Davidson Hunder. It refers to the ongoing pronounced polarization between ideologies, often played out in the political sphere, and frequently focused on such issues as abortion, immigration, LGBT rights, and the separation of church and state.
- ⁹⁰ See for example, Jennifer S. Butler, *Born Again: The Christian Right Globalized*, 2006.
- ⁹¹ See for example, Public Research Associates, *Colonizing African Values: How the U.S. Christian Right is Transforming Sexual Politics in Africa*, 2012, <http://www.politicalresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/10/Colonizing-African-Values.pdf>.
- ⁹² Doris Buss and Didi Herman, *Globalizing Family Values: The Christian Right in International Politics*, 2003.
- ⁹³ George Archibald, *U.S. to help UN redefine 'families'*, Washington Post, April 2002.
- ⁹⁴ Strong interlinkages amongst anti-rights CSOs continue. The Board of the U.S.-based World Congress of Families, for example includes the founder of the Spanish conservative online petition platform HazteOir, the founder of the Russian CSO FamilyPolicy, the director of La Fundacion in Mexico, and the founder of the Italian Novae Terra Foundation.
- ⁹⁵ For more on these and likely future developments, please see Françoise Girard, *Implications of the Trump Administration for sexual and reproductive rights globally*, *Reproductive Health Matters*, 25:49, 2017.
- ⁹⁶ Bendyna, M., Green, J. C., Rozell, M. J. and Wilcox, C., *Catholics and the Christian Right: A View from Four States*. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 39: 321–332, 2000.

- ⁹⁷ We have already seen their effect on the current U.S. administration in early 2017, with respect to the regressive positions on SRHR taken by U.S. representatives at the CSW and CPD, the inclusion of the anti-rights CSO C-Fam (and the Heritage Foundation) on the U.S. delegation to the CSW, and the administration's defunding of the UNFPA.
- ⁹⁸ World Congress of Families newsletter, Oct 28, 2016.
- ⁹⁹ As distinct from the World Meeting of Families, promoted by the Holy See's Dicastery for Laity, the Family and Life. See e.g. <http://www.worldmeeting2018.ie/>
- ¹⁰⁰ Ipas, Public Research Associates and Southern Poverty Law Center, *Everything You Need to Know about the Anti-LGBTQ World Congress of Families*, October 2015, <https://www.splcenter.org/news/2015/10/21/everything-you-need-know-about-anti-lgbtq-world-congress-families-wcf> .
- ¹⁰¹ World Congress of Families newsletter, August/September 2016.
- ¹⁰² J. Lester Feder, *National Organization For Marriage President Confirms Plans To Go Global*, BuzzFeed News, April 2015, https://www.buzzfeed.com/lesterfeder/national-organization-for-marriage-president-confirms-plans?utm_term=.iwqAvLDk#.sblbQPVN1.
- ¹⁰³ Ipas, Public Research Associates and Southern Poverty Law Center, *Everything You Need to Know about the Anti-LGBTQ World Congress of Families*, October 2015.
- ¹⁰⁴ World Congress of Families, *World Family Declaration* <http://www.worldfamilydeclaration.org/WFD>.
- ¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*
- ¹⁰⁶ NORAD, *Lobbying for Faith and Family: A Study of Religious NGOs at the United Nations*, 2013.
- ¹⁰⁷ World Congress of Families October 2016 Newsletter.
- ¹⁰⁸ <http://www.citizengo.org/>
- ¹⁰⁹ <http://hazteoir.org/>
- ¹¹⁰ <http://www.familypolicy.ru/>
- ¹¹¹ Hannah Levintova, *The World Congress of Families' Russian Network*, Mother Jones, February 2014, <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2014/02/world-congress-families-russia-gay-rights>.
- ¹¹² <http://www.novaeterrae.eu/en/>
- ¹¹³ Luca Volontè, *European Resistance to Cultural Suicide*, Public Discourse, Witherspoon Institute, February 2016, <http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2016/02/16362/>.
- ¹¹⁴ Don Feder, *Broad Religious Representation at World Congress of Families IV*, Christian Newswire, April 20, 2007 (quoting Larry Jacobs, vice-president of the WCF), <http://www.christiannewswire.com/news/815802870.html>.
- ¹¹⁵ <http://familyinamerica.org/>
- ¹¹⁶ See the index online here: <http://www.worldcongress.org/pdf/Third%20Section%20-%20591%20and%20Index.pdf>
- ¹¹⁷ Marriage and Religion Research Institute, <http://www.marrpedia.org/start>
- ¹¹⁸ Right Wing Watch, *World Congress of Families*, <http://www.rightwingwatch.org/organizations/world-congress-of-families>.
- ¹¹⁹ The 2014 planned Moscow conference was temporarily put on ice when Russian military intervention undermined planning efforts with U.S.-based partners. However, the conference went ahead as planned with virtually the same partners list and speakers as initially conceived, without the formal title of WCF World Congress.
- ¹²⁰ Ipas, Public Research Associates and Southern Poverty Law Center, *Everything You Need to Know about the Anti-LGBTQ World Congress of Families*, October 2015.
- ¹²¹ See World Congress of Families, *Work* www.worldcongress.org/work.php.
- ¹²² See the full schedule of the 2015 WCF World Congress at <http://wcf9.org/schedule/>
- ¹²³ See the schedule of WCF X at <http://worldcongress.ge/content/13-WCF-schedule>
- ¹²⁴ Meetings were organized for Latin America, co-chaired by Christine Vollmer of the Latin American Alliance for the Family and Katharina Rothweiller of Red Familia, Mexico (including participants from Mexico, Honduras, Guatemala, Venezuela, Peru, Chile and El Salvador); the Caribbean, chaired by Rebekah Ali-Gouveia of the Elpis Centre, Trinidad (including Jamaica, Anguilla, Belize, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, St. Vincent and St. Lucia), Europe, co-chaired by Luca Volonte and Andrea Williams (including Poland, Hungary, Italy, Belgium, Sweden, Serbia, Britain and Portugal); Africa, chaired by Errol Naidoo of Family Policy Institute, South Africa (including participants from Morocco, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa); and Australia/Asia, chaired by Babette Francis of Endeavour Forum in Australia and Francisco Tatad, former Majority Leader of the Philippine Senate, alongside Tio Faulkner of the Australian Marriage Alliance — (including Australia, New Zealand and the Philippines).
- ¹²⁵ *Family Capital and the SDGs, Implementing the 17 Sustainable Development Goals*, Sustainable Families Group, United Families International, World Congress of Families, 2016, <http://www.familycapital17sdgs.org/sdg-book-complete/>.
- ¹²⁶ <https://c-fam.org/about-us/>
- ¹²⁷ Among other controversies, Ruse stated in 2014 that liberal academics “should all be taken out and shot.” See further, Luke Brinker, *This Breitbart Journalist Is Too Extreme For A Notorious Anti-Gay Hate Group*, Media Matters, March 2014, <https://mediamatters.org/blog/2014/03/14/this-breitbart-journalist-is-too-extreme-for-a/198494>
- ¹²⁸ <https://c-fam.org/about-us/>
- ¹²⁹ On this theme, and the following (human dignity), please see further discussion below in the discourses section.
- ¹³⁰ Jennifer S. Butler, *Born Again: The Christian Right Globalized*, 2006.

- 131 Doris Buss and Didi Herman, *Globalizing Family Values: The Christian Right in International Politics*, 2003 (quoting from an interview with Austin Ruse).
- 132 C-Fam, *CEDAW Watch*, September 2012, <https://c-fam.org/cedaw-watch-2>.
- 133 NORAD, *Lobbying for Faith and Family: A Study of Religious NGOs at the United Nations*, 2013.
- 134 See more on the Civil Society for the Family below.
- 135 Which is distinct from the Youth Coalition for SRHR.
- 136 For the full text of the statement, see *Statement of Youth to the World*, International Youth Coalition, <https://iycoalition.org/youth-statement/>
- 137 Susan Yoshihara, C-Fam Friday Fax, *Born of Controversy, Youth Coalition is Emerging Voice at UN*, August 2014, https://c-fam.org/friday_fax/born-of-controversy-youth-coalition-is-emerging-voice-at-un/.
- 138 International Youth Coalition mission, <https://iycoalition.org/mission-statement/>.
- 139 C-Fam claims that the statement received 120,000 signatures, although this has not been confirmed by external sources.
- 140 *Statement of Youth to the World*, International Youth Coalition, paras 2, 3 and 6.
- 141 *ibid*, paras 4 and 7.
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- 156 Statement by Mr. Alexander Lukashevich,, <http://www.osce.org/pc/245656?download=true>
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- 159 <http://www.foreignservicefellowship.org/>
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- 164 Rebecca Oas, *UN Event Shows How Sexual Agenda Tramples Children's Rights*, Catholic Citizens, October 2016, <http://catholiccitizens.org/views/68319/un-event-shows-sexual-agenda-tramples-childrens-rights/>
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- 179 Family Watch International's YouTube page has 19 videos as of November 2016, including 'Cultural Imperialism,' and 'The Protection of the Family: An African Perspective.' <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLzr2OALFhqSjmolMza5qwg/videos>
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- 181 The 2013 version of the Resource Guide is available online at http://www.familywatchinternational.org/fwi/documents/Resource_Guide_2013.pdf
- 182 Ibid, pg 75.
- 183 Ibid, pg 2.
- 184 Ibid, pg 66 (emphasis added).
- 185 Ibid
- 186 Ibid, pg. 8. The full list of chapters includes: abstinence; adoption of children; birth attendant training; child care; development of children; dignity; disabilities; economic support and parents; education and parents; elderly and family; ethical and cultural considerations; extended family; family – basic unit of society; family – central role; family disintegration; family planning; family policies; family reunification; father; female-headed households; fidelity; forced abortion; freedom, dignity and personally-held values; fundamental group unit – family; gender- male and female; generational solidarity; grandparents; happiness; healthy infant; HIV/AIDS and family; husband; impact on families; love; marriage; maternal health; men; migrants; morality; mother; mother to child transmission of HIV; multigenerational families; national laws; national legislative process; natural group unit – family; natural environment for children; nurturing role of family; orphans; parents; parental guidance; parental rights, duties and responsibilities; pornography; pre-natal care; pre-natal sex selection; prostitution; rape; religion; religious and ethical values; religious beliefs of parents; religious intolerance; reproductive health care; reunification of family; right to life; role of parents; sex education; sexual exploitation; single-parent families; spirituality; street children; strengthen and support family; substance abuse (and family); trafficking in children; understanding; values; vital role of family; wellbeing of families; widows; wife; women in family; work; and youth.
- 187 The campaign calls for greater support "to preserve and protect the family," which entails "strengthen[ing] the family as the fundamental unit of society," preserving and protecting "marriage as only between a man and a woman," "protect[ing] life before...birth," and preserving the "rights of parents."
- 188 FWI also prepared a report focusing entirely on anti-Planned Parenthood advocacy, entitled "Abort Planned Parenthood: End their Empire of Abortion, Deception, Fraud and the Sexualization of Children."
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- 193 Cole Parke, *Whose Family? Religious Right's "Family Values" Agenda Advances Internationally*, Political Research Associates, July 2014, <http://www.politicalresearch.org/2014/07/16/whose-family-religious-rights-family-values-agenda-advances-internationally/#sthash.Waca8y9Y.dpbs>
- 194 UN Family Rights Caucus Declaration to the Human Rights Council, July 2017, available online at http://www.unfamilyrightscaucus.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/UNFRC_Declaration.pdf
- 195 Ibid

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- 198 For example, this statement undermining non-discrimination against persons on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity was presented to the UNGA on behalf of FWI and more than 66 members states: http://www.familywatchinternational.org/fwi/un_counterstatement.cfm
- 199 There have been a series of yearly resolutions brought forward at the Human Rights Council since 2014 on the theme of 'protection of the family.' The resolutions and their language is discussed in more detail in the section on discourses below.
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- 201 Stop CSE, <http://www.comprehensivesexualityeducation.org/>
- 202 Stop CSE, Online Petition, <http://www.comprehensivesexualityeducation.org/act-now-2/stop-cse-petition/>
- 203 The letter/online petition is available at <http://fwipetitions.org/lgbtczar/>
- 204 Jennifer S. Butler, *Born Again: The Christian Right Globalized*, 2006.
- 205 Catholics for Choice, *Conservative Catholic Influence in Europe: World Youth Alliance*, March 2015, <http://www.catholicsforchoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/2005worldyouthalliancefactsheet.pdf>.
- 206 World Youth Alliance, *How We Work*, <https://www.wya.net/about-wya/how-we-work/>.
- 207 *ibid*
- 208 For more information, see <https://www.wya.net/programs/elc/>.
- 209 <https://www.wya.net/publications/declarations/>
- 210 In-depth reports on specific topics that share information and offer proposals.
- 211 World Youth Alliance white papers and fact sheets are available here: <https://www.wya.net/publications/white-papers/>
- 212 Their focal point is based in Mexico City.
- 213 See e.g. <https://www.wya.net/op-ed/entrepreneurship-is-the-best-option-for-latin-america/>
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- Alicja Curanovic, *The Guardians of Traditional Values: Russia and the Russian Orthodox Church in the Quest for Status*, Transatlantic Academy, 2014-15 Paper Series, No 1 (<http://www.gmfus.org/publications/guardians-traditional-values-russia-and-russian-orthodox-church-quest-status>)
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- 226 Melissa Hooper, *Russia's 'Traditional Values' Leadership*, The Foreign Policy Center, 2016. See also Mizulina's connections to the World Congress of Families.
- 227 Discourse in danger: attacks on free expression in Putin's Russia, PEN American Center, January 2016, http://www.pen.org/sites/default/files/PEN_Discourse_In_Danger_Russia_web.pdf. Similar laws have since been passed in the Baltics and introduced in Poland.
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- 232 She described the law as necessary to prevent separation of children from their parents, and argued that, “[c]hild protection services have developed in such a way that they see the family as one of the most dangerous places for children. But this is entirely wrong – the family, especially the biological family, is one of the safest places and it must be protected... If the family were so dangerous, how could humanity have survived to this moment?” Mizulina also stated that NGOs exaggerated the extent of domestic violence in Russia in order to increase their funding. For more from the interview, see <https://www.rt.com/politics/375943-senator-blames-feminist-lobby-for/>
- 233 Kristina Stoeckl, *The Russian Orthodox Church as moral norm entrepreneur*, Religion, State & Society 44 (2), 132-151, 2016.
- 234 Emphasis added. Article 29 UDHR reads, in full: 1. Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible; 2. In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society; 3. These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.
- 235 Metropolitan Kirill, *The Experience of Viewing the Problems of Human Rights and their Moral Foundations in European Religious Communities*. Presentation at the Conference ‘Evolution of Moral Values and Human Rights in Multicultural Society’, Strasbourg, October 2006; Europaica Bulletin. 2006 108, <http://orthodoxeurope.org/page/14/108.aspx#1>.
- 236 Kristina Stoeckl, *The Russian Orthodox Church as moral norm entrepreneur*, Religion, State & Society 44 (2), 132-151, 2016.
- 237 Patriarch Kirill, 2007 speech to UNESCO; Kirill appealed to “those people in the world who share traditional moral values founded on religion” (*Vystuplenie mitropolita Smolenskogo i Kaliningradskogo Kirilla na mezhdunarodnom seminare YUNESCO na temu ‘Dialog civilizacij: prava cheloveka, nravstvennye cennosti i kul’turnoe mnogobrazie’*. Interfax Religion, March 2007, 108), suggesting that traditional values have their roots in all world religions.
- 238 Andrew Higgins, In Expanding Russian Influence, Faith Combines With Firepower, New York Times, Sep/13/2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/14/world/europe/russia-orthodox-church.html?_r=0. For example, through its influence and connections, the ROC has helped to export anti-rights legislation to Moldova and Montenegro in the past two years.
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- 244 ibid
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- 246 Juan Marco Vaggione, *Reactive Politicization and Religious Dissidence: The Political Mutations of the Religious*, Social Theory and Practice, Vol. 31, No.2 (April 2005).
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- 248 Jennifer S. Butler, *Born Again: The Christian Right Globalized*, 2006.
- 249 ibid
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- 251 “The family plays a crucial role in the *preservation of cultural identity, traditions, morals, heritage* and the values system of society.” (emphasis added)
- 252 Please see below for more on the 2016 resolution (32/23). The full title of resolution 32/23 is *Protection of the family: role of the family in supporting the protection and promotion of human rights of persons with disabilities*, available at http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/32/L.35
- 253 See also the joint Special Rapporteur 2015 statement and letter to the President of the HRC on the ways in which the ‘protection of the family’ resolution fails to respect State obligations on the right to equality in families, <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Women/WRGS/JointLetterPresidentHRCProtectionFamily.pdf>
- 254 See e.g. UN Human Rights Council, Protection of the family: role of the family in supporting the protection and promotion of human rights of persons with disabilities : resolution / adopted by the Human Rights Council, 18 July 2016, A/HRC/RES/32/23, paragraphs 5 and 11.
- 255 Available at <https://civilsocietyforthefamily.org/>.
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- 257 Group of Friends of the Family, *Statement in Support of the Family*, May 2016, http://www.familywatchinternational.org/fwi/documents/GoFF_May_2016.pdf.
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- 260 The agenda and concept note for the intersessional seminar ('Intersessional Seminar on the protection of the family and disability'), which took place in February 2017, are available at <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/IntersessionalSeminarProtectionFamilyDisability.aspx>.
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- 262 Ibid, para 25.
- 263 Soft international law refers to rules and documents that are not strictly legally binding or enforceable, but that hold normative and persuasive power.
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 1. Every human being has the inherent right to life. This right shall be protected by law. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life.
 2. In countries which have not abolished the death penalty, sentence of death may be imposed only for the most serious crimes in accordance with the law in force at the time of the commission of the crime and not contrary to the provisions of the present Covenant and to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. This penalty can only be carried out pursuant to a final judgement rendered by a competent court.
 3. When deprivation of life constitutes the crime of genocide, it is understood that nothing in this article shall authorize any State Party to the present Covenant to derogate in any way from any obligation assumed under the provisions of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.
 4. Anyone sentenced to death shall have the right to seek pardon or commutation of the sentence. Amnesty, pardon, or commutation of the sentence of death may be granted in all cases.
 5. Sentence of death shall not be imposed for crimes committed by persons below eighteen years of age and shall not be carried out on pregnant women.
 6. Nothing in this article shall be invoked to delay or to prevent the abolition of capital punishment by any State Party to the present Covenant.
- 265 UDHR article 3, "[e]veryone has the right to life, liberty and security of person."
- 266 Amy L Coates, Peter S Hill, Simon Rushton & Julie Balen, *The Holy See on sexual and reproductive health rights: conservative in position, dynamic in response*, *Reproductive Health Matters*, 22:44, 114-124 (2014).
- 267 Holy See, *Statement at the 7th Ordinary session of the Human Rights Council on the report of the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health*, A/HRC/7/11. 11 March 2008, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/secretariat_state/2008/documents/rc_seg-st_20080311_health-care_en.html; and Holy See, *Explanation of position on the resolution of the 65th Session of the GA on global health and foreign policy*, A/RES/65/L.27. 9 December 2010, <http://www.holyseemission.org/statements/statement.aspx?id=81>.
- 268 Family Watch International, *Written Contribution for the Half Day of Discussion on General Comment No.26 – Article 6: Right to Life*, June 2015.
- 269 Programme of action of the International Conference on Population and Development, 1994, Chapter II, principle 1.
- 270 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1990, Article 6.1: States Parties recognize that every child has the inherent right to life. 2. States Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child.
- 271 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Preamble: Bearing in mind that, as indicated in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, the child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth.
- 272 Ibid
- 273 In the *travaux préparatoires*, the proposed and rejected text read, "the right to life is inherent in the human person from the moment of conception."
- 274 The European Court of Human Rights has declined to find that a fetus enjoys the right to life. See e.g. *A, B and C v. Ireland, 2010*, and *Open Door and Dublin Well Woman v. Ireland, 1992*.
- 275 For more discussion, please see Center for Reproductive Rights, *Written Contribution to the Human Rights Committee Day of General Discussion: General Comment on Article 6*, June 2015. The text of the American Convention protects the right to life "in general, from the moment of conception" (emphasis added).
- 276 The ongoing campaign is organized by Family Watch International. It aims to block and defund comprehensive sexuality education, and calls upon teachers, school administrators, and government bodies at the local, national, regional, and international levels to join in this effort.
- 277 Stop CSE Campaign, *CSE Violates Parental Rights*, <http://www.comprehensivesexualityeducation.org/parental-rights/>
- 278 Stop CSE Campaign, *CSE Promotes Disrespect for Parents and Religious and Cultural Values*, <http://www.comprehensivesexualityeducation.org/how-comprehensive-sexuality-education-cse-harms-children/cse-denigrates-the-religious-and-cultural-values-of-their-parents-or-community-if-they-teach-any-restraints-on-sexual-behavior/>
- 279 Stop CSE Campaign, *What is CSE?*, <http://www.comprehensivesexualityeducation.org/what-is-cse/>
- 280 Ibid.
- 281 E.g. that "the higher suicide rates of homosexuals, allegedly caused by homophobia, may be caused by problems inherent in homosexual behavior instead," that "promiscuous sexual lifestyle contributes to health disparities," and so on.
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- 283 E.g. Family and Life, Howard Center.
- 284 E.g. Brigham Young University, in Provo, Utah.
- 285 ARC International, *An Analysis of the Hostile Amendments*, 2016, <http://arc-international.net/global-advocacy/human-rights-council/32nd-session-of-the-human-rights-council/appointing-an-independent-expert-on-sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity-an-analysis-of-process-results-and-implications/iii-understanding-the-e-sogi-resolution-2016-an-analysis-of-the-hostile-amendments/>
- 286 For more discussion on the discourse around the universal/universality, please see below and the sub-section under 'opposition discourses'.
- 287 For more on this discourse, please see the sub-section below.

- 288 *Amendment L.78 to draft resolution A/HRC/32/L.2/Rev.1 - 32/... Protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, A/HRC/32/L.78*, June 2016.. Note that this amendment passed with a majority vote and is now part of the final draft of the 2016 SOGI resolution, situated in the preamble.
- 289 Public Research Institute Staff, *UN Agenda Targets Refugees: High Commissioner takes up population control*, November 1997, <https://www.pop.org/un-agenda-targets-refugees-un-high-commissioner-takes-up-population-control/>.
- 290 Concerned Women for America, *Concerned Women for America Disputes Population Myth*, October 1998.
- 291 Population Research Institute, *Population Control and the New Global Racism*, PRI Weekly News Briefing, October 1999.
- 292 See e.g. Family Watch International, *Protecting Children from the Sexual Rights Revolution*, 2015.
- 293 *ibid.*
- 294 See e.g. Doris Buss and Didi Herman, *Globalizing Family Values: The Christian Right in International Politics*, 2003.
- 295 Family Watch International, *Protecting Children from the Sexual Rights Revolution*, 2015.
- 296 <http://www.theunchoice.com/suicide.htm>
- 297 Family Watch International, *Protecting Children*, 2015.
- 298 Family Watch International, *Declaration on the Rights of Children and their Families: A Call from the Children of the World (Declaration)*, http://www.familywatchinternational.org/fwi/declaration_on_the_rights_of_children.cfm
- 299 Declaration, Article IV. The article reads: Recognizing that parents have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child (CRC Art. 18); and that parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children (UDHR Art. 26(3)); and that only in cases of extreme abuse or neglect shall the State have the right to intervene in the parent/child relationship (CRC Art. 9); we call upon States Parties and the United Nations system to respect family autonomy and the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents to direct the upbringing of their children (CRC Art. 3, 5 & 18; ICPD (1994), II, Principle 11).
- 300 UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)*, 20 November 1989, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1577, article 3.
- 301 CRC article 5: "States Parties shall respect the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents or, where applicable, the members of the extended family or community as provided for by local custom, legal guardians or other persons legally responsible for the child, to provide, in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child, appropriate direction and guidance in the exercise by the child of the rights recognized in the present Convention."
- 302 For example, *The Rights Of The Child: Parents, Science and Experience*, Conference, October 2016, <http://www.un.org/webcast/pdfs/161007am-child-belarus.pdf> . See also the Declaration, articles II: "each child has the right to a family" and III: "each child has the right to a married mother and father", full text available at http://www.familywatchinternational.org/fwi/declaration_on_the_rights_of_children.cfm
- 303 Family Watch International, *Protecting Children*, 2015.
- 304 *ibid.*
- 305 *ibid.*
- 306 *ibid.*
- 307 The CRC Committee stated, for example, its particular concern that "in dealing with allegations of child sexual abuse, the Holy See has consistently placed the preservation of the reputation of the Church and the protection of the perpetrators above children's best interests, as observed by several national commissions of inquiry." UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), *Concluding observations on the second periodic report of the Holy See*, 31 January 2014, CRC/C/VAT/CO/2,,para 29.
- 308 In the case of some anti-rights actors, such as REAL Women of Canada, the framing is of "different approaches to achieving equality." In contrast, other actors such as the Holy See and OIC states emphasize and promote equity or complementarity instead of equality. These discourses are explored in greater detail below.
- 309 See e.g. <http://www.realwomenofcanada.ca/about-us/>. REAL Women of Canada are especially active in planning parallel events at the CSW in connection with other North American Christian Right organizations. In their words, "*Most women agree with the concept of equality for women, but there are different approaches to achieving equality.* REAL Women believes the social and economic problems of women can be resolved only by considering the effects on family life and society as a whole. We believe the family is the basic unit in society, it is the ideal model to nurture the young, protect the vulnerable and care for the elderly" (emphasis added).
- 310 See e.g. *Big Ocean Women, Founded by LDS to Promote 'Maternal Feminism'*, https://www.reddit.com/r/latterdaysaints/comments/42ahn7/big_ocean_women_founded_by_lds_women_to_promote/ and Big Ocean Women, About Us, <http://www.bigoceanwomen.org/about-us/>
- 311 Big Ocean Women, About Us, <http://www.bigoceanwomen.org/about-us/>
- 312 *ibid.*
- 313 The full text is available online at http://www.familycapital17sdgs.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/FamilyCapital.SDGs_Book_2016.09.08.pdf (Susan Roylance, Family Capital and the SDGs Implementing the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, Sustainable Families Group, United Families International, World Congress of Families, 2016).
- 314 *ibid.*
- 315 *ibid.*
- 316 The Vatican was active in advocacy on this topic during the 1995 Beijing negotiations; preoccupation and concerns with gender also furthered its alliances with OIC States during that and subsequent negotiations.

- 317 Associated Press, *Pope Complains Schools Are Telling Children They Can Choose Their Gender*, The Guardian, August 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/02/pope-complains-gender-children-schools-telling-choose>.
- 318 Family Watch International, *Protecting Children*, 2015.
- 319 Mary Ann Case, *After Gender the Destruction of Man? The Vatican's Nightmare Vision of the 'Gender Agenda' for Law*, 31 Pace Law Review 802 (2011).
- 320 See John L. Allen, Jr., *Secularism, Africa and Characters in Rome*, Nat'l Cath. Rep. (August 2010).
- 321 Samuel Osborne, *Pope Francis says gender theory is part of a 'global war' on marriage and family*, The Independent, October 2016, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/pope-francis-catholic-church-gender-theory-global-war-traditional-marriage-family-a7341226.html>
- 322 "Pope Francis has lamented that children are being taught at school that gender can be a choice." *Pope Complains Schools Are Telling Children They Can Choose Their Gender*, The Guardian, August 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/02/pope-complains-gender-children-schools-telling-choose>
- 323 Vince Chadwick, *Poland's Catholics and socially liberal clash on 'gender ideology'*, Sydney Morning Herald, January 2014, <http://www.smh.com.au/world/polands-catholics-and-socially-liberal-clash-on-gender-ideology-20140110-30mg2.html>
- 324 Hilary White, *Radical 'gender' paradigm could be leading to global totalitarianism*, LifeSite, September 2014, <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/radical-gender-paradigm-could-be-leading-to-global-totalitarianism-author>
- 325 The current form of the doctrine of complementarity is an invention of the twentieth century. For more, see Mary Anne Case, *The Role of the Popes in the Invention of Complementarity and the Vatican's Anathematization of Gender*, Online Religion and Gender (2016).
- 326 UN General Assembly, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 18 December 1979, A/RES/34/180, Article 5(a).
- 327 For more on the distinctions between equality and equity, please see Sida, *Gender Tool Box – Brief: Gender Equality and Gender Equity*, November 2016, available at <http://www.sida.se/contentassets/3a820dbd152f4fca98bacde8a8101e15/brief-hot-issue-equity-equality.pdf>
- 328 Holy See, *Report of the Holy See in Preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women*, 1995.
- 329 Aurora C Griffin, *The Complementarity of Men and Women, Across the Religious Spectrum*, The Catholic World Report, September 11, 2015, http://www.catholicworldreport.com/Item/4158/the_complementarity_of_men_and_women_across_the_religious_spectrum.aspx
- 330 John Paul II, *Letter to Women*, 1995.
- 331 The Congregation develops initiatives to "spread sound doctrine and defend those points of Christian tradition which seem in danger because of new and unacceptable doctrines." Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_pro_14071997_en.html.
- 332 Steven Lopes, Helen Alvaré (editors), *Not Just Good, but Beautiful: The Complementary Relationship between Man and Woman*, Plough Publishing House, September 2015, <http://www.plough.com/en/topics/life/marriage/not-just-good-but-beautiful>.
- 333 Peter Montgomery, *Religious Right Leaders Join Vatican Man-Woman Marriage Event*, Right Wing Watch, November 2014, <http://www.rightwingwatch.org/post/religious-right-leaders-join-vatican-man-woman-marriage-event/>.
- 334 Musawah, *CEDAW and Muslim Family Laws*, 2011.
- 335 Ibid.
- 336 See Mary Anne Case, *The Role of the Popes in the Invention of Complementarity and the Vatican's Anathematization of Gender*, Online Religion and Gender (2016).
- 337 See for e.g., <https://www.wya.net/about-wya/history/>. See also the Human Dignity Curriculum launched in 2015.
- 338 Kristina Stoeckl, *The Russian Orthodox Church and Human Rights*, Routledge Press, 2014.
- 339 Russian Orthodox Church, *Basic Teaching on Human Dignity, Freedom and Rights*, section I (emphasis added), <https://mospat.ru/en/documents/dignity-freedom-rights/>
- 340 Ibid.
- 341 World Congress of Families newsletter, August 26, 2016
- 342 As discussed above. See also, Public Research Associate's 'Globalizing the Culture Wars', <http://www.politicalresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/11/africa-full-report.pdf>; and 'Colonizing African Values,' <http://www.politicalresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/10/Colonizing-African-Values.pdf>
- 343 I.e. making reference to 'national sovereignty' in order to suggest or argue that the State in question is not required to respect, protect and fulfill the relevant area of international human rights law.
- 344 Available at http://www.familywatchinternational.org/fwi/documents/fwipolicybrief_National_Sovereignty.pdf. Similarly, see also the Plan of Action in http://www.familywatchinternational.org/fwi/documents/Rise_of_Faux_Rights_ADF.pdf
- 345 Ibid.
- 346 Ibid.
- 347 See e.g. Nathalie Baptiste, *It's Not Just Uganda: Behind the Christian Rights' Onslaught in Africa*, Foreign Policy In Focus, April 2014, <http://fpif.org/just-uganda-behind-christian-rights-onslaught-africa/>.
- 348 Associated Press, *Pope complains schools are telling children they can choose their gender*, August 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/02/pope-complains-gender-children-schools-telling-choose>
- 349 Father Federico Lombardi, emphasis added, Kate Childs Graham, *The Cynical Use of "Freedom Of Religion"*, Religion Dispatches, June 2009, <http://religiondispatches.org/the-cynical-use-of-freedom-of-religion/>

- 350 See Musawah, *CEDAW and Muslim Family Laws*, 2011, pg 12, http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/file/Resources/NGO/wps_cedawandmuslimfamilylaws_march2011.pdf
- 351 A/HRC/7/L.15, March 2008, para 10. "Emphasizes that respect of religions and their protection from contempt is an essential element conducive for the exercise by all of the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion."
- 352 A/68/290, para 23, emphasis added. See also the SR on freedom of religion and the SR on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in their 2006 report, A/HRC/2/3, para 37.
- 353 UN Human Rights Committee, General Comment 22.
- 354 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 18.
- 355 UN General Assembly, *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)*, 16 December 1966, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 999, article 18(3).
- 356 UN Human Rights Committee, General Comment 28. "[A]rticle 18 [of the Covenant] may not be relied upon to justify discrimination against women by reference to freedom of thought, conscience and religion."
- 357 See UDHR, article 30; ICCPR, article 5; and ICESCR, article 5.
- 358 UN Human Rights Council, *Protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity: resolution / adopted by the Human Rights Council*, 15 July 2016, A/HRC/RES/32/2, emphasis added.
- 359 HRC, 2016 Protection of the Family resolution, emphasis added.
- 360 UN Human Rights Council, *Promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms through a better understanding of traditional values of humankind: resolution / adopted by the Human Rights Council*, 8 April 2011, A/HRC/RES/16/3, http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/RES/16/3
- 361 UN Human Rights Council, *Study of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee on promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms through a better understanding of traditional values of humankind*, 6 December 2012, A/HRC/22/71, http://www.ohchr.org/documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/AdvisoryCom/Session10/A.HRC.22.71_en.pdf
- 362 See further the section on the Russian Orthodox Church above.
- 363 UN Human Rights Council, *Promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms through a better understanding of traditional values of humankind: best practices*, 21 September 2012, A/HRC/21/L.2, para 1.
- 364 Ibid, para 4.
- 365 Ibid, preamble.
- 366 UN Human Rights Council, *Study of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee on promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms through a better understanding of traditional values of humankind*, 6 December 2012, A/HRC/22/71, para 40.
- 367 Ibid.
- 368 UN Human Rights Committee (HRC), *CCPR General Comment No. 28*, 29 March 2000, CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.10 (interpreting the binding International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights).
- 369 UN General Assembly, *Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action*, 12 July 1993, A/CONF.157/23, and Beijing Programme for action Chapter II, para 9.
- 370 UN Human Rights Council, *Study of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee on promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms through a better understanding of traditional values of humankind*, 6 December 2012, A/HRC/22/71, para 76.
- 371 CEDAW, article 5a. Reading in full: "State Parties shall take all appropriate measures...[t]o modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary 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."
- 372 Article 2(1) of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, <https://en.unesco.org/creativity/node/4436>.
- 373 Ibid, article 4.
- 374 UDHR, article 27(1). "Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits."
- 375 UN General Assembly, *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)*, 16 December 1966, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 993, article 15(1)(a).
- 376 UN General Assembly, *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*, 21 December 1965, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 660, art. 5 (e) (vi). See also UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities : resolution / adopted by the General Assembly*, 24 January 2007, A/RES/61/106, art. 30, para. 1.
- 377 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, art. 13 (c).
- 378 Ibid, para 11.
- 379 See e.g. UN Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, *Cultural Rights of Women: thematic report*, 10 August 2012, A/67/287.
- 380 Ibid.
- 381 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, para 5, emphasis added.
- 382 Ibid.

- 383 Anne Marie Goetz, *The New Cold War on Women's Rights*, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 22 June 2015, <http://www.unrisd.org/beijing+20-goetz>.
- 384 UN Human Rights Council, Protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity : resolution / adopted by the Human Rights Council, 15 July 2016, A/HRC/RES/32/2.
- 385 Amendment L.78, emphasis added.
- 386 Amendment L.79, emphasis added.
- 387 Pgs. 19-20, Meghan Grizzle Fischer, *The Rise of Faux Rights: How the UN went from recognizing inherent freedoms to creating its own rights*, ADF International, February 2017, http://www.familywatchinternational.org/fwi/documents/Rise_of_Faux_Rights_ADF.pdf. The other elements of the Plan of Action detailed therein include: "assert that international law does not guarantee these controversial 'rights' and that States have national sovereignty in these areas," "assert that UN entities have no binding authority on States," "ensure that UN entities do not exceed their mandates," and "ensure that documents include language recognizing and respecting State sovereignty and religious, cultural and ethical values."
- 388 World Family Policy Center Forum, 1999, <http://www.law2.byu.edu/wfpc/forum/forum.htm>
- 389 Jennifer S. Butler, *Born Again: The Christian Right Globalized*, 2006.
- 390 Such as the 'Stand for the Family' conference, http://www.thenewcivilrightsmovement.com/ex_gay_testimony_plays_key_role_in_keeping_gay_therapy_bills_from_votes_in_most_states (Thomas Alberts, Bills To Ban Harmful 'Ex-Gay' Therapy Are Stalling – 'Ex-Gay' Activists To Blame, The New Civil Rights Movement, Aug/17/2014).
- 391 See the invitation to the training meeting here: http://cloudfront.equalitymatters.org/static/equality/pdf/family-watch-delegate_invitation.pdf
- 392 Katherine Marshall, *Family Watch International Mangles Families and Rights*, Huffington Post, November 2011, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/katherine-marshall/family-watch-international_b_1091222.html
- 393 *ibid.*
- 394 *Fund Forum Takes Part at International Global Family Policy Forum 2013*, UzReport, http://news.uzreport.uz/news_3_e_102317.html.
- 395 The text of her address is available at <https://plus.google.com/+ChristianWohlgemuthIng/posts/LWAKs73CBrV>
- 396 Online at <http://fwi.undatabase.org/site/login>
- 397 http://cloudfront.equalitymatters.org/static/equality/pdf/family-watch-delegate_invitation.pdf
- 398 Currently, a number of missions to the UN are small and lack the staff support to conduct significant independent research. Anti-rights training and materials aim to fill this gap, and independent checking of regressive language is minimized by this lack of capacity.
- 399 Cole Parke, *Queer Spy at the Anti-Gay Conference*, The Daily Beast, October 2015, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/10/28/queer-spy-at-the-anti-gay-conference.html>.
- 400 *ibid.*
- 401 See <http://www.politicalnetworkforvalues.org/home.html>
- 402 See also the December 2014 PNV UN press conference entitled 'Strengthening the Family for Sustainable Development' at <http://webtv.un.org/watch/political-network-for-values-strengthening-the-family-for-sustainable-development-press-conference/3926309670001#full-text>. The formal event was hosted by the Permanent Mission of Hungary and featured the following speakers: Zoltan Balog, Minister for Human Capacities of Hungary; Jeff Fortenberry, United States House of Representatives for Nebraska's first district; Oscar Ivan Zuluaga, President of the Democratic Center Party in Colombia; and Helen M. Alvaré, Professor at George Mason University School of Law.
- 403 In which they were unsuccessful; current anti-rights organizing around the SDGs continues with a focus on reservations and influence on implementation and interpretation, as for example articulated in 'Family Capital and the SDGs', above.
- 404 Brian Brown, president of the World Congress of Families and the National Organization of Marriage, made the opening remarks at the Summit.
- 405 The Declaration and signatures is available at <http://rightsofthefamily.org/>
- 406 Josh Craddock, *60 Parliamentarians from 20 Countries Adopt Pro-Family Declaration at UN*, Aleteia, December 2014, <http://aleteia.org/2014/12/09/60-parliamentarians-from-20-countries-adopt-pro-family-declaration-at-un/>
- 407 <http://www.politicalnetworkforvalues.org/aims.html>
- 408 The agenda and speakers are available at <http://www.politicalnetworkforvalues.org/washington-2015.html>
- 409 *ibid.*
- 410 Key state attendees and speakers at Network Summits include: Oscar Ivan Zuluaga, former presidential candidate for the Colombian right-wing party Democratic Center, created by former President Alvaro Uribe. Other participants included: Julio Rosas (Peru), evangelical congressman from the Fujimorista Popular Force party, known for his opposition to civil unions for same-sex couples and to the protocol for therapeutic abortion; Jose Dario Salazar (Colombia), former Senator of the Conservative Party and one of the promoters of a referendum against abortion rights in Colombia; Ilva Myriam Hoyos (Colombia) current Attorney General for the Defense of the Rights of the Child, Youth and Family, and founder of the ultraconservative organization Future Colombia (Futuro Colombia), which led the movement opposed to abortion legalization in 2006. Also participating were Jaime Oreja (Spain), former MEP for the Popular Party, promoter of the "One of Us" initiative; Liliana Negre de Alonso (Argentina), former senator and strong opponent to sexual and reproductive rights, known for her opposition to the recognition of same sex marriage; Orlando Anaya (Mexico), PAN senator who presented an initiative to establish a three years residency requirement for women who want to have an abortion in Mexico City.
- 411 The list of all Member State reservations to the text to date: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/reservations-country.htm>

- 412 United Nations, *Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties*, 23 May 1969, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1155: <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%201155/volume-1155-I-18232-English.pdf>
- 413 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action: “[I]t is the duty of States, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems, to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms.”
- 414 With reference to ICCPR, article 3, UN Human Rights Committee (HRC), CCPR General Comment No. 28: Article 3 (The Equality of Rights Between Men and Women), 29 March 2000, CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.10: “States Parties should ensure that traditional, historical, religious or cultural attitudes are not used to justify violations of women’s right to equality.” The ICCPR has been ratified by almost all states and its provisions reflect customary international law. It is also subject to few reservations.
- 415 Which are compiled in an official UN document at <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N14/590/04/PDF/N1459004.pdf?OpenElement>
- 416 *Setting Stage for Upcoming Session, General Assembly Transmits Text on Ambitious Post-2015 Development Agenda*, United Nations, GA/11670, Sep/1/2015, <http://www.un.org/press/en/2015/ga11670.doc.htm> for a summary, and listed at http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/68/970/Add.2
- 417 http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/68/970/Add.2 (August 25, 2015).
- 418 Declaration on Rights of Children and their Families, Article III.
- 419 Declaration on Rights of Children and their Families, Article VII.
- 420 Family Articles, Paragraph 5.
- 421 Family Articles, Paragraph 7.
- 422 Decalogue of Commitments, Paragraph 2.
- 423 Decalogue of Commitments, Paragraph 4.
- 424 Decalogue of Commitments, Paragraph 5.
- 425 Decalogue of Commitments, Paragraph 7.
- 426 Decalogue of Commitments, Paragraph 9.
- 427 San Jose Articles, Article 1.
- 428 San Jose Articles, Article 5.
- 429 San Jose Articles, Article 7.
- 430 San Jose Articles, Article 8.
- 431 Doris Buss and Didi Herman, *Globalizing Family Values: The Christian Right in International Politics*, 2003.
- 432 Ibid.
- 433 <http://www.howardcenter.org/home>
- 434 <http://familyinamerica.org/>
- 435 Jennifer S. Butler, *Born Again: The Christian Right Globalized*, 2006.
- 436 Alliance Defending Freedom, *Arete Academy*, <https://www.adflegal.org/training/arete-academy>
- 437 Ibid.
- 438 International Youth Coalition, *Contributors*, <https://iycoalition.org/contributors/>
- 439 World Youth Alliance, *Get Involved: Internships*, <https://www.wya.net/get-involved/internship/>
- 440 For information on the CTP, see further below and at <https://www.wya.net/programs/ctp/>
- 441 World Youth Alliance, *Chapters and Committees*, <https://www.wya.net/get-involved/chapters-committees/>
- 442 The project will cover five countries, Lebanon, Jordan, UAE, Morocco and Tunisia, and includes training of trainers, two Arab forums, 40 national workshops, and 80 community activities. The program includes training on “human dignity and human rights.” See more at <https://www.wya.net/programs/emerging-leaders-of-the-arab-region/>
- 443 <https://www.wya.net/get-involved/internship/>
- 444 <https://www.wya.net/programs/ctp/>
- 445 For more information, see <https://www.wya.net/programs/isf/>
- 446 World Youth Alliance Annual Report 2015.
- 447 Cole Parke, *The World Congress of Families: Christian Extremism Decoded*, The Daily Beast, October 2015, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/10/30/the-world-congress-of-families-christian-extremism-decoded.html>.
- 448 The fora that are State-led, such as the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, and UN conferences such as the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Population and Development. In line with this focus and strategy, Family Watch International argues that only the UN General Assembly has the authority to develop “new human rights”: http://www.familywatchinternational.org/fwi/documents/fwipolicybrief_National_Sovereignty.pdf
- 449 See e.g. Doris Buss and Didi Herman, *Globalizing Family Values: The Christian Right in International Politics*, 2003.

- 450 Family Watch International, *Threats to National Sovereignty: UN Entities Overstepping Their Mandates*, http://www.familywatchinternational.org/fwi/documents/fwipolicybrief_National_Sovereignty.pdf.
- 451 i.e. Beyond the party's legal authority.
- 452 San Jose Articles, Article 6.
- 453 Family Watch International, *Threats to National Sovereignty*, http://www.familywatchinternational.org/fwi/documents/fwipolicybrief_National_Sovereignty.pdf
- 454 Far more is allocated to peace and security, and development. Rights related to gender and sexuality, of course, receive much less than even the 3-4% of the UN budget.
- 455 See for example Doris Buss and Didi Herman, *Globalizing Family Values: The Christian Right in International Politics*, 2003.
- 456 Sneha Barot and Susan A. Cohen, *The Global Gag Rule and Fights Over Funding UNFPA: The Issues That Won't Go Away*, *Guttmacher Policy Review*, Vol. 18, No.2, Spring 2015.
- 457 Carol Morello, *Trump administration to eliminate its funding for U.N. Population Fund over abortion*, *Washington Post*, April 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/trump-administration-to-eliminate-its-funding-for-un-population-fund-over-abortion/2017/04/04/d8014bc0-1936-11e7-bcc2-7d1a0973e7b2_story.html?utm_term=.38ff6048e58f
- 458 <http://www.citizengo.org/en/node/1>
- 459 As above, a member of the board of the World Congress of Families.
- 460 J. Lester Feder, *The Rise Of Europe's Religious Right*, *BuzzFeed News World*, July 2014, https://www.buzzfeed.com/lesterfeder/the-rise-of-europes-religious-right?utm_term=.qv3KpjwXE#.nwgY7b1Lx.
- 461 <http://www.citizengo.org/en>
- 462 CitizenGo, *Petition: Don't Let the BBC Promote Transgender Ideology to Your Children Anymore*, October 2016, <http://www.citizengo.org/en/fm/38188-dont-let-bbc-promote-transgender-ideology-your-children-anymore> (36, 918 signatures).
- 463 CitizenGo, *Petition: Norway Must Reverse Decision Allowing Selective Reduction Abortions and Allowing Abortion Tourism*, October 2016, <http://www.citizengo.org/en/lf/38119-norway-must-reverse-decision-allowing-abortion-tourism> (8175 signatures).
- 464 CitizenGo, *Petition: UNESCO Seeks to Indoctrinate Children with LGBT Propaganda Worldwide*, November 2016, <http://www.citizengo.org/en/ed/38639-unesco-seeks-indoctrinate-children-lgbt-propaganda-worldwide> (99,566 signatures).
- 465 CitizenGo, *Petition: Oppose the Establishment of an International Safe Abortion Day at the UN*, September 2016, <http://www.citizengo.org/en/lf/36999-sign-here-oppose-establishment-international-safe-abortion-day-un> (172,506 signatures).
- 466 CitizenGo, *Petition: Stop the UN Enforcer of the Homosexual Agenda*, November 2016, <http://www.citizengo.org/en/37926-stop-un-enforcer-homosexual-agenda> (110,892 signatures).
- 467 CitizenGo, *Petition: The UN Aims to Create a 'Gay Gestapo'*, May 2016, <http://www.citizengo.org/en/fm/35385-un-aims-create-gay-gestapo> (52,559 signatures).
- The future organization and methods of work of the Commission on the Status of Women, E/CN.6/2015/L.
- 469 The Group of Friends of the Family was launched in 2015, as above, and includes Belarus, Egypt, Qatar, Bangladesh, Comoros, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Libya, Malaysia, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Yemen, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.
- 470 Anne Marie Goetz, *The New Cold War on Women's Rights*, *United Nations Research Institute for Social Development*, 22 June 2015.
- 471 Preambular paragraphs are situated at the beginning of the Agreed Conclusions and resolutions, and state background reasons to address the issue at hand and relevant past international action on the issue. Operational paragraphs follow and are numbered, and are action-oriented in response to the background issues.
- 472 The 2015 session of the Commission on the Status of Women was both the 59th session of CSW and the 20th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, which took place in Beijing.
- 473 Anne Marie Goetz, *The New Cold War on Women's Rights*, *United Nations Research Institute for Social Development*, 22 June 2015.
- 474 Human Rights Council Resolution 29/4, A/HRC/29/L.7/Rev.1, July/1/2015, available at <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/LTD/G15/141/09/PDF/G1514109.pdf>.
- 475 UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice*, 2 April 2015, A/HRC/29/40. The report is available at http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session29/Documents/A_HRC_29_40_en.doc
- 476 16 July 2014, A/HRC/RES/26/11, 'Protection of the Family', available at <http://www.refworld.org/docid/559f7ac24.html>. The first resolution called for a panel discussion "on the protection of the family and its members" and requested the High Commissioner for Human Rights to prepare a report on the panel discussion for the Council.
- 477 As noted above, the OHCHR report did not support an anti-rights perspective.
- 478 Resolutions are sponsored by states or groups of states at the HRC. They can be finalized by consensus or by calling a vote. Once the text of a resolution is tabled, states may propose amendments prior to the vote on the resolution.
- 479 Amendment L41.
- 480 Amendment L37.
- 481 The tally was 22 for, 21 against, and three abstentions.

- 482 Amendment L38.
- 483 With 18 for, 23 against, and five abstentions.
- 484 Amendment L39.
- 485 With 19 for, 23 against, and four abstentions.
- 486 The resolution is available at http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/HRC/31/L.28 (United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), 'Protecting human rights defenders, whether individuals, groups or organs of society, addressing economic, social and cultural rights,' Resolution, 21 March 2016, UN Document A/HRC/31/L.28).
- 487 As mentioned above, at the Human Rights Council, States or groups of States may propose amendments to the tabled resolution text to influence the final text prior to the vote.
- 488 The civil society letter to Member States of the Human Rights Council, dated March 22, 2016, is online at http://www.ishr.ch/sites/default/files/article/files/letter_to_member_states_of_the_unhrc_hrds_04_04_16_0.pdf
- 489 Human Rights Council, Thirty-second session, *Youth and human rights*, June/27/2016, A/HRC/32/L.1, http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/32/L.1
- 490 Human Rights Council, Draft Resolution, Thirty-second session, June/29/2016, A/HRC/32/L.6 - *Trafficking in persons, especially women and children*, http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/32/L.6
- 491 Human Rights Council, Thirty-second session, *Civil Society Space*, June/27/2016, A/HRC/32/L.29, http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/32/L.29
- 492 Human Rights Council, Thirty-second session, *Elimination of female genital mutilation*, June/27/2016, A/HRC/32/L.31/Rev.1, http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/32/L.31/Rev.1
- 493 Human Rights Council, Thirty-second session, *Protection of the family*, June/27/2016, A/HRC/32/L.35, http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/32/L.35
- 494 Human Rights Council, Thirty-second session, *The right to a nationality*, June/28/2016, A/HRC/32/L.12, http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/32/L.12
- 495 Human Rights Council, Thirty-second session, *Elimination of discrimination against women*, June/29/2016, A/HRC/32/L.7/Rev.1, http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/32/L.7/Rev.1
- 496 Human Rights Council, Thirty-second session, *Protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity*, June/28/2016, A/HRC/32/L.2/Rev.1, http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/32/L.2/Rev.1
- 497 Human Rights Council, Thirty-second session, *Addressing the impact of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and violence in the context of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance on the full enjoyment of all human rights by women and girls*, June/28/2016, A/HRC/32/L.25,, http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/32/L.25
- 498 Human Rights Council, Thirty-second session, *Accelerating efforts to eliminate violence against women: preventing and responding to violence against women and girls, including indigenous women and girls*, June/30/2016, A/HRC/32/L.28/Rev.1, http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/32/L.28/Rev.1
- 499 Among other key reports from Special Procedures was the report of the Special Rapporteur on health. All reports from the session are available at <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session32/Pages/ListReports.aspx>
- 500 The reference to CSE in the 2016 VAW resolution was the second overall, and first included without a footnote.
- 501 States such as Egypt and Pakistan attempted to remove references to CSE and IPV during negotiations, e.g. arguing that there is "no such thing" as intimate partners in those national contexts as these relations only occur between husbands and wives. Ultimately both terms remained in the final text.
- 502 Amendment L36 – 12 yes, 22 no, 13 abstentions.
- 503 Amendment L37 – 15 yes, 22 no, nine abstentions.
- 504 Amendment L42 – 14 yes, 23 no, 10 abstentions.
- 505 Amendment L43 – 10 yes, 24 no, 12 abstentions.
- 506 Human Rights Council, Thirty-second session, *Elimination of discrimination against women*, June/24/2016, A/HRC/32/L.7, http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/HRC/32/L.7
- 507 Amendment L70 – 14 yes, 23 no, 9 abstentions.
- 508 Amendment L67 – 16 yes, 20 no, 11 abstentions.
- 509 Amendment L69 – 16 yes, 21 no, 9 abstentions.
- 510 While this wording didn't make it to the final text, Egypt proposed that the resolution "note" the report "with concern."
- 511 The resolution is available at http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/HRC/32/L.29
- 512 The letter, dated June 26, 2016, is available online at https://www.ishr.ch/sites/default/files/article/files/css_hrc32_open_letter_to_member_states_unhrc_final_0.pdf
- 513 This was the third HRC resolution to focus on SOGI. The 2016 resolution is available at http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/HRC/32/L.2
- 514 For additional and detailed analysis of the hostile amendments, please see ARC International, <http://arc-international.net/global-advocacy/human-rights-council/32nd-session-of-the-human-rights-council/appointing-an-independent-expert-on-sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity-an-analysis-of-process-results-and-implications/iii-understanding-the-sogi-resolution-2016/an-analysis-of-the-hostile-amendments/>

- 515 The resolution in this form was adopted by a vote of 23 in favour, 18 against, and six abstentions.
- 516 The resolution is available at http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/HRC/32/L.35
- 517 Although anti-rights States continued to be very involved in the 'protection of the family' negotiations and process while developing their multiple campaigns against the SOGI resolution.
- 518 Amendment L82 – 16 yes, 25 no, four abstentions.
- 519 Amendment L83 – 13 yes, 27 no, five abstentions.
- 520 Amendment L84 – 14 yes, 27 no, four abstentions.
- 521 Amendment L89 – 14 yes, 27 no, four abstentions.
- 522 The General Comment, which interprets article 12 (right to health) of the Covenant, is available at http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=E%2FC.12%2fGC%2f22&Lang=en
- 523 Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR Committee), <http://ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/cescr/pages/cescrindex.aspx>
- 524 General Comment 22 goes on to frame the right to sexual and reproductive health in terms of individual autonomy and free, voluntary and informed decision-making; orders states to prohibit procedural barriers to health services, including regulation of conscientious objection; and calls upon states to ensure that "all individuals have access to justice and to meaningful and effective remedy in instances in which the right to sexual and reproductive health is violated."
- 525 General Comment 3 provides an authoritative interpretation of article 6 of the Convention, and is available at <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/CRPD/GC/Women/CRPD-C-GC-3.doc>
- 526 Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD Committee), <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRPD/Pages/CRPDIndex.aspx>
- 527 Human Rights Committee, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CCPR/Pages/CCPRIndex.aspx>
- 528 UN General Assembly, *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, 16 December 1966, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 999, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CCPR.aspx>
- 529 UN General Assembly, *Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, 19 December 1966, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 999, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/OPCCPR1.aspx>
- 530 See the section on the 'right to life' discourse above for the full text of article 6.
- 531 <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CCPR/Pages/GC36-Article6Righttolife.aspx>
- 532 All written submissions received by the Committee are posted at <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CCPR/Pages/WCRightToLife.aspx>
- 533 For a summary of the conversation, please see *Human Rights Committee discusses draft General Comment on the right to life*, July 2015, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=16234&LangID=E>
- 534 Human Rights Committee, 115th session, *Draft general comment No. 36*, Article 6, Sep/2/2015, CCPR/C/GC/R.36/Rev.2, http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/CCPR/Draft_GC_115thsession.doc
- 535 Draft General Comment 36, para 7.
- 536 The draft GC gives specific examples, stating that States Parties "should not criminalize pregnancies by unmarried women or apply criminal sanctions against women undergoing abortion or against physicians assisting them in doing so. Nor should States Parties introduce excessively burdensome or humiliating requirements for seeking permission to undergo abortion, including the introduction of lengthy mandatory waiting periods before a legal abortion can be carried out."
- 537 Ibid.
- 538 Ibid.
- 539 Centre for Civil and Political Rights, *Draft General Comment on the Right to Life, Issue of abortion provokes intense discussions within Committee*, <http://ccprcentre.org/ccprpages/draft-general-comment-on-the-right-to-life-provokes-intense-discussions-within-committee-on-issue-of-abortion>
- 540 <http://cesr.org/article.php?id=1758>
- 541 Deleting ethnicity, age, and migration status, but not the reference to "other status." Opponents of this language met a challenge in that the Rio+20 phrase was agreed language from a foundational text for the post-2015 process.
- 542 Associated Press, *Saudi Arabia Protests Inclusion of Gay Rights in UN Development Agenda*, Huffington Post, October 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/saudi-arabia-protests-inclusion-of-gay-rights-in-un-development-agenda_us_560841bbe4b0af3706dcaafe
- 543 Ibid.
- 544 General Assembly, Seventieth session, Third Committee, *Recognizing the role of human rights defenders and the need for their protection*, Nov/18/2015, A/C.3/70/L.46/Rev.1, https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/C.3/70/L.46/Rev.1
- 545 See further International Service for Human Rights, *General Assembly adopts important resolution on human rights defenders in face of opposition from China and Russia*, November 2015, <http://www.ishr.ch/news/general-assembly-adopts-important-resolution-human-rights-defenders-face-opposition-china-and>
- 546 These countries included China, Iran, Burundi, Korea, Kenya, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Sudan, Syria, and Zimbabwe.
- 547 At each General Assembly session, the resolutions adopted by the Human Rights Council are brought to the attention of the GA through a report; it has been regular practice of the African Group to introduce a resolution at the Third Committee merely taking note of the report, rather than seeking to question or influence the effect of HRC resolutions.

- ⁵⁴⁸ For additional background on the proposed resolution, please see http://www.ishr.ch/sites/default/files/article/files/backgrounder-hrc_report_sogi_expert-final.pdf and <http://arc-international.net/research-and-publications/new-arc-reports/a-success-in-2016-the-first-un-independent-expert-on-sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity/>
- ⁵⁴⁹ The Third Committee resolution was sponsored by the African Group, Pakistan, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Yemen.
- ⁵⁵⁰ The Council and its predecessor, the Human Rights Commission, have established 57 mandates.
- ⁵⁵¹ While UN Special Procedures experts (i.e. Special Rapporteurs, Working Group members and Independent Experts) themselves work pro bono, some funds are generally allocated to facilitate country visits on the invitation of the national government, and support staff.
- ⁵⁵² Samuel Oakford, *Islamic Countries Are Blocking LGBT Groups From a UN Meeting on AIDS*, Vice News, May 2016, <https://news.vice.com/article/islamic-countries-are-blocking-lgbt-groups-from-a-global-meeting-on-aids>
- ⁵⁵³ Associated Press, *Excluded Groups Say They Should be Part of UN AIDS Meeting*, June 2016, <http://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/update-excluded-groups-say-they-should-be-part-un-aids-n588166>
- ⁵⁵⁴ *ibid.*
- ⁵⁵⁵ Samuel Oakford, *Islamic Countries Are Blocking LGBT Groups From a UN Meeting on AIDS*, Vice News, May 2016, <https://news.vice.com/article/islamic-countries-are-blocking-lgbt-groups-from-a-global-meeting-on-aids>
- ⁵⁵⁶ Paola Totaro, *Belarus leads group of about 17 nations to block LGBT rights in U.N. cities plan*, Reuters, Oct/11/2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-un-habitat-lgbt-idUSKCN12C03B?il=0>
- ⁵⁵⁷ However, the same group had been unsuccessful in pushing through language referencing the traditional family in earlier negotiations.

