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**Submission by IWRAW Asia Pacific to the Call by the United Nations Special Rapporteur  
in the field of Cultural Rights on**

The Impact of Fundamentalism and Extremism on Women's Human Rights, with a Focus on  
Cultural Rights

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**International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific** welcomes the opportunity to provide its response and contribution on the follow up report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights Ms Karima Bennouna (hereafter "Special Rapporteur") to the General Assembly on the impact of fundamentalism and extremism on the cultural rights of women.

IWRAW Asia Pacific commends the Special Rapporteur for her last report to the Human Rights Council on fundamentalism, extremism and cultural rights and in choosing to focus on the disproportionate impact of such context on women's human rights in her follow up report.

This contribution draws the Special Rapporteur's attention to some critical areas in relation to the impact of fundamentalism and extremism on women's human rights in general and on women's cultural rights in particular. Being an international women's rights organization located in the Global South and working primarily with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) as a means to draw state accountability for women's human rights violations, this submission focuses less on impacts on the ground and more on overarching issues relating to framing a response to the impact of fundamentalism and extremism on women's human rights, through the CEDAW framework.

## **CONTEXT**

The Special Rapporteur in introducing her report on the impact of fundamentalism and extremism on cultural rights states "... *at the heart of the fundamentalist and extremist paradigms are rejections of equality and universality of human rights.*" In the context of women's human rights, the notion of inequality between men and women has been historically entrenched in social, legal and cultural norms and structures. The following analysis and the attendant recommendations are premised on the understanding that the impact of fundamentalism- whether cultural, political or religious, on women's human rights has to be studied in light of these pre-existing structural inequalities between men and women. The escalation of fundamentalist movements the world over- starting from the abduction of school girls by the Boko Haram in Nigeria to the ban on burkinis in France, has thrown into stark relief the ever-present challenge to women's human rights and highlighting that women's rights bear the brunt of assault from fundamentalisms- whether having a religious or a secular bent. At the same time the rise in fundamentalism cannot be viewed separately from other political-economic trends that undermine human rights including the proliferation of the neo-liberal economic order, deepening inequality, growing militarization and repression.

The Special Rapporteur's report contains useful definitional phraseology relating to fundamentalism and extremism, in light of the need to fully understand the phenomena to ensure a full suite of actions will be taken by the UN and member states to combat this problem. The report highlights useful entry points for further analysis by the women's rights movement, including aspects of the problem of fundamentalism and extremism as identified in the Special



Rapporteur's report which include that they currently represent 'a minority phenomenon' (Para 6) though containing seeds of populism which enable it to escalate as warned by feminists in the past (para 76) and that they are geared to 'taking and holding state or communal power' (Para 14).

Accordingly, in order to understand the impact of fundamentalism and extremism on the cultural rights of women, a broader definition of "culture" and stronger elaboration of the context is needed. Fundamentalism and extremism are only some of the factors which work together with other contemporary forces, such as the dominant neo-liberal economic model, militarism and arms proliferation, persistence of patriarchy, erosion and regression to fundamental freedoms and constitutional protections of human rights, and deep-rooted discriminatory stereotypes to deny women's cultural rights. It is important to make links between the prevalence of these diverse contexts which produce and reproduce social and power hierarchies, inequality, discrimination, hate, exclusion and curtail State's ability to guarantee the human rights of women, and marginalized groups.

Social institutions such as the family, religious groups or caste systems; political and legal structures; economic and educational institutions; and the mass media—all are permeated with norms and values that discriminate against women that legitimizes and institutionalizes social status on the basis of gender.<sup>1</sup> Fundamentalism and extremism leverages of this and reinforces pre-existing discrimination. Extremism and religious fundamentalism denies women's autonomy and subjects them to the most cruel and inhuman punishments for "transgression" of norms dictated by those in power within the hierarchies that rule these movements.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, it is important for these institutions to address "culture" beyond the purview of religious culture.

There is a need for ways to collectively unlock the transformative power of culture and cultural rights which are founded on the principles of equality, inclusion, diversity, liberty, freedom. The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa reflects the perception of the transformative power of culture and its potential for impacting positively on women's lives.

Article 17 (1) "Women shall have the right to live in a positive cultural context and to participate at all levels in the determination of cultural policies".

Because of these interlinkages addressing the violation of cultural rights of women requires a holistic human rights based approach as well as complementarity of actions between different UN mechanisms, different organs of state at the national level and global support of diverse groups of women's movement.

## **WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS PERSPECTIVE ON CULTURAL RIGHTS**

Many customary practices, traditions and religious beliefs relegate women to a secondary status and sometimes even deny adult women their legal majority. Most women define themselves, both as individuals and as members of communities, in terms of cultural factors that are inextricably linked to the social and economic aspects of their lives. In a world where conflicts based on differences and identities are rampant, the issue of cultural rights remains one of the

<sup>1</sup> <http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/edumat/IHRIP/circle/modules/module4.htm>

<sup>2</sup> <http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/edumat/IHRIP/circle/modules/module4.htm>



most controversial and divisive. This makes the consideration of cultural rights from a women's rights perspective very problematic.<sup>3</sup>

The extreme extent to which culture and tradition can be used by those supporting patriarchal interests came to light in the State of Uttar Pradesh in India. A women's group, Vanangana, rescued an 11-year old girl who was being abused by her father. The organization helped the child and her mother seek protection and also took legal action against the father. The accused and his supporters in turn filed several false charges against, and published pamphlets attacking, the members of the women's organization. They charged that the organization was destroying the institution of the family and attacking Indian culture.<sup>4</sup>

The cultural rights of women should not just be understood as guaranteeing women the exercise and enjoyment all total of rights enshrined in relevant international instruments. It is important to also understand how these rights are being experienced by women.

CEDAW reflects a clear awareness of this dilemma by stating that culture and tradition do not justify a State party's failure to intervene to prevent traditional practices that foster discrimination and violence against women;

In article 2(f) CEDAW calls on States Parties "to take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices which constitute discrimination against women". Similarly, in article 5(a) it calls on States Parties to the Convention- "take all appropriate measures to 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."

## **CULTURAL RELATIVISM AND WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS**

While respect for diversity and for diverse forms of social and cultural expression and identity must guide adherence to human rights principles, women's rights activists argue for transformation of these practices and beliefs on the basis of recognition of the dignity and worth of women as full human beings.<sup>5</sup>

The perceived need for "cultural sensitivity" has led at times to failure to forge a consensus, thereby strengthening the hand of fundamentalist and conservative lobby groups in countries opposed to women's and girls' rights. Cultural relativist approaches dilute women's and girls' rights as humans under the mantle of protecting them, rather than protecting their human rights against discrimination and violence.<sup>6</sup> Cultural relativist approaches to the concept of human rights must be distinguished from the need to apply universal standards in a way that is meaningful within a local context. Respect for pluralism, diversity and ethnic and religious

<sup>3</sup> <http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/edumat/IHRIP/circle/modules/module4.htm>

<sup>4</sup> <http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/edumat/IHRIP/circle/modules/module4.htm>

<sup>5</sup> <http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/edumat/IHRIP/circle/modules/module4.htm>

<sup>6</sup> EGM/DVGC/2006/BP.1 (at para 25)



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identity should not be used as justifications for undermining the core values of equality and the right to freedom from violence and bodily security.<sup>7</sup>

There is a need to challenge the understanding that the root of human rights is ideologically foreign to the laws cultures and practices of all member states of the UN, since the inception of its Charter and the various human rights treaties that govern the duties and obligations of states and confirms the entitlements of all rights holders has been the joint creation of all nations.

Forging a consensus on the universality of the norms of non-discrimination and substantive equality must be a key dimension of any strategy for the advancement of women's human rights including cultural rights of women.

## **CONVENTION ON ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN (CEDAW)**

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) has addressed the issue of cultural rights of women in its concluding observations and general recommendations. In terms of cultural rights, the Committee has consistently referred to the specific situations of sexual and reproductive health rights and bodily integrity, rights in marriage and family, harmful traditional and cultural practices, stereotype, violence against women, issues of women in conflict and post conflict contexts, equal rights to nationality; equal rights in all aspects of family law including marriage, divorce and custody of children.

The Committee have also identified specific issues and recommendations related to the need to address fundamentalism as part of CEDAW obligations in its Concluding Observations, for instance in the case of Indonesia (2007), where it decried the “rise of religious fundamentalist groups advocating restrictive interpretations of sharia law, which discriminate against women,” and in Pakistan (2007), where the Committee criticized the prevailing “trends of fundamentalism, intimidation and violence incited by non-state actors” which are “seriously undermining women’s enjoyment of their human rights in name of religion.”<sup>8</sup>

## **NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORKS AND INSTITUTIONS**

### **Reservations**

Out of the 193 UN Member States, 189 have ratified the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Despite its near universal ratification, concerns have also been raised regarding the fact that the Convention has more reservations than any other international human rights treaty. Furthermore, a considerable number of those reservations have been made to key articles of the Convention including Article 2 which is foundational to articulating state obligations under CEDAW. The CEDAW Committee has repeatedly called upon States to remove reservations to the Convention and in particular found reservations to Articles 2 and 16 to be “incompatible with the object and purpose” of the treaty. They have also held that such reservations cannot be justified for national, traditional, religious or cultural reasons.

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<sup>7</sup> EGM/DVGC/2006/BP.1 (at para 30)

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.awid.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/rfs\\_cedaw\\_briefing\\_paper\\_nov15.pdf](https://www.awid.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/rfs_cedaw_briefing_paper_nov15.pdf)



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Despite this, 61 State Parties continue to retain reservations/ declarations to the Convention. Article 16 of CEDAW, which deals with equality in matters concerning marriage and family has attracted the most reservations across all human rights conventions. In fact, a large number of these reservations were on the grounds that in the respective domestic jurisdictions the issue of personal laws is governed by the political exigencies of recognizing cultural or religious differences and/or cultural or religious imperatives.<sup>9</sup>

Taking this trend of using cultural relativism as a reason to regress on universal standards of women's human rights, State Parties have also argued that the reservations are not being withdrawn due to the growing threat of religious fundamentalism<sup>10</sup> and more bizarrely that the reservations actually act as a bulwark against the rise of religious fundamentalism<sup>11</sup>. Thus, dismantling of structural discriminatory provisions and the removal of reservations justified by cultural/religious practices is a priority concern calling for concerted action by UN treaty bodies and special procedures reaffirming that this issue needs to be addressed urgently by national legislatures.

### **Legal pluralism**

The discussion on reservations leads directly to the issue of legal pluralism and its impact on women's human rights. As noted above, a significant number of reservations to CEDAW based on religious and cultural grounds have been made on Article 16 which impact family or personal status laws at the domestic level. Thus, there is an ostensible exclusion of a whole sphere of women's lives from the purview of the protection of globally accepted international human rights law standards. The CEDAW Committee has repeatedly raised concerns regarding this issue, expressly stating that "*the co-existence of multiple legal systems, with customary and religious laws governing personal status and private life and prevailing over positive law and even constitutional provisions of equality, remains a source of great concern.*"<sup>12</sup>

In addition to having implications broadly on the issue of state accountability under international human rights law and potentially posing equality challenges to women's right of access to justice, legal pluralism also implicates women's right to participate, access and contribute to cultural life. However, there is also recognition that plural legal systems exist in different forms across jurisdictions globally and engaging with them may even have transformative value for women's rights if such engagement occurs in light of international human rights standards. Accordingly, it is important to create a space for progressive (re) interpretation of cultural or religious norms and engagement and dialogue with customary and non-state justice actors in

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<sup>9</sup> IWRAW Asia Pacific, Briefing Paper on Women's Access to Justice

<sup>10</sup> Committee on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention Eighth periodic report of States parties due in 2015 Bangladesh, CEDAW/C/BGD/8 29 May 2015

<sup>11</sup> Committee on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, Consideration of initial reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention Eighth periodic report of States parties, Morocco, CEDAW/C/MOR/1 03 November 1994

<sup>12</sup> Statement to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women, 13 October 2004:  
[www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw25anniversary/cedaw25-CEDAW.pdf](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw25anniversary/cedaw25-CEDAW.pdf).



order to advance women's access to justice in plural legal contexts<sup>13</sup>. The necessity of such constructive engagement has been made even more urgent due to the increasing influence of fundamentalist groups that have in some contexts been noted to advocate for restrictive interpretations of personal laws<sup>14</sup> and push for homogenizing personal laws through codification, including those of minority communities, in the guise of secularism in others<sup>15</sup>.

### **Discriminatory laws**

Beyond the scope of personal laws, women's human rights are facing an onslaught from fundamentalist ideologies that are increasingly finding state sanction and being codified into statutory law. Examples range from a law in Bangladesh that has created a legal exception for girls under the age of eighteen to be married in certain circumstances<sup>16</sup> to a law decriminalizing some instances of domestic violence in Russia<sup>17</sup> to proposed amendments to the abortion law in Poland that sought to increase the criminal penalties for abortion to 5 years<sup>18</sup> but were dropped in the face of massive protests from women to the protracted refusal by the Government of India to criminalize marital rape<sup>19</sup> to multiple enactments and proposals for enactments banning the full face veil in countries across Europe<sup>20</sup>, including most recently Germany and Austria. These developments suggest that women's bodies continue to be the sites of legal warfare and that fundamentalist ideologies are vehemently driving the entrenchment of gender stereotypes and patriarchal attitudes into laws and policies worldwide.

### **Institutional responses and violence against women**

Religion and culture have long been used to justify various forms of violence against women. The banality of the use of fundamentalist ideology to justify attacks on women's rights and the near absence of an institutional response from States to address it is also perhaps most apparent in the context of violence against women. An example of this is the prevalence and treatment of 'honour crimes' in countries across South Asia. From the murder of Qandeel Baloch in Pakistan<sup>21</sup> to the Romeo Squads currently roaming in Uttar Pradesh, India<sup>22</sup>,

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<sup>13</sup> Supra at 1 citing UN Women, Progress of the World's Women In Pursuit of Justice, 2011-2012, Available at: <http://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20eseasia/docs/publications/2011/progressoftheworldswomen-2011-en.pdf?vs=2106>

<sup>14</sup> Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, Concluding observations on the combined sixth and seventh periodic report of Indonesia (CEDAW/C/IDN/6-7) July 2012

<sup>15</sup> Ratna Kapur, The Fundamentalist Face of Secularism and Its Impact on Women's Rights in India, Joseph C. Hostetler-Baker & Hostetler Lecture, Cleveland State Review, 1999

<sup>16</sup> The Conversation, Bangladesh's new child marriage law swings in the wrong direction, Sara Hossain & Sajeda Amin. Available at: <http://theconversation.com/bangladeshs-new-child-marriage-law-swings-in-the-wrong-direction-72282>

<sup>17</sup> The Guardian, Shaun Walker, Putin approves legal change that decriminalises some domestic violence. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/07/putin-approves-change-to-law-decriminalising-domestic-violence>

<sup>18</sup> Amnesty International, Poland: Abortion ban would put women and girls at risk. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/poland-abortion-ban-would-put-women-and-girls-risk>

<sup>19</sup> The Indian Express, 'Concept of Marital Rape can't be applied in Indian Context: Maneka Gandhi'. Available at: <http://indianexpress.com/article/business/budget/amarital-rape-concept-maneka-gandhi-indian-context/>

<sup>20</sup> The Times of India, Full-face veil: A look at the laws in Europe. Available at: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/full-face-veil-a-look-at-the-laws-in-europe/articleshow/58432363.cms>

<sup>21</sup> The Dawn, Qandeel Baloch is dead because we hate women who don't conform. Available at: <https://images.dawn.com/news/1175827>



instances abound of non-State actors perpetrating violence against women with complete impunity based on fundamentalist notions of women's role in society.

It is also significant to note that the advocacy by women's rights groups to address this context has not framed the issue through the lens of fundamentalism. An analysis of CEDAW Concluding Observations is especially telling in this regard. Fundamentalism as a factor impacting violence against women has been identified only in the case of certain countries such as Algeria and Pakistan<sup>23</sup>. However, formulating an effective response to the threats posed by fundamentalism to women's rights requires us to recognize and address the routinized use of fundamentalist ideology to violate women's rights across the world.

### **Harmful Practices**

Together with the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the CEDAW Committee has noted that harmful practices are grounded in discrimination, including gender-based discrimination, and that they have been justified by invoking religious customs and values (General Recommendation 31). The Committee called for States parties to provide for the means of prevention of harmful practices and combat their impunity, and stated that efforts to change these practices must address the underlying systemic and structural causes. The Committee flagged that prevention can best be achieved through a rights-based approach to changing harmful cultural and social norms. The Committee also indicated that dowry-related violence, the defence of 'honor' as an exculpatory or mitigating factor for crimes committed against women and girls, and situations in which the perpetrator escapes sanction by marrying the victim are additional harmful practices contrary to State obligations under the Convention, and that states must repeal all legislation that condones, allows or leads to harmful practices, including traditional, customary or religious laws.<sup>24</sup>

### **Economic fundamentalism and women's rights**

In the discourse of human rights and particularly around cultural rights, the greatest silence is regarding the violations arising out of the intersection between fundamentalism and neo-liberal globalization. The corporate actors tailoring the development discourse in a fundamentalist or conservative fashion is changing the nature and ability of the States to promote and protect women's human rights. Corporate capture of state responsibilities and resources further hobble these obligations.

Neo-liberal globalisation intensifies inequalities of wealth, power and resources between countries, between rich and poor, and between men and women. It further escalates land, water and resource grabbing in the imperialist drive for profit and geo-political control, concentrated in the hands of big transnational and local corporations and landlords, for dams, mining, agricultural plantations and aquacultures.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Hindustan Times, Romeo Squads Strike Terror. Available at: <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/up-s-anti-romeo-squads-strike-terror-a-quiet-gloomy-sunday-at-ghaziabad-s-biggest-park/story-s0oLyrFPCu5ua2bUk00tFO.html>

<sup>23</sup> Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, Concluding comments of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women: Pakistan, CEDAW/C/PAK/CO/3, 11 June 2007

<sup>24</sup> [https://www.awid.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/rfs\\_cedaw\\_briefing\\_paper\\_nov15.pdf](https://www.awid.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/rfs_cedaw_briefing_paper_nov15.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> <https://panap.net/2016/03/fight-back-imperialist-globalisation-militarism-religious-fundamentalism/>



Economic fundamentalism, unlike religious fundamentalism, has gained such widespread credibility in Canada and other wealthy nations that it is now the driving force behind public policy changes associated with globalization and restructuring. While religious fundamentalism is still treated with some skepticism because it appears dogmatic and rigid, economic fundamentalism has become accepted as a sensible framework for understanding the changes which are occurring in the world... Economic fundamentalism is as dangerous for women as any other form of fundamentalism because it establishes a rigid framework for the thinking of society.<sup>26</sup>

### **Education**

Education has been the target of both fundamentalism and capitalism, and later in the name of privatization. The education sector is increasingly being opened up to profit-making and agenda-setting for commercial interests rather than as a human rights

A key facet of quality education is the need for academic freedom: that the right to education must be exercised with the freedom to express contrary views without repercussions. The main factors which nullify the right of girls and women to quality education are social, cultural and political spheres of influence. There are cultural practices that deny girls the right to education including girls being harassed and abused merely for attending school.

In few instances, UN treaty bodies have raised concern over education and freedom of conscience and religion. The Committee on the Rights of the Child for instance with regards to the United Kingdom:

“The Committee recommends that the State party repeal legal provisions for compulsory attendance at collective worship in publicly funded schools and ensure that children can independently exercise the right to withdraw from religious worship at school.”<sup>27</sup>

Privatization in many cases exacerbates gender discrimination in the area of education, in part because in many countries parents favour the education of boys over girls. As quality education becomes more costly, studies show that boys are often given priority over girls. This problem is also further compounded by other issues which emerge within the context of privatization, such as poor regulation and oversight of private education providers leading to, in some cases, lack of accountability for sexual assault of girls by school teachers, colleagues and administrators; promotion of gender stereotypes; and lack of access to sexual and reproductive health education, which also have disproportionate impacts on girls. In order for women and girls to be able to realize their right to education, as well as their rights to non-discrimination and equality more broadly, it is imperative that education be seen as a public good, and not as a commodity.<sup>28</sup>

### **Land grabbing and natural resource exploitation**

The Standing Rock protest against the Dakota Access Pipeline Project to protest its construction on sacred native American burial grounds shows how women are in forefront

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<sup>26</sup> Marjorie Griffin Cohen, What Women Should Know About Economic Fundamentalism

<sup>27</sup> UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Concluding Observations: Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, 2016, CRC/C/GBR/CO/5, para 26

<sup>28</sup> <https://counterview.org/2014/08/25/privatization-exacerbates-gender-discrimination-in-education-because-parents-favour-the-education-of-boys-over-girls/>





fighting against the corporate encroachment in the indigenous and tribal spaces and sovereignty. Similarly, in India, a mining company was accused of displacing a tribal group from its traditional lands without obtaining consent or providing adequate compensation.

The CEDAW reaffirms that State Parties must ensure that the acts of any person, organization or enterprise, under its effective control, including those of national corporations operating extraterritorially, do not result in violations of the Convention and that its extraterritorial obligations extend to actions affecting human rights, regardless of whether the affected persons are located on its territory, as indicated in the Committee's general recommendation Nos. 28 on state obligation and 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post conflict context. Similarly CEDAW Article 14 and General Recommendation No 34 on rural women are very significant to help to address the issues.

CEDAW has expressed concerns of forced evictions from land, mainly by the military, which is then granted to foreign companies under concession (**Myanmar, 2016**). It has urged State Parties to ensure effective consultations with affected communities before granting concessions for the economic exploitation of lands and territories traditionally occupied or used by women in companies or third parties, and to secure the free, prior and informed consent of affected women<sup>29</sup>.

**CEDAW** has expressed concerns over the land appropriation and resulting displacement, forced evictions and relocations as a result of large development projects, extractive industries and disasters that continue to affect rural women disproportionately including religious minorities and indigenous women (**Philippines, 2016**).<sup>30</sup>

### **Militarism, fundamentalism and women's human rights**

Militarism, fundamentalism and extremism move hand in hand. Militarism adds fuel to the fundamentalist ideologies and in turn fundamentalism paves the way for militarism.

Militarism as an ideology creates a culture of fear and supports the use of aggression, violence and military interventions for settling disputes and enforcing economic and political interests. Militarism privileges violent forms of masculinity, which often has grave consequences for the safety and security of women, children, men, and society as a whole. Attacks on civilians participating in social movements, military interventions and ongoing conflicts exemplify the ways in which militarism influences how we view women and men, our families, neighbors, public life, and specific countries. Militarized societies often see higher rates of domestic violence, in particular, and violence against women, more generally, as a result of the larger process of normalization of violence. In order to effectively address militarism within our societies we must expose the ways in which it permeates our cultures, e.g., by assessing educational systems and the ways in which children, particularly boys, are socialized.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women: Concluding observations on the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of Myanmar, 2016, CEDAW/C/MMR/CO/4-5, para 42, 43

<sup>30</sup> UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women Concluding observations on the combined seventh and eighth periodic reports of the Philippines, 2016, CEDAW/C/PHL/CO/7-8, para 43

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/docman/violence-against-women-publications/387-intersectionsvaw-militarism-pdf-1/file>



**Recommendation:** For the Special Rapporteur to consider these initiatives to strengthen the women's rights movement's capacity to challenge fundamentalism and extremism's impact on women's human rights including cultural rights, for states to prioritise and address fundamentalism and extremism as a critical pillar towards creating a culture of human rights, rule of law, peace, gender equality and good governance and for UN bodies including the human rights treaty bodies and special mandate holders to focus specific attention and resources to address fundamentalism and extremism, including:

1. To provide tools and engagement opportunities for the women's rights movements to enable the development of a streamlined response that addresses fundamentalism and extremism as key contextual factors that are impacting the state of women's human rights globally. This includes challenging fundamentalisms in their routinized manifestations in addition to calling out the egregious manifestations.
2. To further strengthen the framework for crafting a human rights response by providing a broad based and extensive interpretation of fundamentalism and extremism considering a combination of factors such as neo-liberalism, militarism, patriarchy and how they are intertwined with various institutions and practices.
3. To dialogue with the UN human rights treaty bodies and other special procedures to strengthen the mutual reinforcement of international human rights standards and providing a multi-level State accountability mechanism as a bulwark against the impact of fundamentalism and extremism in relation to the cultural rights of women.
4. To recommend the creation of a global support network of resources and partnership among UN system, government, CSOs, women's rights organizations, media, as collective response to counter the issues of fundamentalism and extremism.
5. To continue highlighting the critical importance of local initiatives in intervening with regard to religion, custom or harmful tradition based practices in countries that deny women's human rights, as is being done through this current call.