### The “Faith for Rights” framework

(www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomReligion/Pages/FaithForRights.aspx)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>... to stand up and act for everyone’s right to free choices, particularly for everyone’s freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief</th>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>... to use the declaration on “Faith for Rights” as a common minimum standard of interaction between theistic, non-theistic, atheistic or other believers</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>... to promote constructive engagement on the understanding of religious texts through critical thinking and debate on religious matters</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>... to prevent the notions of “State religion” and “doctrinal secularism” from being used to discriminate or reduce the space for diversity of religions and beliefs</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>... to ensure non-discrimination and gender equality, particularly regarding harmful stereotypes and practices or gender-based violence</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>... to stand up for the rights of all persons belonging to minorities and to defend their freedom of religion or belief, particularly in cultural, religious, social, economic and public life</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>... to publicly denounce all instances of advocacy of hatred that incites to violence, discrimination or hostility in the name of religion or belief</td>
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<td>... to monitor interpretations, determinations or other religious views that manifestly conflict with universal human rights norms and standards</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>... to condemn any judgemental determination that disqualifies the religion or belief of another individual or community, exposing them to violence in the name of religion</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>... not to tolerate exclusionary interpretations on religious grounds which instrumentalize religions, beliefs or their followers for electoral purposes or political gains</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>... not to oppress critical voices on religious matters in the name of “sanctity”, and to advocate for repealing any anti-blasphemy and anti-apostasy laws</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>... to review the curriculums and teaching materials wherever some religious interpretations seem to encourage or tolerate violence or discrimination</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>... to engage with children and youth against violence in the name of religion and to promote their active participation in decision-making</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>... not to coerce people in vulnerable situations into converting from their religion or belief, while fully respecting everyone’s freedom to have, adopt or change a religion or belief</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>... to leverage the spiritual and moral weight of religions and beliefs in order to strengthen the protection of universal human rights and develop preventative strategies</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>... to develop sustained partnerships with specialised academic institutions to promote interdisciplinary research, programs and tools for implementing the 18 commitments</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>... to use technological means more creatively and consistently in order to produce capacity-building and outreach tools and make them available for use at the local level</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>... to ensure non-discrimination and gender equality, particularly regarding harmful stereotypes and practices or gender-based violence</td>
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Module 5: Women, girls and gender equality

Full text of commitment V

We pledge to ensure non-discrimination and gender equality in implementing this declaration on “Faith for Rights”. We specifically commit to revisit, each within our respective areas of competence, those religious understandings and interpretations that appear to perpetuate gender inequality and harmful stereotypes or even condone gender-based violence. We pledge to ensure justice and equal worth of everyone as well as to affirm the right of all women, girls and boys not to be subjected to any form of discrimination and violence, including harmful practices such as female genital mutilation, child and/or forced marriages and crimes committed in the name of so-called honour.

- “A man should respect his wife more than he respects himself and love her as much as he loves himself.” (Talmud, Yeabmot, 62,b)
- “Never will I allow to be lost the work of any one among you, whether male or female; for you are of one another.” (Qu’ran 3, 195)
- “O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another.” (Quran 49:13)
- “In the image of God He created him male and female. He created them.” (Genesis 1, 27)
- “The best among you is he who is best to his wife” (Hadith)
- “It is a woman who is a friend and partner for life. It is woman who keeps the race going. How may we think low of her of whom are born the greatest. From a woman a woman is born: none may exist without a woman.” (Guru Granth Sahib, p. 473)
- “The world of humanity is possessed of two wings - the male and the female. So long as these two wings are not equivalent in strength the bird will not fly. Until womankind reaches the same degree as man, until she enjoys the same arena of activity, extraordinary attainment for humanity will not be realized” (‘Abdu’l-Baha)
- “A comprehensive, holistic and effective approach to capacity-building should aim to engage influential leaders, such as traditional and religious leaders [...]” (Joint general recommendation No. 31 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/general comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on harmful practices, CEDAW/C/GC/31-CRC/C/GC/18, para. 70)

Context

Women and girls have always suffered from patriarchal interpretations of almost all religions. This is not limited to any particular religion or region. The resulting male domination is a negative inheritance in virtually all cultures. Women’s right to vote, for example, was not recognized across the world until quite recently, including in Western countries. Equal pay for the same work by women and men is still far from being a reality in almost all parts of the world. Religious interpretations have been invoked as grounds for inequality, including through States’ reservations to human rights treaties. As a normal reaction, many women’s rights activists have developed negative attitudes towards religions. This polarization has created a vicious circle threatening equality and solidarity, at the very nucleus level of the family itself. Most family-related issues have a faith dimension in many parts of the world, such as marriage, divorce, custody and inheritance. The confusion between cultural heritage, social traditions and religious precepts adds to the complexity of handling this important intersection between religions and human rights. In addition, the ideological divide between faith groups and human rights activists on sexual and reproductive health matters add tensions between faith and rights. A constructive engagement to search for common ground in this context should continue. Faith actors have a role to play and women’s and girls’ rights much to gain in this regard.
Responding to pandemics: The new coronavirus and the respiratory disease it causes (COVID-19) also have various negative impacts on women’s rights and gender equality. The facilitator could ask the participants what are the most challenging consequences of the COVID-19 crises in their areas of work. How do they particularly affect girls and women? What are the areas of action where faith leaders believe they have the highest chance to make a difference in facing these challenges? What promising practices can they share in this respect? What elements of the #Faith4Rights toolkit could be of practical utility in their work? What support or preparation would they feel necessary for them to use this tool in an optimal manner?

In its Call for joint action in the times of the COVID-19 pandemic (April 2020), the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women referred to its “peer-to-peer learning webinars, in collaboration with Religions for Peace and other partners to explore how various faith communities can scale up collaboration around the diverse challenges posed by COVID-19 with a human rights-based approach with respect to women and girls. These webinars will use the #Faith4Rights toolkit as a resource. The key areas of these online webinars include gender-based violence against women, individual behaviours related to COVID-19, home schooling, working from home, creative modes of local solidarity and responding to discrimination against women in various aspects of public policies. There will be specific focus on young women working in the fields of education, media, technology and women faith actors. To achieve this, the Committee will also rely on its jurisprudence, which recognizes that education for gender equality and empowerment of women and girls is the most sustainable way to ultimately achieve the objectives of non-discrimination and equality of women and men. The Committee supports the appeal of UN Secretary-General António Guterres for a global ceasefire as well as his special appeal to religious leaders of all faiths to focus on the common battle to defeat COVID-19. The Committee also appreciates the statement of 19 March 2020 by Religions for Peace on the Coronavirus Crisis, stressing the responsibility of faith actors to translate ethical values into concrete actions and offering substantive ideas for learning, teaching, preaching and designing community development projects. […]

The Committee holds the strong opinion that these unprecedented times are also an opportunity for change guided by the principle of ‘Leave no one behind’ of the Sustainable Development Goals, recognizing that women and national machineries for the advancement of women are central to response and recovery strategies. National human rights institutions, the UN System, the UN human rights treaty bodies and special procedures may join forces in order to show a way forward for both States and civil society actors. The CEDAW Knowledge Hub initiative, with its imminent webinars about women rights, will be the signature contribution of CEDAW to a new thinking and joint action. The Committee invites all relevant stakeholders, including the private sector, to join in this initiative and hopes that it will lay the foundations, in collaboration with other relevant stakeholders, for a positive and enabling post COVID-19 environment that actualizes the principal lessons of the virus: no one is safe unless all are safe.”

See also the related exercises in module 6, module 16 and the case to debate on an epidemic (scenario G).

Inspiring: Participants may share artistic expressions they know of that capture aspects of the commitment under discussion, particularly with respect to the role of women in society and in faith communities. Are there restrictions on women and girls in artistically expressing themselves, for example by singing or

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dancing? Limitations on artistic freedoms based on religious arguments range from urging the faithful not to partake in various forms of artistic expression to outright bans on music, images and books.\(^a\)

In this context, the **Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights**, Karima Bennoune, published in 2018 her report on the contribution of artistic and cultural initiatives to creating and developing right-respecting societies.\(^b\)

Facilitators could also show the video documentary *“Equality: It’s All in the Family”*\(^c\) or prepare their own examples.

In addition, please find here the example of a cartoon\(^d\) and calligraphy\(^e\) as well as music\(^f\).

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### Learning objectives

- Participants realize that the rights of women and girls are a priority area for achieving inclusive societies and sustainable development.
- Participants are familiarized with examples of the overlapping between cultures and religions. They realize that cultural particularities can either positively or negatively influence religious interpretations.
- Participants reflect on the gendered impact of the coronavirus pandemic and explore how they can collaborate with other faith actors to address the diverse challenges, especially for women and girls.
- Participants recognize that women and girls are more than half of the society that is the most influential in shaping its future. Participants accept their responsibilities in this respect.

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\(^a\) See the report on the right to freedom of artistic expression and creativity, published in 2013 by the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, Farida Shaheed, [https://undocs.org/A/HRC/23/34](https://undocs.org/A/HRC/23/34) (para. 47).

\(^b\) See the 2018 report by the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, Karima Bennoune, [https://undocs.org/A/HRC/37/55](https://undocs.org/A/HRC/37/55).


\(^d\) [https://www.standup4humanrights.org/layout/files/Posters/30_cartoons_UDHR.pdf](https://www.standup4humanrights.org/layout/files/Posters/30_cartoons_UDHR.pdf)


\(^f\) [https://soundcloud.com/faith4rights/commitment5](https://soundcloud.com/faith4rights/commitment5)
Module 6: Minority rights

Full text of commitment VI

We pledge to stand up for the rights of all persons belonging to minorities within our respective areas of action and to defend their freedom of religion or belief as well as their right to participate equally and effectively in cultural, religious, social, economic and public life, as recognized by international human rights law, as a minimum standard of solidarity among all believers.

Context

Hostilities between communities threaten social cohesion, peace and security within and among nations. Such hostilities can be rooted in social, ethnic, religious or on any other ground. History tells us how much damage occurs to the whole society when minority rights are violated. Discrimination plants seeds of hatred in the social tissues. This creates tensions and grievances which are exploitable for political purposes. Today’s world witnesses numerous aggravating factors at an accelerated pace. These include conflicts, demographical changes, migration, racism and the misuse of new communication technologies. Nationals from different origins, stateless persons, refugees and asylum seekers suffer various forms of discrimination. Full equality and non-discrimination of citizens and non-citizens are fundamental requirements for safe and prosperous societies and for sustainable development. Almost all societies are becoming multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious. Such diversity is either cherished as a great richness or perceived as a ticking bomb fuelled by racism, xenophobia and related intolerance. Faith actors have their independent say and role to play at this historical crossroad.

Additional supporting documents

In support of the peer-to-peer learning on commitment VI on minorities, the training file should include: the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities of 1992, UN Human Rights Committee General Comment No. 23 of 1994, the Marrakesh Declaration on the Rights of Religious Minorities in Predominantly Muslim Majority Communities of 2016, and the Statement on Human Fraternity for world peace and living together, signed by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar in Abu Dhabi in February 2019.

The Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence (2012) notes with concern that “perpetrators of incidents, which indeed reach the threshold of article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, are not prosecuted and punished. At the same time members of minorities are de facto persecuted, with a chilling effect on others, through the abuse of vague domestic legislation, jurisprudence and policies. This dichotomy of (1) non-prosecution of ‘real’ incitement cases and (2) persecution of minorities under the guise of domestic incitement laws seems to be pervasive.”

89 https://www.refworld.org/docid/453883fc0.html
90 http://www.marrakeshdeclaration.org/
92 https://undocs.org/A/HRC/22/17/Add.4, appendix, para. 11.
Responding to pandemics: The new coronavirus disease poses specific challenges for minorities who often live in over-crowded housing conditions, which make physical distancing and self-isolation difficult. Persons belonging to minorities may also be more likely to be excluded from health care because they lack resources or official documentation, or because of stigma or discrimination. They may also miss important public health messages due to the absence of information about the pandemic in minority languages.

The facilitator could ask the participants how religious leaders could promote the dissemination of accurate, evidence-based health and scientific information on COVID-19. How could they draw on language from within their faith traditions to promote positive messages that strengthen the protection of universal human rights and affirm the dignity of all people, the need to protect and care of the vulnerable, and inspire hope and resilience in those affected by, or vulnerable to, COVID-19 and related hate speech?

In this context, the facilitator could refer to the statement of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues (March 2020), in which Fernand de Varennes flagged that “The coronavirus outbreak endangers the health of all of us, with no distinction as to language, religion or ethnicity. But some are more vulnerable than others. All of us can take steps to resist this rise in discriminatory and hate speech against Asian and other minorities in social media, including by joining our voices in messages of support with the hashtags #IAmNotAVirus or #JeNeSuisPasUnVirus.”

In April 2020, the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief expressed extreme concerns “that certain religious leaders and politicians continue to exploit the challenging times during this pandemic to spread hatred against Jews and other minorities”. Ahmed Shaheed also called all religious leaders and faith actors to combat incitement to hatred, noting that “Resolution 16/18, United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, Rabat Plan of Action, #Faith4Rights toolkit, Fez Plan of action and UNESCO’s programme to prevent violent extremism through education are some useful tools for such engagement and education”.

In its statement on derogations from the Covenant in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic (April 2020), the UN Human Rights Committee stressed that States cannot “tolerate, even in situations of emergency, the advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that would constitute incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence, and they must take steps to ensure that public discourse in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic does not constitute advocacy and incitement against specific marginalized or vulnerable groups, including minorities and foreigner nationals.”

Furthermore, the UN Network on Racial Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities stressed in its COVID-19 statement (April 2020) that “Political, civic and religious leaders have a crucial role to play in speaking out firmly and promptly against intolerance, discriminatory stereotyping and instances of hate speech. Their actions or inactions have lasting impacts on overall efforts at ensuring that the pandemic does not deepen inequalities and discrimination.” As a top-line message, the UN Network flagged that “We need everyone to stand up against discrimination! Racism and discrimination against racial, ethnic and religious minorities are increasingly widespread during the COVID-19 crisis. Now is not the time for division, but to reach out and include those left behind. #FightRacism #StandUp4HumanRights #AllInThisTogether #Faith4Rights”.

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108 https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/CCPR/COVIDstatement.docx

#Faith4Rights toolkit
Module 16: Ethical and spiritual leverage

Full text of commitment XVI

We commit to leverage the spiritual and moral weight of religions and beliefs with the aim of strengthening the protection of universal human rights and developing preventative strategies that we adapt to our local contexts, benefitting from the potential support of relevant United Nations entities.

- “Love your neighbour as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these” (Mark 12, 31)
- “But love your enemies, do good to them and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great” (Luke 6, 35)
- “The God-conscious being is always unstained, like the sun, which gives its comfort and warmth to all. The God-conscious being looks upon all alike, like the wind, which blows equally upon the king and the poor beggar.” (Guru Granth Sahib p. 272)
- “The religion of God and His divine law are the most potent instruments and the surest of all means for the dawning of the light of unity amongst men. The progress of the world, the development of nations, the tranquility of peoples, and the peace of all who dwell on earth are among the principles and ordinances of God.” (Baha’u’llah)

Context

As much as religions are often manipulated in conflict situations, faith actors are powerful agents of peace-building and reconciliation in post conflict situations. They are certainly best placed to prevent or counter such manipulation in the name of their own religion or belief. Universal values are common heritage of humanity. This fact can and should be used by faith actors in particular to reconcile divided communities. Faith actors, like any other human rights defenders, are among the custodians of shared values among all religions and beliefs – be they theistic, non-theistic, atheistic or other. Optimizing this custodianship through concrete social engagement is not a deviation from the role of faith actors. It rather lies in its heart and demonstrate its sincerity.

Additional supporting documents

In support of the peer-to-peer learning on commitment XVI, the training file could include the 2019 Declaration of the 10th World Assembly of Religions for Peace: “To our commitment to the importance of human rights, we add our foundational concern for the cultivation of virtues, those habitual orientations to value that sculpt our human potentials. These include our potentials for the most elevated states of mercy, compassion, and love. For us, the labor to become virtuous is not a solitary act; rather, it is an act of “solidarity,” one that can only be achieved by generosity and mutual love. The cultivation of virtue tackles the ignorance, individual egoism, and group egoism that mutilate authentic community. Shared well-being also calls for a robust notion of the “common good” that can serve all of us in our efforts to virtuously unfold our rights-protected human dignity. The supreme good for us is the sacred, even as we understand it differently. The common good includes the earth with its air, water, soil, and web of life. The common good also includes just institutions that help each to develop her or his human dignity. These call all of us to a shared and grateful responsibility. Each person is to draw from the common good; each is to help build it up. Advancing shared well-being is concrete. We commit to advancing shared well-being by preventing and transforming violent conflicts, promoting just and harmonious societies, nurturing sustainable and integral human development, and protecting the earth.”

https://rfp.org/home-3-2/10th-world-assembly/
#Faith4Rights toolkit
In March 2020, Religions for Peace published the following **Statement on Coronavirus Crisis**:

“Religions for Peace wishes to draw attention, of faith leaders, communities and beyond, to several observations and lessons learned from the current coronavirus crisis.

*Humanity could not have received a stronger reminder of the depth of its interrelatedness and unity of purpose. This most tiny virus, COVID-19, carries an existential test, combined with a huge opportunity for humankind: a test of solidarity and an opportunity to re-think and correct a number of trajectories.*

As a community of believers from different faith traditions across the globe, putting aside any theological differences, we submit that many of the crises we face are human-made and have been managed neither with fairness nor in solidarity.

*Last year Pope Francis and Imam El-Tayeb: “Call[ed] upon intellectuals, philosophers, religious figures, artists, media professionals and men and women of culture in every part of the world, to rediscover the values of peace, justice, goodness, beauty, human fraternity and coexistence… as anchors of salvation for all, and to promote them everywhere.”*

This time of crisis makes such a call more urgent than ever.

Our core responsibility as faith actors is to translate ethical values into concrete actions. A compelling way to do this is to promote human rights, fraternity and solidarity through the “**Faith for Rights**” framework.

Beyond religious institutions and faith leaders, such a joint approach to face the current health crisis – and its severe economic and social implications – is also an individual responsibility. The “**Faith for Rights**” framework and its 18 commitments reach out to individual theistic, non-theistic, atheistic or other believers in all regions of the world to enhance cohesive, peaceful and respectful societies on the basis of a common action-oriented platform.

To fulfil this responsibility of believers, in this broad definition of religion or belief, we encourage faith actors to use the online **#Faith4Rights toolkit.** Now that we all have more time to reflect, you will find that this toolkit offers concrete ideas for learning, teaching, preaching and design community development projects. It also proposes several cases to debate, including a hypothetical case concerning reactions to an epidemic by religious and political leaders.

Despite our apparent scientific and material progress, it did not take more than a virus to uncover the fragile state of our humanity. Greed, moral deterioration and lack of fairness and solidarity are weakening the spiritual grounds of our sense of responsibility. Far from surrendering to negativism and frustration, we urge all religious actors and individual believers to seize this exceptional opportunity to innovate while assuming their respective responsibilities in making faith stand up for the rights of all.

We count on all our members to mobilise action in what they believe are their priority areas of the commitments on Faith for Rights. It could be divine will that such a miniscule creature finally teaches us that caring for others renders valuable service to ourselves.

**Nobody is safe unless all are safe. This is the moral of the unfolding story of the virus.**

Responding to pandemics: A concrete example, that could be used by facilitators, is the coronavirus crisis in 2020 and the related Statement by Religions for Peace\(^{234}\) (see text above under Additional supporting documents). The question to participants could be how to conceive a project that alleviates any negative consequences in their local context? What are these consequences and where are the entry points in the 18 commitments to these issues? What is the specific role that faith actors can play in this respect in order to complement rather than duplicate the contributions of other actors? Which practices in the religious sphere could either prevent diseases or increase the risk of their propagation? What are the lessons learned that may lead to preventive action by the participants who could integrate this in their own work?

In this context, the facilitator could refer to the World Health Organization’s document Practical considerations and recommendations for religious leaders and faith-based communities in the context of COVID-19 (April 2020), which provides guidance on gatherings, conducting faith activities remotely/virtually, safe ceremonies and burial practices, strengthening mental health and resilience, faith leaders’ role in COVID-19 education as well as upholding human rights and addressing stigma and discrimination. With regard to the latter point, WHO’s guidance stresses the following: “Religious leaders have a particularly important role to play in championing attention to and inclusion of, vulnerable populations including minorities, migrants, refugees, internally displaced persons, indigenous peoples, prisons, people with disabilities, and members of other marginalized groups, by creating supportive environments; advocating for their rights and access to diagnosis, treatment and vaccines; sharing evidence-based accurate information; and publicly standing against statements and acts that encourage violence and human rights violations against people. By drawing on language within their own faith tradition, religious leaders can promote positive messages that affirm the dignity of all people, the need to protect and care of the vulnerable, and inspire hope and resilience in those affected by, or vulnerable to, COVID-19. On the practical side, faith-based organizations can work with health and development agencies to identify mechanisms to increase access to information and services for vulnerable communities, including those that are provided by faith-based organizations themselves. Moreover, most of these faith traditions serve all people in need, without regard to national or ethnic origin, race, sex, or religious affiliation, and are motivated by universal values and ethical principles of ‘do no harm’, ‘solidarity’, and the ‘golden rule’.”\(^{235}\)

Simulating: Simulation of an adversarial debate leading to an in-depth discussion, for example on a hypothetical case related to the spread of an epidemic (see in the annex the scenario G). The facilitator could point to the specific role and responsibilities of religious leaders, whose actions may either positively or negatively affect the overall health situation and even lead to stigmatization or discrimination of specific communities.\(^{236}\) This collective exercise, especially the case to debate in scenario G, would require a length of at least an hour.

Tweeting: Summarize the commitment XVI within 140 characters (individual exercise for 5 minutes). One possible result of this tweeting exercise could be as follows: “We commit to leverage the spiritual and moral weight of religions and beliefs in order to strengthen the protection of universal human rights and develop preventative strategies”.

Translating: Similar to the tweeting exercise, participants could be asked to “translate” this commitment into child-friendly language or into a local dialect. Again the idea is to stimulate discussion about the most important elements and appropriate ways of transposing and simplifying the message, without losing the substance of the commitment.

\(^{234}\) [https://rfp.org/statement-by-religions-for-peace-on-coronavirus-crisis/](https://rfp.org/statement-by-religions-for-peace-on-coronavirus-crisis/)


Scenario G: A case to debate on an epidemic

Independent media in the State of Itneconni report about a new infectious virus called ANOROC-20, which allegedly originated from the poor neighbouring country Mulam and is now spreading within and beyond both States. The severe consequences of the disease have created a mass panic since the virus leads to the death of around 20% of those infected but is difficult to detect due to an incubation period of 20 days. A vaccination against ANOROC-20 is not yet fully tested but will be rolled out shortly in Itneconni.

The leader of A-Religion, which has around 10,000 followers both in Mulam and Itneconni, has been criticized for his lack of transparency in dealing with the virus. During a cross-border religious festival that brought together around 500 followers of A-Religion, the virus ANOROC-20 was reportedly spread into Itneconni. For fear of repercussions, the leader of A-Religion did initially not want to disclose any information on attendees, citing their right to privacy, and also refused to be tested himself concerning a possible infection with ANOROC-20. He also claimed that believing in A-Religion would actually protect against getting infected and he strongly opposed any vaccination because this would alter the body’s blood system which is considered sacred by the holy scripture of A-Religion. After receiving some threats via social media, however, he agreed to be tested for ANOROC-20, which turned out to be negative.

The Prime Minister of Itneconni has ordered the closure of his country’s borders to Mulam, while nationals of Itneconni are still allowed to return home if they self-quarantine for three weeks. However, followers of A-Religion are held in closed mandatory confinement centers, even if they want and can go back to Mulam. The Prime Minister’s emergency order also declared that “in view of obvious public health and safety concerns, it is compulsory that all followers of A-Religion are treated with the new vaccination against ANOROC-20.”

The leader of B-Religion, which constitutes the vast majority of Itneconni’s religious demography, stated in an interview broadcasted by the public TV that “All members of the shameful ‘A-sect’ should either go back where they belong to or be imprisoned if these insects dare to remain in Itneconni”. Furthermore, he claimed without any further proof that the transmission of the virus during the religious festival of A-Religion had happened during a funeral service where all followers allegedly kissed the coffin of a deceased person.

The followers of A-Religion, who publicly wear the insignia of their religion (a small necklace with an “A”), are being verbally harassed and even physically attacked in Itneconni, without intervention by the police.

Questions:

A sample of questions related to this case (see also modules 5, 6 and 16) could include the following:

- What are the reprehensible acts and statements by the leaders of A-Religion and B-Religion?
- How does the order of the Prime Minister of Itneconni violate international human rights law?

A tip for facilitators

The facilitator may wish to refer to the op-ed by UN High Commissioners Filippo Grandi and Michelle Bachelet concerning the coronavirus outbreak as a test of our systems, values and humanity (10 March 2020): “When fear and uncertainty kick in, scapegoats are never far away. We have already seen anger and hostility directed at some people of east Asian origin. If left unchecked, the urge to blame and exclude may soon extend to other groups – minorities, the marginalised or anyone labelled ‘foreigner’. [...] Ceding space to rumour, fear mongering and hysteria will not only hamper the response but may have broader implications for human rights, the functioning of accountable, democratic institutions. No country today can wall itself off from the impact of the coronavirus, both in the literal sense and – as falling stock markets and closed schools demonstrate – economically and socially. An international response that ensures that developing countries are equipped to diagnose, treat and prevent this disease will be crucial to safeguarding the health of billions of people.”