

## Human Rights Council 34th session

*Check against delivery*

### ITEM 3 – INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE WITH SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON THE PROMOTION OF THE ENJOYMENT OF THE CULTURAL RIGHTS OF EVERYONE AND RESPECT FOR CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Thank you Mr President. ISHR, Nazra, FIDH and OMCT make this statement on behalf of the Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition<sup>1</sup>.

We thank the Special Rapporteur for drawing attention of this Council to the ‘wake up call of our times’. We share your deep concern at the normalization of fundamentalist and extremist ideologies and rhetoric, and the resulting clash between those who uphold principles of universality and non-discrimination and those who do not.

In a joint statement in November 2016 on International Women Human Rights Defenders Day, Special Procedures had also expressed their alarm that ‘women who step up to defend human rights are facing worsening obstacles amid a global trend of fundamentalism and populism’. They highlighted that ‘women human rights defenders represent an essential counter-power and a colossal force of action’. As the Special Rapporteur has highlighted, women human rights defenders challenging fundamentalist and extremist agendas by, inter alia, defending the rights of women to take part in cultural life are cultural rights defenders.

We share the Special Rapporteur’s concern that in too many instances and in all regions, civil society groups that oppose fundamentalist and extremist ideologies are themselves branded as threats to State security and “terrorists”. Furthermore, there remain government delegations represented in this Council who seek to subvert international human rights standards and attack those who work to uphold them through calculated manipulation of ideas about culture. We urge States to ‘wake up’ and join the real fight. Doing so requires of all States:

- 1) To remove barriers and obstacles for independent civil society promoting rights in accordance with international standards;
- 2) To ensure the genuine participation of women human rights defenders in policy discussions to combat extremism and fundamentalisms, and we ask the Special Rapporteur to further elaborate on this point during this dialogue and in follow up to the report; and
- 3) To ensure accountability for violations perpetrated against cultural rights defenders and women human rights defenders.

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<sup>1</sup> Amnesty International (AI), Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD), Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM ASIA), Association for Progressive Communications Women’s Rights Programme (APC WRP), Association for Women’s Rights in Development (AWID), BAOBAB for Women’s Human Rights (BAOBAB), Center for Women’s Global Leadership (CWGL), Coalition of African Lesbians (CAL), International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), Fondo de Acción Urgente América Latina, Frida the Young Feminist Fund, Front Line Defenders, Gulf Centre for Human Rights, Human Rights First, Information Monitor (INFORM), International Civil Society Network (ICAN), International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), International Service for Human Rights (ISHR), International Women’s Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific (IWRAP-AP), Isis International, ISIS Women’s International Cross-Cultural Exchange (ISIS-WICCE), Just Associates (JASS), Latin American and Caribbean Committee for the Defense of Women’s Rights (CLADEM), MADRE, MENA WHRD Coalition, Nazra for Feminist Studies, Nobel Women’s Initiative (NWI), Peace Brigades International, Rainbow Rights Project (R-Rights), Inc., Society for Appraisal & Women Empowerment in Rural Areas (SAWERA), Urgent Action Fund for Women’s Human Rights (UAF), Urgent Action Fund Africa, Women Living under Muslim Laws (WLUML), Women’s Global Network for Reproductive Rights, Women’s Initiatives for Gender Justice (WIGJ), Women’s Rehabilitation Centre (WOREC), World Organisation against Torture (OMCT)