

Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the right to education; the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights; the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief and the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls

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(Please use this reference in your reply)

10 February 2025

Excellency,

We have the honour to address you in our capacities as Special Rapporteur on the right to education; Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights; Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief and Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 53/7, 55/5, 49/5 and 50/18.

In this connection, we would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government information we have received concerning **denial of access to compulsory education of female students wearing headscarves and the imposition of administrative penalties on parents for non-compliance with the school uniform policies established by schools.**

According to the information received:

On 14 January 2016, the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan adopted Order No. 26 "**On approval of the Requirements for mandatory school uniforms in organizations of secondary education**" (hereinafter, "the Ministerial Order No. 26").

The claimed objective of the Order is to ensure a unified approach among educational institutions of secondary education (schools) in the application of mandatory school uniforms, inter alia, "in order to increase the responsibility of educational management for observing the **secular nature of education**" (paras. 3 and 5 of the Order, in accordance with Article 3 of the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Education No. 319-III of 27 July 2007, hereinafter "Law on Education").

Para. 13 of the Ministerial Order No. 26 states: "**the inclusion of elements of clothing identifying religious affiliation to any faith in the school uniform is not permitted.**"

Although the literal reading of para. 13 suggests that schools, in order to maintain the secular nature of public education, **should not prescribe** in their internal regulations on school uniform any elements of religious clothing, in practice, this clause has been interpreted by numerous school authorities as a green light to **ban the wearing** of female headscarves in schools and to deny physical access to school premises to female students refusing to take off their headscarves.

Reportedly, starting from September 2023, school security guards following seemingly coordinated instructions of school administrations have **denied physical access** to school buildings or classes for more than a hundred girls with reference to the Ministerial Order No. 26. Several courts have deemed such actions illegal (see, for example, Ruling No. 3594-23-00-4/1489 of 25 June 2024 of the Specialized Interdistrict Administrative Court of Karaganda Region).

In September 2024, the Supreme Court of Kazakhstan ruled that none of the existing legal instruments allow schools to deny children access to compulsory secondary education in public schools, including physical access to an educational institution due to their failure to comply with the school uniform requirements (Rulings No. 6001-24-00-6ап /1357 of 24 September 2024 and, later on the same issue, No. 6001-24-00-6ап/2644 of 5 December 2024).

Such actions are contrary to the Constitution of Kazakhstan and national legislation.

In particular, article 30 of the Constitution guarantees free secondary education, which is also compulsory. Article 14 forbids discrimination based on gender, as well as on religion or conviction, among other grounds of discrimination. This article is non-derogable (see article 39.3). Article 19 declares that everyone has the right to determine and indicate his or her religious affiliation while freedom of conscience is guaranteed by article 22. Article 20 forbids propaganda of religious superiority. Article 39 establishes that human rights can only be limited by law and only to the extent necessary to protect the constitutional system, public order, human rights and freedoms or the health and morals of the population. Moreover, any actions capable of violating interethnic and inter-religious harmony shall be considered unconstitutional (article 39, para. 2).

The Law on Education confirms, among the main principles of education in Kazakhstan, the equal rights of all to receive quality education as well as respect for human rights and freedoms. Article 26.2 guarantees the admission of all children to secondary educational organizations residing in the respective service area, without exceptions. Parents are responsible for ensuring that their children attend compulsory level education in institutions (article 49). Disruption of studies is not allowed (article 47.10). Expulsion from public secondary educational organizations of children under the age of sixteen is permitted only in exceptional cases either for committing acts that are illegal or for gross and repeated violation of the charter of the educational organization (article 31.3).

Constitutional and legal provisions therefore clearly protect students from being suspended or expelled based on demonstrating their religious affiliation, including through clothes. Both the Constitution and the Law on Education establish the obligation of public schools to provide compulsory secondary education. Educational organizations cannot restrict or prohibit access to the educational process, including for violation of the prescribed school uniform. The Ministerial Order No. 26 itself does not contain provisions prohibiting students from attending classes if they do not comply with prescribed school

uniform requirements.

In addition to the denial of physical access to schools, parents whose daughters attend school in headscarves have recently started to receive **administrative penalties** in the form of a warning or a fine as stipulated by article 409.2 of the Code of Administrative Offenses of the Republic of Kazakhstan. As reported, several district courts upheld such administrative penalties imposed on parents for failure to fulfill parental duties in education, in particular, the duty to make sure that children comply with the school uniform requirements (article 49 of the Law on Education). In doing so, courts tend to interpret the Ministerial Order No. 26 as **banning the wearing** of clothing identifying religious affiliation, although it only bans the inclusion of such elements by schools in their formally approved school uniform.

While we do not wish to prejudge the accuracy of these allegations, we express our most serious concerns that the *de facto* ban on the wearing of headscarves in public schools, based on the misinterpretation by schools, law enforcement agencies and courts of the provisions of the Ministerial Order No. 26, has led to a number of violations of human rights guaranteed by international human rights standards, as well as by the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

In particular, we observe that such misinterpretation results in the exclusion of a significant number of girls wearing a headscarf from accessing compulsory education, in contravention of international human rights standards, especially the principle of non-discrimination. The current application of the Ministerial Order No. 26 negatively affects their fundamental right to education, their freedom of religion or belief and cultural rights, as they are forced to choose between access to compulsory education and expressing their religious or cultural identity.

Exclusion of girls from compulsory education based on their choice to manifest their religious affiliation may amount to violation of the internationally recognized right to education. The risk of exclusion is especially high in Kazakhstan where no alternatives are available for girls wishing to manifest their faith, considering that homeschooling is not allowed, private schools can be prohibitively expensive and only few of the nine madrasahs in the country offer places to female students.

We are concerned that measures taken to ensure the principle of secularism, the stated objective of which is to guarantee freedom of religion and belief for all, have in practice undermined the freedom of girls to manifest their religion or belief through the application of the Ministerial Order No. 26. Such measures may lead to excluding large numbers of girls and women from education and cultural life, and may also fuel intolerance and discrimination against them.

In connection with the above alleged facts and concerns, please refer to the **Annex on Reference to international human rights law** attached to this letter which cites international human rights instruments and standards relevant to these allegations.

As it is our responsibility, under the mandates provided to us by the Human Rights Council, to seek to clarify all cases brought to our attention, we would be grateful for your observations on the following matters:

1. Please provide any additional information and/or comment(s) you may have on the above-mentioned allegations.
2. Please provide clarifications on how the reported practice of interpretation and implementation of the Ministerial Order No. 26 is compatible with your Excellency's Government's obligations to respect the principle of the best interests of the child and to guarantee the fundamental right to education and the right to take part in cultural life.
3. Please indicate whether the de facto limitation of the freedom of religion or belief of girls choosing to wear headscarves to school is consistent with the scope of permissible limitations under article 18(3) of the ICCPR, in particular, whether they are prescribed by law and necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others; and in line with the obligations of non-discrimination and equality upheld in articles 2.1 and 26 of the ICCPR.
4. Please indicate which safeguards are put in place to ensure that restrictions are not enacted and applied in a discriminatory manner, do not violate the rights of persons openly manifesting their religion or belief and identity without discrimination, and do not lead to social marginalization.
5. Please indicate the steps your Excellency's Government plans to undertake to remediate the inconsistencies with the international human rights standards.
6. Please indicate how your Excellency's Government is ensuring protection from discrimination and remedy for victims of discrimination, including on the basis of gender and religion, on all levels of education at the national level. Especially, please indicate how your Excellency's Government intends to guarantee the non-discriminatory application by its judiciary of regulatory norms governing the introduction of school uniforms nationwide.

This communication and any response received from your Excellency's Government will be made public via the communications reporting [website](#) within 60 days. They will also subsequently be made available in the usual report to be presented to the Human Rights Council.

While awaiting a reply, we urge that all necessary interim measures be taken to halt the de facto exclusion from public education of girls choosing to wear headscarves to school and suspend or reverse the decisions to impose fines on their parents. If the investigations suggest the allegations to be correct, we urge to ensure the accountability of any person(s) responsible for the alleged violations.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Farida Shaheed
Special Rapporteur on the right to education

Alexandra Xanthaki
Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights

Nazila Ghanea
Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief

Laura Nyirinkindi
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Annex

Reference to international human rights law

In connection with above alleged facts and concerns, we would like to refer your Excellency's Government to international human rights standards and jurisprudence guiding the establishing of balance between the right to education and the freedom of religion or belief in the situation of students wearing headscarves in public schools.

Right to education and the non-discrimination principle

The right to education is a fundamental human right enshrined by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), as well as by a number of international human rights treaties ratified by Kazakhstan. Denying or restricting access to education undermines the principles of equality and non-discrimination and hinders children's potential to develop their capabilities. Therefore, the right to education must be guaranteed without discrimination, including on the basis of religion or belief, as stipulated in article 26 in combination with article 2(1) of the UDHR, article 13 in combination with article 2(2) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) (ratified in 2006), article 29 in combination with article 2(1) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (ratified in 1994) and article 10 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (ratified in 1998). In addition, articles 2.1 and 26 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (ratified in 2006), prohibits discrimination and requires State Parties to guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection against discrimination on any ground, including religion. The Human Rights Committees' General Comment No. 18 provides an authoritative guidance on the application of the principle of non-discrimination.

In addition, UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (ratified in 2016) prohibits any distinction, exclusion, limitation or preference, including based on religion. The Convention considers discriminatory such policies and practices which have the **purpose or effect** of nullifying or impairing equality of treatment in education and in particular of depriving any person or group of persons of access to education of any type or at any level.

As noted by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) in its general comment No. 13 on the right to education (E/C.12/1999/10, para. 6b), education must be accessible to all **in law and in fact**, particularly to the most vulnerable groups, without discrimination based on any of the grounds mentioned in article 2(2). States parties must closely monitor education - including all relevant policies, institutions, programmes, spending patterns and other practices - so as to identify and take measures to redress any *de facto* discrimination (para. 37).

Furthermore, article 13(3) of the ICESCR, article 18(4) of the ICCPR and article 5 of the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education require States Parties to respect the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions. This has been reaffirmed by article 5(1) of the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or

Belief which states: “The parents or, as the case may be, the legal guardians of the child have the right to organize the life within the family in accordance with their religion or belief and bearing in mind the moral education in which they believe the child should be brought up”.

Freedom of religion or belief

Article 18(1) of the ICCPR states “everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom ... either individually or in community with others and in **public** or private, to manifest his [or her] religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.”

Specifically in relation to children, article 14 of the CRC requires States Parties to respect the right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion and to respect the rights and duties of the parents and, when applicable, legal guardians, to provide direction to the child in the exercise of his or her right in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child.

In its general comment No. 22 the Human Rights Committee further explains that the freedom to manifest religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching encompasses a broad range of acts. The concept of worship extends to the display of symbols, the observance and practice of religion or belief may include not only ceremonial acts but also such customs as the wearing of distinctive clothing or head coverings ([CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.4](#), para. 4).

Article 18(3) of the ICCPR and article 14(3) of the CRC permit restrictions of the freedom to manifest religion or belief **only if limitations are prescribed by law** and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health or morals, or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

The Human Rights Committee recalls that article 18(3) is to be strictly interpreted. Limitations may be applied only for those purposes for which they were prescribed and must be directly related and proportionate to the specific need on which they are predicated. They cannot be imposed for discriminatory purposes or applied in a discriminatory manner (general comment No. 22, para. 8). Any limitation must fulfil a number of obligatory criteria of legality, proportionality and necessity, including being nondiscriminatory in intent or effect and constitute the least restrictive measure.

Jurisprudence of the Human Rights Committee on the wearing of religious symbols in education context is consistent when it comes to religious rights of students.

In *Bikramjit Singh v. France* ([CCPR/C/106/D/1852/2008](#)), the HRC found that France’s prohibition on wearing religious symbols, including the Sikh turban, in public schools breached the student’s right to religious freedom under the ICCPR.

In *Seyma Türkan v. Turkey* ([CCPR/C/123/D/2274/2013/Rev.1](#)) the Committee concluded that restriction on covering the head in a university constituted a form of intersectional discrimination against the author as a Muslim woman who chose to cover her hair, and thus violated article 26 and article 3, in conjunction with article 18, of the Covenant. In reaching this conclusion, the Committee assessed how the restriction on

the manifestation of religion or beliefs satisfies the requirements of article 18(3), that is, whether it served a legitimate aim of protecting public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others, and how it was necessary and proportionate to such an aim. The Committee further noted that a broad restriction, without a clear justification of its purpose, disproportionately affected the author, who lost the opportunity to pursue her university studies.

Also, in *Hudoyberganova v. Uzbekistan* ([CCPR/C/82/D/931/2000](#)), the Committee found that prohibiting a student from wearing a headscarf for religious reasons at a university violated her right to manifest her religion under article 18 of the ICCPR. It noted that, as reflected in the Committee's general comment No. 22 (para. 5), policies or practices that have the same intention or effect as direct coercion [to remove the headscarf], such as those restricting access to education, are inconsistent with article 18(2) of the Covenant. Similarly, in *Sonia Yaker v. France* ([CCPR/C/123/D/2747/2016](#)) and *Miriana Hebbadj v. France* ([CCPR/C/123/D/2807/2016](#)) the Committee concluded that a blanket criminal ban on the full-face veil (niqab) constituted a form of intersectional discrimination based on gender and religion, in violation of article 26 of the Covenant as it disproportionately affected Muslim women who choose to wear it.

With regard to religious symbols, especially in public schools, special procedure mandate holders have previously expressed their concern over legislation banning or attempting to ban the wearing of religious symbols in educational context ([FRA 13/2023](#) and [IND 4/2022](#)).

Also, the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief reiterated that each case has to be decided according to its own circumstances. If restrictions on the wearing of religious symbols are deemed necessary, these restrictions should not be applied in a discriminatory manner and they must be directly related and proportionate to the specific need on which the restrictions are predicated ([A/HRC/16/53](#) para. 59).

The Special Rapporteur also alerted that some forms of discrimination based on religion or belief, in law and or in practice, could be direct, such as in cases of outright restrictions of certain types of religious observances or prohibitions regarding public displays of certain religious symbols. Other forms of discrimination may be indirect. Examples include laws that appear neutral but have a disproportionate impact on different faith groups ([A/72/365](#), para. 22).

In the case of Kazakhstan, although there is no direct prohibition in the law to wear religious symbols in public schools, the normative framework is interpreted in a way that discriminates against girls manifesting Islam and has a disproportionate impact on this gender and faith group.

In addition, the judicial practice of holding parents administratively liable for their children wearing headscarves at school due to religious beliefs may amount to coercion impairing the freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of choice which is prohibited by article 18(2) of the ICCPR.

Aims of education and religious tolerance

Article 13(1) of the ICESCR states that all education shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and all racial, ethnic or religious groups. In article 29(1.d) of the CRC, States Parties agreed that education shall be directed to the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups.

In recognition of these aims, in 2023, the Human Rights Council adopted resolution [54/5](#) “Ensuring quality education for peace and tolerance for every child” proposed by Kazakhstan and adopted without a vote. This resolution calls upon all States to support quality education for peace, including by designing and implementing policies whereby education systems instill the principles of tolerance and respect for others and for cultural diversity, as well as and the freedom of religion or belief. It urges States to take measures, including through education, to promote religious tolerance and respect for all religions, religious values, beliefs and cultures.

The Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief in his 2010 report on freedom of religion or belief and school education ([A/HRC/16/53](#)) stated that school education can and should contribute to the elimination of negative stereotypes which frequently poison the relationship between different communities, especially with regard to religious communities of different orientations. From a human rights perspective, it should be left primarily to pupils (or their parents or guardians, respectively) to express their religious or non-religious conviction in the school context in such a way which they themselves see fit, provided this does not conflict with the rights of others (para. 40). The possibility to wear religious symbols in the public sphere, including in the school context, thus appears to be a natural result of the freedom to manifest one’s religion or belief. In addition, religious symbols in the school may also reflect the religious diversity as it exists in society at large (para. 43).

Educational policies which have an effect of excluding or stigmatizing students based on their religion or belief may violate the internationally recognized aims of education.

Best interests of the child

As recognized by the Supreme Court of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the two rulings mentioned above, Kazakhstan has committed to pay primary attention to the best interests of the child in all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies (article 3 of the CRC). The Court has concluded that denial of access to schools to girls wearing headscarves does not meet the obligations assumed by the state to ensure the best interests of the child in the field of compulsory secondary education.

The Supreme Court’s position is consistent with that of the Committee on the Rights of the Child in terms of access to education. However, the Committee goes further and gives a legal assessment of the ban itself, a topic which the Court expressly deemed outside of its scope of consideration.

In 2004, in its concluding observations on France ([CRC/C/15/Add.240](#)), the Committee expressed concern that France's ban on religious symbols in schools might neglect the best interests of the child and the right to education. The Committee noted that the blanket ban on wearing religious symbols and clothing in public schools may be counterproductive, by neglecting the principle of the best interests of the child and the right of the child to access to education. The Committee recommended that the State party, when evaluating the effects of the legislation, use the enjoyment of children's rights, as enshrined in the Convention, as a crucial criteria in the evaluation process and also consider alternative means, including mediation, for ensuring the secular character of public schools, while guaranteeing that individual rights are not infringed upon and that children are not excluded or marginalized from the school system and other settings as a result of such legislation. The Committee urged France to ensure that no child was excluded or marginalized from the school system due to such laws.

Similarly, in its concluding observations on Belgium in 2019, the Committee expressed concern that schools were allowed to ban wearing religious symbols, such as Islamic headscarves, which stigmatizes and discriminates against children, particularly girls of Muslim faith, and may influence their choice of school, further studies and employment. The Committee recommended that the State party take all measures necessary to ensure the full implementation of the rights of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion and to non-discrimination ([CRC/C/BEL/CO/5-6](#)).

The Committee also recommended Austria to consider abolishing the law that bans young girls from wearing headscarves in primary schools ([CRC/C/AUT/CO/5-6](#)) and urged Azerbaijan to give due consideration to context-adapted and flexible alternatives to its school uniform policy which prohibits the wearing of headscarves in schools ([CRC/C/AZE/CO/3-4](#)).

Discriminatory effect on girls

Article 2 of CEDAW requests States to take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices which constitute discrimination against women.

In its general recommendations Nos. 28, 33 and 35, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women confirmed that discrimination against women is intrinsically linked to other factors that affect their lives, such as minority status, colour, religion, ethnicity or race.

The Committee's jurisprudence provides clear guidance on the discriminatory effect of headscarves bans on female students. In its concluding observations on Belgium in 2008, the Committee noted that "the ban of headscarves in schools may increase the discrimination faced by girls from ethnic and religious minorities and may impede equality of access to education" ([CEDAW/C/BEL/CO/6](#)). In 2014, the Committee recommended Belgium to monitor and assess the impact on women and girls, in particular in relation to their access to education, of the ban on wearing headscarves adopted by several schools ([CEDAW/C/BEL/CO/7](#)).

Recognizing that girls are disproportionately represented among out-of-school children owing to, inter alia, discriminatory laws and *de facto* discrimination in access to education (HRC resolution [54/5](#)), special attention should be paid to cases of *de facto* or potential situations of exclusion of girls from education process, especially at the level of compulsory education.

Cultural rights

The wearing of a headscarf or any other religious symbol can be part of the expression of one's identity and hence, falls within the right to take part in cultural life, as recognized in article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and article 15 of the ICESCR.

In its general comment 21, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights stressed the right to take part in the development of the community to which a person belongs, and in the definition, elaboration and implementation of policies and decisions that have an impact on the exercise of a person's cultural rights (para. 15(c)). The Committee specified that the right of everyone to participate in cultural life includes the right to choose one's own identity, to identify or not with a particular community or communities or to change this choice, and to exercise one's own cultural practices (para. 15(a)). The Committee further stressed that no one shall suffer discrimination for having chosen to belong or not to belong to a particular community or cultural group (para. 22).

In her thematic report on the enjoyment of cultural rights by women on an equal basis with men ([A/67/287](#)), the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights noted that participation in cultural life includes the ability to embrace or reject particular cultural practices and identities as well as to keep or to revise and (re)negotiate existing traditions, values or practices, regardless of their provenance (para. 28). She recommended States to review the existence of formal or informal dress codes for women and men and the consequences for contravening these on girls and women as compared to men, and to adopt adequate measures taking into consideration obligations to respect, protect and fulfil the cultural rights of women, on the basis of equality with men (para. 79(i)).

Secular nature of public education

With concern to the reference to the secular nature of education made in article 3 of the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Education, we would like to note that international human rights law and jurisprudence considers it a complex issue which depends on the relationship between State and religion established in a particular country. Display of particular religious symbols in classrooms or by teachers as public servants, as well as the teaching of specific religions in a non-neutral way, is generally considered more intrusive with the secular nature of public education than the wearing of religious symbols by students exercising their protected freedom of religion or belief. Notably, the 2017 UNESCO Guidelines on Inclusion and Equity in Education emphasize the need for inclusive education systems that respect diversity, including religious and cultural differences. While teachers and curricula should remain neutral, students' rights to express their identity are supported.

Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion and belief provided useful guidance on the **relationships between State and religion** in his 2018 annual report ([A/HRC/37/49](#)). In particular, on the issue of secularism, he noted that “States that adopt more secular or neutral governance models may also run afoul of article 18(3) of the Covenant if they intervene overzealously and aggressively in the manifestation of religion or belief alleging the attempt to protect other rights [...]. Such protection efforts need to be reconciled with the obligations to uphold freedom of religion or belief, although its manifestation can be limited if this leads to the violation of the rights and freedoms of others. When these rights ultimately clash, every effort must be made, through a careful case-by-case analysis, to ensure that all rights are brought in practical concordance or protected through reasonable accommodation” (para. 47).

For example, in his report on countering Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred to eliminate discrimination and intolerance based on religion or belief ([A/HRC/46/30](#)), the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief noted that, despite the fact that some women regard it as integral to their faith or identity, some States in Europe, Africa and South Asia imposed public restrictions or bans on Muslims covering the hair – predominantly by women – on the grounds that this type of religious dress is incompatible with a secular public space, violates the rights of Muslim women or poses a security risk. Other States reportedly permit certain institutions (e.g., schools, places of work or the courts) to exercise discretion on whether to permit Muslim dress. He further asserted: “As the Human Rights Committee has noted, such prohibitions can violate Muslim women’s rights to freedom of religion or belief and non-discrimination and exacerbate their social marginalization” (para. 26).

In this context, we would like to reiterate the main principle of non-discrimination, as reminded by the Human Rights Committee in its general comment No. 22: “if a set of beliefs is treated as official ideology [e.g. secularism] in constitutions, statutes, proclamations of the ruling parties, etc., or in actual practice, this shall **not result in any impairment** of the freedoms under article 18 or any other rights recognized under the Covenant nor in **any discrimination** against persons who do not accept the official ideology or who oppose it” (para. 10).