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UN Human Rights Council: Amnesty International calls on states not to reject human rights law

Tomorrow, Friday 2 October the Human Rights Council will consider a revised draft resolution about “traditional values” (A/HRC/12/L.13/Rev.1). Russia and the other co-sponsors of the revised draft resolution have removed from the original draft resolution (A/HRC/12/L.13) the stipulation that “traditional values of humankind” should be “in conformity with international human rights law”. In doing so, they are removing all doubts about whether such a resolution belongs in the Human Rights Council. It does not.

The draft resolution does not define “traditional values”. It fails to acknowledge that some “traditional values” are inconsistent with human rights or are used in efforts to justify human rights violations. Numerous UN conventions, declarations and resolutions, as well as the work of human rights treaty monitoring bodies and independent experts, recognize that tradition and culture are too frequently used in efforts to justify violations of human rights, particularly the human rights of women. In previous decades and centuries, mixed-race marriages, desegregation, women having the right to work, to vote, or to own property, are just some of the rights that would have been denied on the grounds of inconsistency with so-called “traditional values”.

Adopting this resolution will introduce into the Human Rights Council of a seriously flawed concept of “traditional values” without the safeguards necessary to ensure that it cannot be abused to undermine human rights.

Amnesty International urges states to oppose this draft resolution.

Background

Draft resolution A/HRC/12/L.13/Rev.1 is entitled “Promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms through a better understanding of traditional values of humankind in conformity with international human rights law”.

Previous UN resolutions from the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council and its predecessor the Commission on Human Rights, on rights of the Child, the elimination of all forms of intolerance and of discrimination based on religion or belief, and violence against women have already addressed the threat posed by harmful traditional practices to human rights.

The Human Rights Council resolution on the mandate of the newly-appointed *Independent Expert in the field of cultural rights*, affirms that “no one may invoke cultural diversity to infringe upon human rights guaranteed by international law, nor to limit their scope”.

Public Document

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566 or email: press@amnesty.org

International Secretariat, Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW, UK
www.amnesty.org