

[#HRC34 | Women human rights defenders challenge fundamentalist and extremist rhetoric and ideologies](#)

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Governments relying on the manipulation of ideas about culture to attack human rights defenders were put on the spotlight yesterday at the Human Rights Council. A [coalition](#) of organisations supporting women human rights defenders urged States from all regions to ‘wake up’ and be genuine in their fight against extremist and fundamentalist ideologies.

On behalf of the Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition, ISHR highlighted the importance of ensuring the genuine and safe participation of women human rights defenders in policies and programmes to combat fundamentalist ideologies and rhetoric. 'In too many instances, civil society groups that oppose fundamentalist and extremist ideologies are themselves branded as threats to State security' said Ms Pooja Patel, Programme Manager at ISHR. She called on States to remove barriers and obstacles for independent civil society members who promote rights in accordance with international standards.

The Human Rights Council engaged in dialogue with the UN expert on Cultural Rights Karima Bennouna on Friday and Monday. In her [report](#), Ms Bennouna outlined that those defending the rights of women to take part in cultural life are de facto cultural rights defenders. As cultural rights defenders, they are the very antidote to fundamentalist and extremist agendas.

In a [joint statement](#) on International Women Human Rights Defenders Day last November, a number of other UN experts had also raised concern over the wave of populism and fundamentalism taking place in the world, and highlighted that ‘women human rights defenders represent an essential counter-power and a colossal force of action’.

Read the full statement [here](#).

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