Policy recommendations

1. Often religion has a negative connotation when considered in conjunction with women’s rights; religion is often blamed as a justification for violating women’s rights. The Global Gender-Specific Religious Persecution 2019 Analysis highlights instead the existence of an intersection between violations of freedom of religion or belief and women’s rights. Religious persecution is not gender-blind but rather gender-specific. Women and girls from minority faiths are doubly vulnerable -- subject to serious violations of their fundamental rights because of both their gender and religion. The misconception that religion is a primary source for women’s rights violations leads to neglecting that women and girls who belong to certain religious minorities are doubly vulnerable because of their gender and religion. Therefore,

   The International Community should acknowledge and research the double vulnerability of women and girls belonging to a religious minority, and should assert that women’s rights and freedom of religion or belief are not contradictory, but instead mutually reinforcing.

2. The Global Gender-Specific Religious Persecution 2019 Analysis highlights how violations of freedom of religion or belief dramatically amplify the scale of gender-based violence against women and girls from religious minorities. Gender-based violence impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women of many fundamental human rights and constitutes discrimination within the meaning of article 1 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). These rights include, but are not limited to: right to life; right not to be subject to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; right to liberty and security of person; right to equal protection under the law (CEDAW committee General Recommendation No. 19, 11th session, 1992). Under these premises,

   We urge the United Nations CEDAW Committee to take into account the double vulnerability of women and girls from religious minorities. Furthermore, it should form a panel of special experts to conduct a focused study on the intersection between freedom of religion or belief and women’s rights. Said panel should determine (1) how the CEDAW Committee, and the UN in general, is assisting women from religious minorities; and (2) what needs to improve to protect women who are doubly vulnerable due to their adherence to a minority faith.