



Human Rights Observatory

(01/2025 – 04/2025)

**Trimestral review on the state of situation
of human rights discussions in international
organizations, with a special focus on the right to
education, freedom of religion and family rights**

Introduction

The Human Rights Observatory (HRO) is a trimestral monitoring initiative led by FUNCIVA and OIDEL, aimed at providing a comprehensive and structured overview of the latest developments in international human rights discussions, with a particular focus on the right to education, freedom of religion or belief, and family rights. This Observatory seeks to offer stakeholders—governments, civil society organizations, researchers, and educators—an accessible and timely synthesis of key resolutions, reports, and policy trends emerging from international organizations such as the United Nations, UNESCO, OECD, Council of Europe, and the European Union. Its aim is to enable timely responses and ensure that all stakeholders are meaningfully involved in shaping decisions—thus contributing to more equitable and democratic outcomes.

Covering the period from January to April 2025, this edition provides an analytical snapshot of recent developments, highlighting both challenges and opportunities for advancing a human rights framework that respects pluralism, protects dignity, and fosters social cohesion.

This report stands as a clear expression of the commitment of FUNCIVA and OIDEL to the promotion and defense of human rights. It also reflects their shared mission to bring the work of international organizations closer to the field—bridging the gap between global decision-making and local realities. By doing so, both institutions reaffirm their dedication to fostering informed civic participation and ensuring that international human rights processes remain open, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of all communities.

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1. Report Summary

During the first quarter of 2025, the global human rights landscape has continued to evolve within a context of turbulence and unpredictability, as recently emphasized by United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk¹. Conflicts, political polarization, and challenges to international norms have increasingly impacted discussions across international organizations, including critical debates on the rights to education, freedom of religion, and family rights.

Throughout this period, significant developments were observed within United Nations bodies — particularly the Human Rights Council (HRC) — as well as the European Union, the OECD, and the Council of Europe.

The **right to education**, as articulated in international human rights law, guarantees free and compulsory elementary education for all, with higher education accessible based on merit, aimed at developing the human personality and fostering respect for human rights and freedoms (see Article 26 UDHR). On the right to education, international resolutions and thematic reports emphasized education's foundational role in strengthening democracy, promoting inclusion, and ensuring peacebuilding, particularly for vulnerable and marginalized groups. Discussions also addressed emerging challenges, including the digital divide, mental health needs within educational systems, and the safeguarding of educational spaces in contexts of armed conflict. Regional and national developments further illustrate the diversity of approaches to educational freedom, parental choice and minority rights.

Freedom of thought, conscience, and religion under international human rights law protects each individual's right to hold beliefs of their choice, to change their religion or belief, and to manifest these beliefs alone or with others, in public or private (see Article 18 UDHR). Recent resolutions on freedom of religion or belief reaffirmed its intrinsic connection to other fundamental rights such as freedom of expression and non-discrimination. Reports drew attention to the rise in religious intolerance, attacks against religious minorities, and restrictions on the exercise of religious conscience. Efforts to promote intercultural dialogue and safeguard religious identity within diverse societies emerged as essential priorities.

In the context of international human rights law, **family rights** generally refer to the recognition of the family as the fundamental unit of society, entitled to protection and support by both the State and society (see Article 16.3 UDHR). In relation to family rights, discussions stressed the important role of the family for the protection of human dignity, especially regarding children's rights, social protection, and caregiving responsibilities. Reports underscored the impact of conflict, poverty, and digital risks on family structures, while recent legal and political developments revealed ongoing debates around parental authority, reproductive rights, and the evolving definitions of family across different regions.

The international dialogue in early 2025 reflects both persistent challenges and promising initiatives. It reveals a heightened awareness of the need to defend fundamental rights in an increasingly fragmented world.

¹ Access to the full speech: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2025/03/turbulence-and-unpredictability-amid-growing-conflict-and-divided>



2. Right to Education

2.a United Nations

2.a.i Human Rights Councilⁱ

2.a.i.i Resolutions

In the 58th regular session of HRC, held from the 24th of February to the 4th of April of 2025, four resolutions made explicit reference to the right to education. The Council adopted all four by consensus.

One resolution, focused on **Human rights, democracy and the rule of law** reaffirms the contribution of education to strengthening democracy, good governance, and the rule of law at all levels. It emphasized the need for States to ensure access to safe, inclusive, equitable, and quality education, and expresses grave concern over escalating attacks on schools, students, and education personnel, underlining the importance of keeping educational environments safe. The resolution recognizes the importance of

human rights education and training, including through digital platforms, and encourages the development of educational policies to combat disinformation and hate speech, particularly through media and information literacy. Notably, it sets the theme for the sixth session of the Forum on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law (2026) as *“Education for civic participation: empowering future generations, fostering knowledge and critical thinking.”*

Another resolution on **Cultural rights and the protection of cultural heritage** emphasizes the role of education in promoting access to and enjoyment of cultural rights. It also invites States to implement educational programs on the importance of cultural heritage and cultural rights.

The resolution addressing **Freedom of religion or belief** underlines the importance of education in promoting tolerance and countering discrimination based on religion or belief. The text reiterates that schools should contribute to promoting tolerance

and the elimination of discrimination based on religion or belief.

Finally, the resolution on the *Question of the realization in all countries of economic, social and cultural rights* encourages States to increase investment in inclusive and equitable quality education, recognizing the transformative power of education in advancing the broader realization of economic, social and cultural rights.

2.a.i.ii Reports – Thematicⁱⁱ

The idea of education as an instrument for inclusion and protection, particularly for those in vulnerable or marginalized situations, also resurfaced in different debates and reports that took place during the HRC.

In her latest *report*, the **Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict**, Virginia Gamba, highlights education as a fundamental right and a cornerstone for peacebuilding. She urges parties to conflict to ensure safe, unimpeded access to education, protect schools from attacks and military use, and adopt measures to guarantee continued learning, especially for girls.

Similarly, the **Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children**, Najat Maalla, stresses in her *annual report*, the critical role of education in protecting children from exploitation and abuse. The report further stresses that humanitarian crises often result in the disruption of quality and inclusive education, thereby intensifying children's vulnerability to trafficking and other forms of abuse.

A broader set of reflections can be found in the 2025 report *Conclusions and recommendations of special procedures* published in 2025 compiles the main conclusions and recommendations

presented by special procedure mandate holders in 2024. Among the various thematic areas addressed, several contributions focus on the right to education. The **Special Rapporteur on the right to education**, Farida Shaheed, examines the use of artificial intelligence in education from a human rights perspective, analyzing potential risks and benefits. The Rapporteur also emphasizes the importance of academic freedom, calling for the protection of educational institutions and actors from political or ideological pressure. In addition, the **Independent Expert on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism** highlights the educational barriers faced by children with albinism.

The *report of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)ⁱⁱⁱ on the Rights of persons with disabilities and digital technologies* explores how digital and assistive technologies can enhance access to education for persons with disabilities. It highlights tools such as text-to-speech features, accessible applications, and smart devices that support inclusive learning environments. The integration of such technologies into education is framed as essential to achieving equity, independence, and full participation for learners with disabilities.

The reports (*A/HRC/58/54* and *A/HRC/58/69*) of the **Special Rapporteur on minority issues**, Nicolas Levrat, emphasizes the role of education in affirming minority identity and promoting inclusive representation. The Special Rapporteur underlines that mother tongue instruction, curriculum reform, and minority-led schools are essential tools for preserving cultural heritage and enabling equitable access to education. Additionally, the United Nations Forum on Minority Issues recommends integrating minority histories, languages, and cultures into national curricula, expanding mother tongue-based education, and supporting

minority-led educational institutions to strengthen identity and participation.

Lastly, the **OHCHR** report on *Mental health and human rights* (A/HRC/58/38) brings attention to the importance of addressing mental health within educational settings. It highlights that many school systems around the world lack adequate mental health training for staff, leaving children and adolescents without appropriate support and delaying timely care. The report underscores the urgent need to integrate mental health into education policies.

2.1.i.iii Reports – Universal Periodic Review (UPR)^{iv}

In the *Report of the UPR Working Group on Portugal*, several countries recommend improving access to inclusive and quality education, particularly for children with disabilities, Roma communities, and those living in poverty or rural areas. They also call for expanding early childhood education, strengthening mental health support in schools, and promoting digital literacy. The text was adopted without a vote.

In the *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review on Norway*, the Kingdom of the Netherlands urges the government to revise the Independent Schools Act to guarantee the right to establish new schools without interference from local authorities, underscoring the importance of educational freedom. The text was adopted without a vote.

2.a.i.iv High-Level Segments^v

During the 58th Session of the HRC, the majority of the Human Rights Council's High-Level Segments focused on ongoing conflicts in Ukraine, Gaza, Myanmar, Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Still, many countries spoke about democratic

freedom, freedom of religion, access to education, and children's rights at large, both in the context of these conflicts and standing alone.

Several Member States addressed the right to education, often linking it to broader commitments to equality, inclusion, and peacebuilding. **Kenya** highlighted the impact of violence on educational institutions, reporting that over 2.8 million children are currently out of school and that one in eleven is being denied the right to learn. Kenya also emphasized efforts to reduce the digital divide as a means to promote equal access to education and information. **Cuba** drew attention to the impact of external sanctions, noting that the U.S. blockade continues to obstruct the full realization of the rights to education and healthcare. **Colombia** underlined the importance of protecting migrants' rights and described national policies designed to guarantee access to basic rights, including education, for migrant populations. **Georgia** presented a new initiative exploring the development of an optional protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child to strengthen the right to free education.

Saudi Arabia outlined its efforts to integrate 132,000 children without legal status into the national education system, underlining the importance of equal access for all. **Qatar** strongly condemned the destruction of educational infrastructure in Gaza and urged the international community to prioritize its reconstruction.

Other countries raised concerns linked to education and children's rights. **Andorra** and **Iceland** condemned the continued exclusion of girls from education in Afghanistan. **Iran**, in presenting domestic developments, identified education, healthcare, and women's rights as key areas of progress. **El Salvador** described the establishment of eleven "Cube" centers—community spaces created to provide

children with safe access to learning tools and educational support.

Finally, the President of the **Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (CIDH)** emphasized the role of education as a gateway to participation in public life, underscoring the need to ensure this right is fully guaranteed to women.

2.1.ii UNESCO^{vi}

2.a.ii.i Guidelines

UNESCO's report *Homeschooling through a Human Rights Lens – Preliminary Research*, is expected to be published at the end of April 2025. This report, originally informed by desk-based research, expert contributions, and some submissions from UNESCO Member States, examines homeschooling from a rights-based perspective. It highlights both the challenges and opportunities associated with homeschooling and explores trends, along with the obligations of States under international human rights law to provide inclusive, quality education while respecting parents' rights to choose the educational path for their children.

2.a.ii.ii Report

The **UNESCO Global Educational Monitoring Report (GEM Report)** is an annual publication by the **United Nations, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)**. It focuses on education at the global level and monitors progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. The report highlights policy recommendations and best practices for improving education systems and promoting lifelong learning opportunities. It thus is a valuable resource for policymakers, educators, researchers, and anyone interested in global education

issues. Each year's report typically has a specific theme or focus, and it provides a wealth of data, analysis, and insights related to that theme.

The *2024 GEM Report Technology on her terms* examines how digital technologies impact gender equality in education. It warns that while technology can empower, it may also deepen existing inequalities. The report highlights challenges such as the digital access gap, gender bias in tech design, underrepresentation of women in STEM, and online harassment. Its key recommendations for policymakers include ensuring equity in digital access, promoting inclusive technology design, supporting girls in STEM, and tackling online abuse.

The *2024/2025 GEM Report Leadership in education* highlights the critical role of leadership in shaping quality education. The report identifies leadership as the second most influential factor in student learning after teaching. The report urges governments to invest in training and professional development, support collaboration within schools, and ensure autonomy and accountability at the system level. It also emphasizes the need to diversify leadership, noting that women remain underrepresented in top education roles, and calls for stronger, more stable political leadership to sustain long-term reforms.

2.a.iii Treaty Bodies^{vii}– Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

In February 2025, the **Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR)** released a *Statement on Tax Policy and the International Covenant, on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, highlighting how fiscal frameworks directly impact rights. In paragraph 6, the Committee emphasizes that well-designed tax systems should raise sufficient revenue

to secure rights, such as education, and reduce socioeconomic inequalities. It emphasizes that regressive taxes like VAT can disproportionately affect low-income women and hinder access to education, and calls for gender-, disability-, and age-responsive investment in education systems. The report also warns that illicit financial flows and cross-border tax abuses deprive low- and middle-income countries of critical public revenue, undermining their ability to fulfill education rights. To counter this, the Committee urges States Parties to participate in good faith in the development of a **UN framework convention on international tax cooperation**, ensuring that international tax rules are fair and enable all States to fund essential public services such as education.

2.b Others

2.b.i OECD^{viii}

On January 28, the OECD published the policy paper *School partnerships addressing child well-being and digital technology that examines* how partnerships between schools and external actors can better support student well-being and digital competence.

Based on data from 23 OECD countries, the study finds that while partnerships with mental health professionals and guidance counselors are increasingly common, engagement with medical, fitness, and digital specialists remains limited. Promising models such as *Mexico's Construye T* and *Belgium's Pupil Guidance Centres* demonstrate the potential of coordinated, multi-actor approaches. In contrast, digital partnerships are underdeveloped, despite the rising relevance of digital literacy and online safety.

The report identifies key conditions for effective collaboration, including trust-

building, strong leadership, inclusive governance, and alignment with local contexts. It calls on policymakers to integrate these partnerships into teacher training and system-wide reforms to foster more resilient, inclusive education systems.

2.b.ii Council of Europe

In January 2025, the **Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe** adopted the Resolution on *Multiperspectivity in remembrance and history education for democratic citizenship*. The text underscores the essential role of history teaching in fostering democratic culture, pluralism, and resilience against disinformation. It calls for the inclusion of sensitive and controversial historical topics, and for promoting critical thinking and multiperspectivity in classrooms. The resolution highlights the need to overcome challenges such as overloaded curricula and limited teacher training, urging member States to introduce education for democratic citizenship as a distinct compulsory subject, support teacher development, and facilitate partnerships between schools, cultural institutions and other relevant stakeholders, such as museums and artists.

2.b.iii European Union

As a new development of the 2024–2029 legislative period, the European Parliament (EP) has established its first-ever **Intergroup on Education and Skills**. This initiative aims to support Europe's green and digital transitions by promoting future-ready competences. It marks a significant step toward more integrated, cross-sectoral policymaking in education and training.

2.b.iv Global Developments on the Right to Education

Several developments during the current period reveal the evolving landscape of the right to education across different regions, highlighting both advances and areas of concern. These include regional agreements, legislative efforts, policy revisions, and restrictions that directly or indirectly impact educational access, freedom, and quality.

In January 2025, the **Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI)** and the **Holy See** signed a cooperation agreement aimed at promoting comprehensive, quality education and fostering regional integration throughout Ibero-America.

In the **United States**, recent executive orders sought to expand educational freedom and parental choice, reinforcing an approach that emphasizes the decentralization of educational decision-making and increased options for families within the educational landscape.

In **Venezuela**, recent reports by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) have documented systematic violations of academic freedom, including persecution, harassment, and arbitrary detention of students, professors, and education community members.

In **Argentina**, the Government of the City of Buenos Aires announced a comprehensive review of all contents related to its Integral Sexual Education (ESI) program. While the review takes place during the academic recess, all ESI materials have been temporarily removed from official government websites. Authorities have indicated that the review aims to be neutral, although civil society actors have expressed concern regarding transparency and access to educational resources during the process.

In **Chile**, several legislative initiatives underscore ongoing debates around the right to education. One bill seeks to extend constitutional protection to the preferential right of parents to educate their children. Another proposal aims to regulate interventions in educational settings that may affect the identity or psychological development of minors, while also addressing issues of technology use, safety, and privacy in schools. Additionally, a third initiative proposes declaring early childhood, primary, and secondary education as an essential public service, thereby limiting the conditions under which in-person education can be interrupted.

Together, these developments reflect the complexity of ensuring the right to education globally. While some initiatives seek to reinforce access, protection, and quality, others reveal tensions surrounding parental rights, state responsibility, and academic freedom.



3. Freedom of religion

3.a United Nations

3.a.i Human Rights Council

3.a.i.i Resolutions

During the **58th regular session of the HRC**, three resolutions addressed issues related to the right to freedom of religion or belief, emphasizing the urgent need to combat intolerance, protect religious communities, and promote peaceful coexistence. The Council adopted all three by consensus.

The resolution on *Freedom of religion or belief* reaffirms the right of every individual to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, including the freedom to adopt, change, and manifest one's religion or belief, either individually or in community with others, publicly or privately. It emphasizes the interdependence between

freedom of religion and freedom of expression, condemns all forms of violence and intolerance based on religion or belief, and stresses the role of education in promoting mutual understanding and tolerance. Furthermore, it calls on States to step up efforts to combat religious intolerance and to ensure that public officials respect freedom of religion or belief in their duties.

The resolution on *Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against, persons based on religion or belief* strongly condemns all advocacy of religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility, or violence. It highlights the importance of promoting inter-religious and intercultural dialogue and calls on States to adopt measures to ensure respect for places of worship and to counter religious profiling. The resolution reaffirms that violence can never be an acceptable response to acts of religious intolerance and underlines the positive role

of education in fostering mutual respect and peaceful coexistence.

The resolution on the *Promotion and protection of human rights in Nicaragua* expresses grave concern over the repression of religious leaders and institutions, particularly the Catholic Church, by the Nicaraguan authorities. It condemns acts of intimidation, harassment, and arbitrary detention of religious figures, and stresses the urgent need to restore full respect for freedom of religion and belief in the country. Although broader in focus, the resolution recognizes the essential role of religious freedom in ensuring the enjoyment of other fundamental human rights.

3.a.i.ii Reports – Thematic

The interrelation between freedom of religion or belief and the protection of other fundamental rights was a key focus in several thematic reports during the 58th session of the HRC.

In her report on *Freedom of religion or belief and the prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment* the **Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief**, Nazila Ghanea, explores the intersection between freedom of religion or belief and the prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. She stresses that coercion—whether through forced religious conversion, punishment for apostasy, or discrimination against religious minorities—often crosses into the realm of ill-treatment or even torture, which constitutes a non-derogable violation under international law. The report urges States to ensure that violations of religious freedom are recognized not only as discrimination but as serious breaches of absolute human rights norms.

In his *report*, the **Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues**, Nicolas Levrat, focuses on the right to identity of persons belonging to national, ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities. He highlights that the recognition and protection of collective religious identities is a necessary condition for the effective realization of minority rights. The report underlines that affirming the religious identity of minorities through legal and institutional measures strengthens social cohesion and prevents conflict.

During the *seventeenth session of the Forum on Minority Issues*, chaired by Nicolas Levrat, participants stressed the need to ensure the recognition and fair representation of religious minorities in public spaces and discourses. The Forum highlighted that respecting the religious identities of minorities is essential to fostering inclusive societies, and called on States to actively combat hate speech and discrimination targeting religious groups.

The **OHCHR** report on the *rights of persons belonging to minorities* reiterates the urgent need for comprehensive anti-discrimination laws. It calls upon States to ensure that such frameworks protect religious minorities effectively, not only prohibiting direct discrimination but also addressing structural and intersectional forms of exclusion.

Finally, in its *report* the **Group of Human Rights Experts on Nicaragua** documents the systematic repression of religious leaders and institutions, particularly the Catholic Church. Such acts, including arbitrary arrests, expulsions, and the closing of religious spaces, were assessed as part of a broader pattern of violations amounting to crimes against humanity.

3.a.i.iii Reports – Universal Periodic Review (UPR)

In the *Report of the UPR Working Group on Portugal*, a few countries emphasize the importance of protecting freedom of religion and conscience. In particular, the Holy See recommends safeguarding conscientious objection in the medical field and ensuring that freedom of religion, conscience, and expression are respected when implementing laws against so-called conversion therapies. The text was adopted without a vote.

In the *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review on Norway*, several delegations welcome their Action Plan against Racism and Discrimination on the Grounds of Ethnicity and Religion. Recommendations urged Norway to combat hate speech and discrimination targeting religious groups, including Muslims and Jews. The text was adopted without a vote.

3.a.i.iv High-Level Segments

During the 58th Session of the HRC, several Member States highlighted the importance of protecting freedom of religion.

Kenya emphasized its commitment to combating religious intolerance and the **Holy See** placed particular focus on the defense of religious freedoms, stating that attempts to restrict religious freedom are an obstacle to lasting peace and integral development. The Holy See noted that approximately 380 million Christians around the world suffer from persecution and discrimination for their beliefs. They called on the HRC to take a more active role in protecting religious individuals and ensuring freedom of religion.

3.b Others

3.b.i European Union

Within the newly convened 2024–2029 EP, Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) have relaunched the cross-party **Intergroup on Freedom of Religion or Belief and Religious Tolerance**. Building on its prior mandate, the Intergroup continues to serve as an important internal forum for dialogue on issues related to Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB), fostering connections between MEPs, civil society organizations, and religious leaders.

The EP INI report *Human rights and democracy in the world and the European Union's policy on the matter – annual report 2024* reaffirms the EU's commitment to protecting fundamental rights, including freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, as key pillars of democracy and the rule of law. It condemns the global rise of authoritarianism, and repression of religious and belief minorities, emphasizing the urgent need to defend human dignity and uphold international law. The report calls for stronger EU action to counter abuses, increased support for human rights defenders, and consistent enforcement of human rights clauses in international agreements.

3.b.ii Global Developments on the Right to Education

Several developments during the current period reveal the evolving landscape of freedom of religion across different regions, highlighting both advances and areas of concern.

In **Costa Rica**, a new legislative project was introduced in Congress aiming to protect the rights to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. The bill seeks to guarantee the right to conscientious

objection for individuals and to safeguard the ideological freedom of private legal entities, reinforcing protections derived from fundamental human rights.

In **Brazil**, the Federal Supreme Court (STF) ruled that the presence of religious symbols, such as crucifixes, in public buildings does not violate the principle of state secularism or individual freedom of belief. The Court emphasized that such symbols reflect Brazil's cultural tradition and do not compromise the principles of non-discrimination or state neutrality.

In **Colombia**, the Ministry of the Interior established the Observatory of Freedom of Religion through an official resolution. The Observatory is tasked with promoting and protecting religious freedom through research, information gathering, and policy recommendations, aiming to uphold diversity, equality, and full exercise of religious rights in the country.

In **Cuba**, the Cuban Observatory of Human Rights (OCDH) reported at least 996 violations against religious freedom during 2024. These incidents included preventing attendance at religious services, imposing fines on leaders of non-recognized churches, and harassment of practicing individuals.

The **United States Commission on International Religious Freedom** (USCIRF) released its **2025 Annual Report**. The Commission documented religious freedom conditions worldwide, highlighted countries of particular concern such as Nicaragua, Cuba, China, and Russia, and issued policy recommendations to the U.S. government. The report emphasized the need for consequences, including sanctions, for foreign governments violating religious freedom, underscoring the growing global challenges to religious liberty.



4. Family Rights

4.a United Nations

4.a.i Human Rights Council

The 58th regular session of the HRC, which took place from 24 February to 4 April included discussions, reports, and resolutions on family rights.

4.a.i.i Resolutions

The 58th regular session of the HRC included resolutions that, although not explicitly centered on “family rights,” addressed important aspects related to children and their protection. The Council adopted all those resolutions by consensus.

The resolution *Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law* reaffirms the right of children and young people to access safe, inclusive, and quality education, emphasizing the importance of protecting schools, students, and educational staff from attacks. It expresses concern over the long-term impact of such violence, particularly on girls and children with disabilities.

The resolution *Question of the realization in all countries of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* recognizes the persistent vulnerability of children in contexts of poverty, inequality, and underinvestment in public services. It encourages States to ensure equitable access to essential services for all.

The resolution *Human Rights Defenders and New and Emerging Technologies* highlights the risks posed to children’s rights in digital environments, calling for the development and implementation of

national child safety policies in alignment with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The resolution *Promotion and protection of human rights in Nicaragua* includes references to the impact of state repression on children and adolescents, particularly due to the closure of civil society organizations that provided education and support.

4.a.i.ii Reports – Thematic

During the 58th session of the HRC multiple thematic reports reaffirmed the family as a critical site of human rights protection, particularly in contexts of conflict, caregiving, migration, and discrimination.

The **report** of the **Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict**, Virginia Gamba, highlights the devastating impact of armed conflict on children. The report underscores that the separation of children from their families—through recruitment into armed groups, abductions, or the denial of humanitarian access—exposes them to heightened risks of violence and exploitation. Recognizing the family as a vital space for the protection and well-being of children, the Special Representative advocates for urgent measures, such as promoting birth registration, supporting family reunification, and preventing the detention of children without due legal safeguards.

In her **report**, the **Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children**, Najat Maalla, focuses on the alarming increase in the trafficking of children and the urgent need to strengthen coordinated global action. She highlights the multiple vulnerabilities children face, especially in contexts of conflict, displacement, poverty, and humanitarian crises, which traffickers increasingly exploit. The report outlines the importance of cross-

border cooperation, stronger national child protection systems, engagement with civil society, the private sector, and the active participation of children themselves.

The **report** of the **Group of Human Rights Experts on Nicaragua** documents systematic violations against families, including the forced expulsion of entire families, deprivation of nationality, and transnational repression. The report highlights how the government's actions led to family separation, economic persecution, surveillance, and the targeting of children of political opponents through discrimination and interrogation.

The report of the **Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the rights of persons with disabilities and digital technologies** examines the rights of persons with disabilities and digital technologies and devices, including assistive technologies. It notes that insufficient investment in assistive technologies imposes a disproportionate caregiving burden on families—especially women.

In the **Report of the Secretary-General on the question of the realization in all countries of economic, social and cultural rights** the right to social security is closely linked to the protection and promotion of family rights. The report recalls that international instruments such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recognize the family as a fundamental group unit entitled to special protection and assistance. In particular, States are reminded of their obligations to provide social security measures that safeguard family life, including special protection for mothers before and after childbirth and the provision of essential benefits for children and dependents.

The **Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities** *Thirty years of implementation of the Beijing*

Declaration and Platform for Action

acknowledges the central role of women, particularly mothers of children with disabilities, in providing care and support within the family, and calls for greater recognition of unpaid caregiving work and the development of adequate support systems.

4.a.i.iii Reports – Universal Periodic Review (UPR)

During this HRC, the UPR reports of Portugal and Norway were being presented.

In the *Report of the UPR Working Group on Portugal*, several countries address the importance of strengthening family support policies. Egypt recommends recognizing the family as the natural and fundamental unit of society, Italy calls for measures to improve housing conditions for families with children, and Burundi urges the government to prioritize access to decent housing for vulnerable families. The text was adopted without a vote.

In the *Report of the UPR Working Group on Norway*, several countries show concern over the separation of children from their families and the practices of the child welfare system. Vanuatu recommends ensuring that children separated from their families are not placed in long-term care prematurely and should maintain regular contact with their parents. Zimbabwe and Libya emphasize that child removal should be a last resort, while Egypt encourages the strengthening of the family as the natural and fundamental unit of society. Türkiye recommends reviewing the Child Welfare Act with attention to family reunification goals. The text was adopted without a vote.

4.a.i.iv High-Level Segments

During the 58th Session of the Human Rights Council, several Member States raised issues tied to the protection and

promotion of the rights of the family. These interventions reflected a recognition of the family as a core institution in both social development and human rights frameworks.

Brazil highlighted the adoption of a national care policy that formally distributes caregiving responsibilities among the State, families, civil society, and the private sector—marking a structural commitment to shared family care. **Morocco** shared that they revised the Family Code in 2024 following a balanced approach that aims to maintain its national identity while carrying essential revisions related to social transformation.

Other States made indirect references to the role of the family through discussions on child protection and education.

4.a.ii Treaty Bodies – Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

In February 2025, the **CESCR** issued a *Statement on Tax Policy and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, which included relevant considerations for family rights. The document warns about the disproportionate burden regressive and ineffective tax policies place on low-income families. Additionally, the Committee calls on States to review how tax structures affect gender equality and unpaid care work within families, noting that second earners (often women) are disincentivized by higher tax rates. The Statement emphasizes that investment in public services is essential to support families and realize economic, social and cultural rights, such as comprehensive care and support systems that are gender-, disability- and age-responsive.

4.b Others

4.b.i OECD

On February 1, the **OECD Development Centre** published the policy paper *Transforming laws and norms to achieve universal sexual and reproductive health and rights*. The report draws on data from the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) and findings from an OECD expert workshop.

The paper identifies persistent obstacles, including restrictive laws, third-party consent requirements, and discriminatory social norms, which limit access to SRHR services. It presents case studies from multiple countries to illustrate the effects of legal and policy changes, as well as community-based interventions.

Recommendations include reforming legal frameworks to align with international human rights standards, expanding access to comprehensive sexual education, strengthening healthcare delivery, and improving SRHR data systems.

4.b.ii Council of Europe

In January 2025, the **Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe** adopted a resolution on *Overcoming age-based discrimination against older persons*. The resolution affirms that human rights must apply equally at all ages, rejecting the notion that ageing justifies diminished rights or participation. It identifies ageism—defined as stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination based on age—as a societal issue, particularly affecting older persons in employment, healthcare, education, and access to services. The Assembly calls for a human rights-based approach to combat ageing, robust anti-discrimination legislation, and the integration of older persons' voices in decision-making

processes. It further emphasizes the importance of intergenerational solidarity, education, digital inclusion, and the collection of disaggregated data to understand and combat intersectional forms of age-based discrimination. Member States are urged to strengthen legal protections, promote awareness, support care infrastructure, and consider establishing dedicated institutions for the rights of older persons.

4.b.iii European Union

In May 2022, the **European Commission** (EC) presented a **proposal** for new binding rules to prevent and combat child sexual abuse online. The proposal introduces mandatory obligations for service providers to detect, report and remove child sexual abuse material (CSAM), along with requirements to assess and mitigate risks. It also foresees the creation of an independent EU Centre on Child Sexual Abuse (EUCSA) to coordinate expertise and support providers in their obligations. Strong safeguards are included to ensure that detection measures are proportionate, respect privacy, and fully comply with fundamental rights.

The legislative process remains ongoing. The EP's Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee (LIBE) adopted its report in November 2023, introducing several modifications. However, no agreement was reached within the Council by the end of 2024. On 15th February 2023, Parliament and Council reached a provisional agreement to extend the interim derogation — a temporary framework that allows service providers to voluntarily detect and report CSAM — until April 2026. The adoption of a definitive regulation remains a priority for 2025 under the Polish Presidency of the Council of the EU.

On 6th February 2024, the EC submitted a [proposal](#) for the revision of the **Directive on Combating Child Sexual Abuse** (Directive 2011/93/EU). This initiative finalizes a broader strategy, following the adoption of two new pieces of legislation: the strengthening of Europol's mandate to fight online child sexual abuse and an interim regulation allowing online service providers to voluntarily detect and report abuse material, notwithstanding ePrivacy rules. The proposed revision expands the definition of offences, increases penalties, reinforces measures for the prevention and support of victims, and introduces minimum statutes of limitation to ensure victims' access to justice.

In the EP, the file was assigned to the LIBE Committee, with the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM) as associated committee. A draft report was presented on 16th April 2024, welcoming the extension of the definition of child sexual abuse material to cover AI-generated images and instructional content. After the European elections of June 2024, discussions continued under the new EC, led by Magnus Brunner. On 13th December 2024, the Council reached a common position, opening the way for inter-institutional negotiations.

In March 2025, the EC launched a [Roadmap for Women's Rights](#) to strengthen its commitment to gender equality as a core EU value. Building on the Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025, the Roadmap sets long-term objectives such as combating gender-based violence, ensuring equal pay, advancing women's leadership, and improving work-life balance. It emphasizes a dual strategy: integrating gender considerations across all policies while directly addressing persistent inequalities.

The Roadmap outlines specific institutional commitments, such as integrating gender equality into the EU budget and upcoming

policy initiatives, and reinforces cooperation with Member States, social partners, and civil society. A public consultation for the post-2025 Gender Equality Strategy is planned for spring 2025, aiming to involve a wide range of stakeholders in shaping the next phase of the EU's efforts towards a more inclusive and equitable society.

4.b.iv Global Developments on Family Rights

Recent legal and policy developments across the Americas and Europe reveal significant tensions and evolving interpretations of family rights. These reflect ongoing debates about parental authority, reproductive autonomy, family structures, and identity, with courts, legislatures, and international bodies weighing in on key issues.

In the **United States**, the New Mexico Supreme Court ruled that local counties must comply with state-level protections for abortion rights, striking down attempts by municipalities to impose restrictive ordinances. Meanwhile, a federal court in Kentucky annulled a Department of Education rule that interpreted Title IX's sex-based discrimination prohibition to include gender identity.

In **Colombia**, the Supreme Court issued a judgment recognizing distinctions between civil and religious marriage, affirming the legitimacy of diverse family forms. In a separate ruling, the Constitutional Court upheld the right of non-binary individuals to have their gender identity reflected in official digital ID documents.

In **Chile**, the Chamber of Deputies introduced a bill that prohibits all forms of surrogacy, framing the use of women's bodies for gestation as incompatible with human dignity. Another bill under discussion aims to restrict social media

access for children under fourteen and emphasizes parental responsibility in monitoring digital usage.

In **Spain**, the government of the Autonomous community Castilla-La Mancha announced the creation of a new registry for medical professionals who object to performing abortions, sparking debate about the balance between institutional conscience rights and access to abortion.

These developments illustrate the diverse and often conflicting approaches to defining and protecting family rights. While some legal frameworks seek to expand recognition of varied family forms and individual identities, others reaffirm traditional roles or impose regulatory boundaries based on ethical or ideological lines.

Annex

Abbreviations

CESCR: Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
CIDH: Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
CSAM: Child sexual abuse material
EC: European Commission
EP: European Parliament
EUCSA: EU Centre on Child Sexual Abuse
FEMM: Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality
GEM Report: UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report
HRC: Human Rights Council
LIBE: Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee (LIBE)
OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OEI: Organization of Ibero-American States
OHCHR: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
RES: Resolution
SR: Special Rapporteur
STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
UDHR: Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN: United Nations
UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UPR: Universal Periodic Review
USCIRF: United States Commission on International Religious Freedom

References

ⁱ The Human Rights Council is a United Nations body responsible for promoting and protecting human rights worldwide, addressing violations, and making recommendations for their improvement. It is composed of member states that meet regularly to discuss and address human rights issues globally.

ⁱⁱ The Human Rights Council (HRC) produces thematic reports on various human rights issues as part of its mandate to promote and protect human rights around the world. These reports are prepared by independent experts, special rapporteurs, working groups, and other mechanisms established by the HRC. Some thematic reports cover specific human rights topics or issues, while others may focus on country-specific situations or regions. Although not juridically binding, these reports have relevance in shaping international discussions on human rights.

ⁱⁱⁱ The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is a UN agency responsible for promoting and protecting human rights globally. It works to ensure the implementation of international human rights standards and assists governments and civil society in addressing human rights issues.

^{iv} Every four years, each Member of the United Nations is evaluated by other members of the organization on its human rights performance. This process is known as the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). One of the main steps in the UPR assessment process is the publication of the *Report of the UPR Working Group*, through which other States can make statements and recommendations on human rights issues to the State under review.

^v The High-Level Segment of the Human Rights Council is a formal opening to each session where heads of state, ministers, and senior representatives present their national priorities and positions on global human rights issues.

^{vi} UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, is a specialized agency dedicated to promoting international collaboration in the fields of education, science, culture, and communication. Its mission includes fostering intellectual exchange, protecting cultural heritage, and advancing access to quality education worldwide.

^{vii} A treaty body, in the context of international human rights, refers to a committee or expert body established by an international human rights treaty to monitor and promote the implementation of that treaty.

^{viii} The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is an international organization comprising 38 member countries that collaborate on economic and social policy issues. It aims to promote policies that improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world by providing a platform for governments to discuss, share, and coordinate efforts to address global challenges.