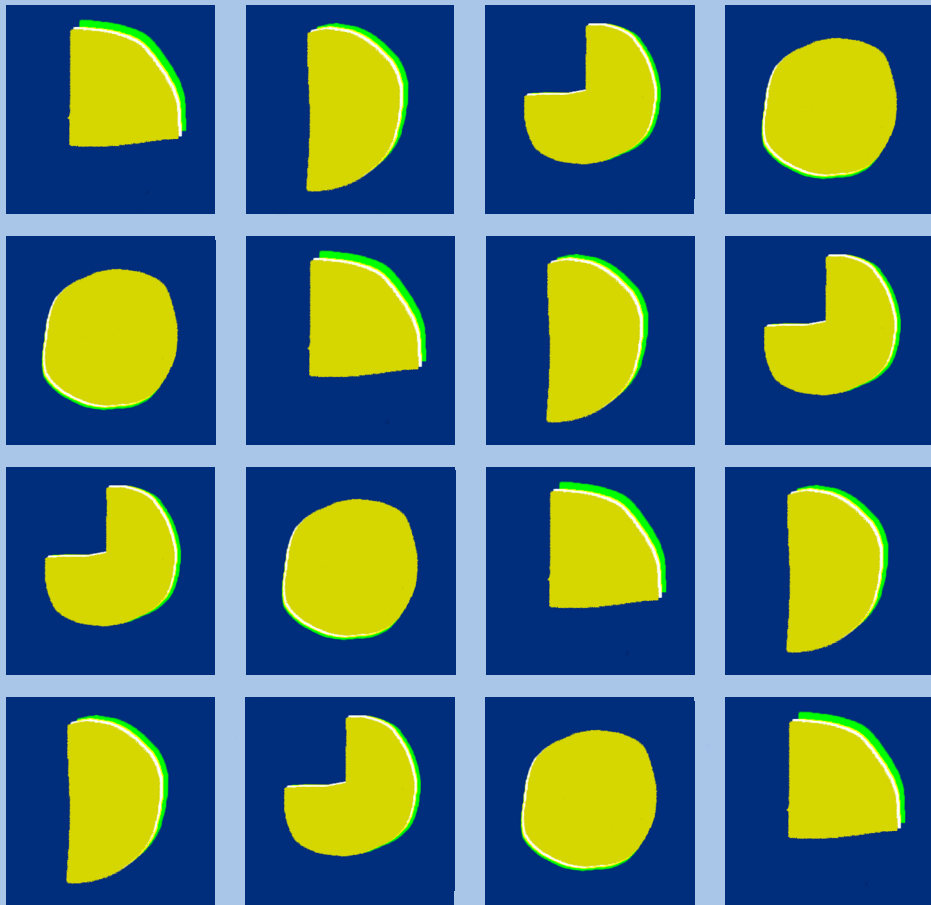


PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE



**OURs' feminist vision to face
today's anti-rights realities**



Who are we?

OURs is a collective of rights-affirming intersectional feminist organizations and organizations committed to feminist principles who work at the international, regional, and national level. We monitor, analyze, share information, and carry out collaborative advocacy on the anti-rights threats undermining regional and international human rights system.



Anti-rights actors are fascist and fundamentalist groups (state or non-state) who are increasingly gaining narrative, political, and cultural power in spaces of political governance. They are also gaining increased access to resources across all regions of the world and within the human rights system. Fascist and fundamentalist actors, while nationalist in their discourse, are completely transnational in their ideological underpinnings, political alliances, and networks of financing. Often backed by obscure funding, these actors build tactical alliances across issues, regions, and faiths to increase their impact.¹ They gain legitimacy by deploying cultural, religious and nationalist arguments.

¹<https://www.awid.org/anti-rights-actors>

What do we work for?

OURs aims to defend and strengthen the human rights framework and their integrity, while bolstering feminist demands within the human rights system by:

1

Advocating for state accountability and civil society participation

We want a system that can fulfill its main mandate of holding states accountable for human rights violations — a system that is participatory, democratic, and inclusive of movements. We use our collective power to demand accountability from states for human rights violations and the backsliding of rights, and demand consistency in the application of human rights standards. We work to ensure these systems forefront civil society, particularly feminist demands, both procedurally and substantively.

4

2

Countering the infiltration and co-optation of the human rights system and frameworks by anti-rights actors and movements

OURs works to defend human rights frameworks and systems from anti-rights movements and ideologies that are grounded in nationalisms, religious fundamentalisms, and market fundamentalisms. We work to counter the co-optation of the human rights framework as a result of the misuse of religion, culture, and tradition; corporate capture; “security”; racism; and double standards. We work to protect the progress that has been achieved by feminist movements through the human rights system.

3

Strategically connecting and mobilizing with other networks, partners, and allies

OURs works to build stronger cross-movement alliances to ensure all movements are well informed and equipped to resist anti-rights strategies. We do this by “sounding the alarm” for others, forging relationships, and providing resources that share a holistic feminist analysis. We tackle human rights systems as entry points to advance frameworks aligned with feminist visions.

5

Where do we work?

The OURs initiative works across regions, issues, and human rights spaces. OURs members work at the national, regional, and international level. As a collective, OURs primarily works in UN spaces, such as the Commission on the Status of Women, the Human Rights Council, and UN Special Procedures. At the same time, through its members, it strives to build strategic and mutual connections with national level contexts and regional spaces such as the African Union and Organization of American States.

Who do we work with?

OURs aims to work across different movements to build common agendas and strategies and recognizes the importance of creating new alliances and reinforcing existing ones. We aim to deepen collaborations with sex worker movements and trans movements, among others. We aim to expand collaboration with other movements such as disability justice movements, economic justice movements, children's rights movements, intersex movements, indigenous movements, decolonial movements, peace movements, human rights, and environmental justice movements. OURs also works with feminist academics, media and cultural workers, and feminist allies within human rights and other intergovernmental institutions.

What do we believe in? What guides our work?

The work of OURs is grounded in our commitment to address the root causes of oppression and discrimination, and counter evolving ideologies of nationalisms, religious fundamentalisms, and market fundamentalisms which undermine rights. We believe that all struggles for liberation are interconnected, and we reaffirm the concepts of universality, indivisibility, and interdependence of rights. **The realization of the human rights of one group of people does not come at the cost of the rights of any others.**

We believe movements, including feminist movements, are the key drivers in countering the political project of fascist, fundamentalist, and anti-rights actors. Where tension arises from unequal power relations within and between movements and organizations, from biases or faultlines, OURs commits to addressing them in good faith, with the aim of strengthening movements, rather than polarizing them.



Countering Religious Fundamentalisms and Co-optation of the Right to Freedom of Religion or Belief

OURs categorically rejects the invocation and misuse of religion or belief to further oppressive ideologies. In line with our commitment to the indivisibility, interdependence, and universality of rights, we reaffirm existing human rights instruments that assert freedom of religion or belief and non-discrimination as mutually reinforcing.

The right to freedom of religion and belief cannot be used to justify discrimination or violence on the basis of gender, sexuality, race, caste, ethnicity, migration status, or other statuses. This applies both to the co-optation of religious belief and of secularism.

We reject the co-optation of “religious freedom” to curtail rights pertaining to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), including abortion rights; comprehensive sexuality education; and the rights of persons marginalized on the basis of orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC).

We reject the instrumentalization of secularism in the service of racism, islamophobia, and xenophobia, or to incite violence and discrimination.

OURs acknowledges and values the importance of progressive, feminist religious narratives, and religious narratives that are affirming of people marginalized on the basis of SOGIESC. These narratives are a way to reclaim religious belief, knowledge, community, and identity from patriarchal dominance, and to advocate for law reform.

We recognise that we need progressive religious approaches in particular contexts where religion is embedded in state institutions, laws, and society at large. In some contexts, without feminist religious narratives feminist agendas would not move forward.

Through instruments such as CEDAW, feminists have sometimes strategically used progressive religious frameworks as a continuum of national level advocacy strategies in calling for state accountability.

As OURs, we recognize that religious actors are not homogenous nor monolithic, and value the contributions of religious actors, traditions, and frameworks that consistently uphold and affirm the indivisibility, interdependence, and universality of rights, and that align with feminist principles and values.

At the same time, in its international advocacy efforts, OURs:

Does not advocate for the mainstreaming of religious frameworks within the United Nations system.

Does not support the invocation of religion in spaces and frameworks where religion is not central.

Recognizes the risk of the dilution of international human rights norms under the guise of religious exceptionalism.

Market Fundamentalism

Market fundamentalism refers to the strict and literal adherence to the principles of free market capitalism in which economic growth is prioritized over all else, including people's health during a global pandemic, undermining the primacy of human rights and threatening the planet.² The hallmarks of market fundamentalism— trade liberalization, deregulation, austerity policies, and precarization of the labor market—can thus be understood as attacks on economic and gender justice. **OURs understands market fundamentalism to be a part, as well as a driver, of fascisms and fundamentalisms, and opposes this dominant economic and political paradigm.**

We condemn the historical³ and ongoing pressure on Global South countries from international financial institutions (IFIs) to adopt austerity measures, and oppose all forms of aid conditionality.

OURs does not support nor will we be silent on coercive and punitive measures, sanctions, or the commodification of people's basic needs and rights.

OURs advocates against privatization of public health, services, and social protection.

OURs will confront uncritical approaches to global development, noting the challenges of neocolonial exploitation, sovereign debt, and aid extractivism, and the global tax architecture.⁴

OURs does not advocate for multistakeholderism⁵ that favors the private sector/corporations in the UN or for corporations to have a seat at the table in multilateral spaces. We actively challenge growing corporate power in these spaces.⁶

OURs will not accept resources from corporations that are exploiting labor nor from organizations involved in extractivist activities, or linked to war or occupation.

OURs will only participate in activities sponsored by corporations if these provide the opportunity to criticize them and demand corporate accountability.

Anti-rights actors have long sought to impose patriarchal interpretations of the family and entrench oppressive norms that deny the rights of those marginalized on the basis of gender and SOGIESC and the autonomy of persons with disabilities. They have pushed to move rights out of the hands of family members and onto the institution of "the family". OURs underscores the critical need for feminist-informed public care policies as a countermeasure against both anti-rights attacks and market fundamentalism.

We affirm care as a human right both in the form of giving care, receiving care, and as self-care. Care should be recognized as a significant contributor to the economy. States should assume obligations regarding care, including the compensation, redistribution, and recognition of care work, and acknowledge its centrality to the sustainability of life.



² https://www.awid.org/sites/default/files/2022-01/RightsAtRisk_TimeForAction_OURsTrendsReport2021.pdf

³ During the 1980s and 1990s, a range of measures related to the IFIs' imposition of Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) were implemented by countries in the Global South

⁴ https://www.tni.org/files/download/beyonddevelopment_extractivism.pdf

⁵ In the name of inclusion and "multi-stakeholderism" large businesses, particularly transnational corporations, are occupying seats at the negotiating table and taking recurrent leadership positions in a number of multilateral institutions, including the United Nations. This corporate capture is having a tremendous impact on whether human rights for all can ever be achieved. https://www.awid.org/sites/default/files/2022-01/RightsAtRisk_TimeForAction_OURsTrendsReport2021.pdf

⁶ We recognize some members do not have the choice to not interact or engage with corporations, especially intermediary social media or tech companies.

Double Standards

OURs demands the application of human rights standards in a principled, consistent way and denounces the application of double standards across the human rights system. We recognize that the selective and inconsistent application of international human rights law undermines the integrity of the human rights framework and erodes its credibility and legitimacy.

OURs recognizes the power inequalities between states within multilateral systems and integrates and challenges these power differentials in our analysis.

OURs challenges the instrumentalization of rights related to gender and sexuality within multilateral spaces. We reject pinkwashing,⁷ femonationalism,⁸ and homonationalism.⁹ To this end, we commit to calling out such instrumentalization and inconsistencies by states and multilateral institutions.



⁷ “Pinkwashing” was originally coined to describe the way the Israeli state uses the language of LGBTQ rights to direct international attention away from the oppression of Palestinians and to rebrand Israel as a “liberal” state in contrast to racist stereotypes about Palestinians, Arabs, and Muslims. The term has since been used to refer to similar tactics by other groups, states, and corporations.

⁸ “Femonationalism” has been defined as the weaponization of feminist ideas by nationalist parties and neoliberal governments under the guise of opposing the perceived patriarchy of Islam in particular, and of migrants from the Global South in general.

⁹ “Homonationalism”, originating from Jasbir Puar, refers to the collusion between LGBTQ subjects or rights discourses and nationalism and the parallel complicity of certain LGBT individuals and associations with nationalist politics.



OURs calls out inconsistencies between foreign policies and national policies.

OURs rejects measures restricting asylum and refugee rights, the militarization and externalization of borders, and the scapegoating of migrants to push right-wing, nationalist agendas. It is not lost on us that the same countries enacting anti-migrant policies are those that produce and export the weapons that fuel conflict and subsequent large-scale displacement.

OURs does not recognize, legitimize, or collaborate with the state of Israel in any international space. We denounce Israel’s practices of colonization and apartheid, and the ongoing genocide and systemic oppression of the Palestinian people by Israel.

We also condemn the political manipulation of identity, whether based on race, caste, religion, colonial history, or other social factors, that is used against millions of people in other countries and regions of the world and stand in solidarity with them.



Our shared values

The Observatory on the Universality of Rights (OURs) coalition is committed to a feminist politic and vision of the world. We aim to challenge dominant power structures using an intersectional lens, in principle and in practice. **This means recognizing the politics of gender and sexuality as indivisible politics of race, caste, economics, class, (dis)ability, and religion, entwined with past and present colonialism and imperialism.** It also means constantly challenging our own understanding of power hierarchies externally in the world, including online, and internally within OURs.

We are committed to implementing feminist principles by:

- Strengthening the human rights framework and upholding human rights standards. We use a feminist lens to both expand and critique these.

- Respecting and upholding the full autonomy and self-determination of all to make decisions about their own lives, bodies, futures, and the environments in which they live and work, including structurally oppressed peoples. This means we explicitly reject transphobia, racism, caste-based and other descent-based discrimination, we support abortion rights and comprehensive sexuality education, and we affirm the rights of sex workers.

- Seeking systemic change towards gender, social, economic, digital, and climate justice.

- Recognizing the need to fight for the rights of marginalized communities based on shared experience and identity, while also upholding the importance of advocacy based on common causes and struggles.

- Learning and unlearning from feminists across all ages and movements.

- Challenging our own individual and collective biases and prejudices as members and as a coalition.

- In line with our commitment to intersectionality, committing to practices that facilitate diversity and inclusion not as mere checkboxes in decision making, but with the aim of transforming power structures, and based on feminist politics of care and trust.

- Committing to access practices informed by disability justice. This includes producing resources in a range of formats (written, audio), and available in other languages besides English, including sign language, and holding a commitment to accessibility across our publications, communications, and convenings to the fullest extent possible.

- Ensuring that, as a group of mostly international and regional organizations, our analysis and strategies are informed by grassroots organizing and organizations. We are committed to creating opportunities for grassroots feminists and feminists working nationally to represent their own issues in the regional and international spaces that we have access to.

Endorsed by

Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights

AKĀHATĀ

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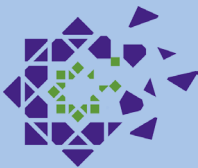
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