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**Human Rights Council****Forty-seventh session**

21 June–14 July 2021

Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,  
political, economic, social and cultural rights,  
including the right to development****Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council  
on 12 July 2021****47/8. Elimination of harmful practices related to accusations of witchcraft  
and ritual attacks***The Human Rights Council,**Guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations,**Reaffirming the fundamental principles of equality, non-discrimination and human dignity that underlie the Charter and international human rights instruments,**Recalling the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the optional protocols thereto, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the optional protocol thereto, and all other relevant international human rights instruments,**Reaffirming the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, and the outcomes of their review conferences, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples,**Recalling the commitment to eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation, contained in Sustainable Development Goal 5, and the commitments to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, to provide access to justice for all and to build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels, contained in Sustainable Development Goal 16, and taking into account the commitment to leave no one behind,**Reaffirming that everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person and that no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment,**Reaffirming also the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health and the right to access to information, which includes the right to seek, receive and*

impart information and ideas concerning health issues, the lack of which being likely to facilitate harmful practices against persons with medical impairments,

*Reaffirming further*, pursuant to article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and to Human Rights Council resolution 40/10 of 21 March 2019, that everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and that this right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of one's choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest one's religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching,

*Recalling* the universality, indivisibility, interdependence and interrelatedness of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and the need for all to be guaranteed the full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms without discrimination of any kind,

*Recognizing* traditional or complementary or integrative medicine, as defined by the World Health Organization, as a field distinct from harmful practices related to witchcraft accusations and others rituals attacks violating or abusing human rights,

*Taking note* of joint general recommendation No. 31 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/general comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2014) on harmful practices, and noting that attacks and other human rights violations and abuses based on accusations of witchcraft or other rituals constitute harmful practices,

*Taking note also* of general comment No. 22 (1993) of the Human Rights Committee, in which the Committee affirmed the unconditional right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including the freedom to hold beliefs, and noted that restrictions on that freedom were permitted only if limitations were prescribed by law and were necessary to protect public safety, order, health or morals, or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others,

*Taking note further* of the recommendations made by various relevant United Nations treaty bodies, mechanism and agencies on harmful practices related to witchcraft accusations and ritual attacks and killings,

*Recognizing* the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism, the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions and the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences,

*Taking note* of the reports of the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism submitted to the Human Rights Council pursuant to its resolution 28/6 of 26 March 2015,<sup>1</sup> and on the expert workshop on witchcraft and human rights held in Geneva on 21 and 22 September 2017,<sup>2</sup> including its conclusions and recommendations,

*Expressing its concern* that harmful practices related to witchcraft accusations and ritual attacks have resulted in various forms of violence, including killings, mutilation, burning, coercion in trafficking of persons, torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and stigmatization, particularly for persons in vulnerable situations, including women, children, persons with disabilities, older persons and persons with albinism, and that these forms of violence are often committed with impunity,

*Expressing its concern also* at the existing widespread discrimination, stigma, social exclusion and forced displacement experienced as a result of witchcraft accusations and ritual attacks,

1. *Urges* States to condemn harmful practices related to accusations of witchcraft and ritual attacks that result in human rights violations;

2. *Also urges* States to take all measures necessary to ensure the elimination of harmful practices amounting to human rights violations related to accusations of witchcraft

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<sup>1</sup> A/HRC/34/59.

<sup>2</sup> A/HRC/37/57/Add.2.

and ritual attacks, and to ensure accountability and the effective protection of all persons, particularly persons in vulnerable situations;

3. *Calls upon* States to ensure that no one within their jurisdiction is deprived of the right to life, liberty or security of person because of religion or belief, and that no one is subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, or arbitrary arrest or detention on that account, and to bring to justice all perpetrators of violations and abuses of these rights in compliance with applicable international law;

4. *Invites* States, in collaboration with relevant regional and international organizations, to promote bilateral, regional and international initiatives to support the protection of all persons vulnerable to harmful practices amounting to human rights violations related to accusations of witchcraft and ritual attacks, while noting that, in providing protection, attention to local context is critical;

5. *Also invites* States to draw attention to this issue in the context of the universal periodic review;

6. *Emphasizes* that States should carefully distinguish between harmful practices amounting to human rights violations related to accusations of witchcraft and ritual attacks and the lawful and legitimate exercise of different kinds of religion or beliefs, in order to preserve the right to freely manifest a religion or a belief, individually or in a community with others, including for persons belonging to religious minorities;

7. *Encourages* human rights mechanisms, including relevant special procedures of the Human Rights Council and treaty bodies, to compile and share information on harmful practices related to accusations of witchcraft and ritual attacks and their impact on the enjoyment of human rights;

8. *Requests* the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to organize an expert consultation with States and other relevant stakeholders, including the United Nations Secretariat and relevant bodies, representatives of subregional and regional organizations, international human rights mechanisms, national human rights institutions and non-governmental organizations, the results of which will help the Office of the High Commissioner to prepare a study on the situation of the violations and abuses of human rights rooted in harmful practices related to accusations of witchcraft and ritual attacks, as well as stigmatization, and to inform further action by existing mechanisms at the United Nations, and to submit a report thereon to the Human Rights Council at its fifty-second session;

9. *Decides* to remain seized of the matter.

*35th meeting  
12 July 2021*

[Adopted without a vote.]

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