

United Nations Human Rights Council, 61st Session
23 February to 31 March 2026
Item 9: General Debate
Speaker: Humanists UK representative: Mariam Sorour¹

We would like to thank the High Commissioner for his report on *Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against, persons based on religion or belief*.²

However, we note a lack of consistency in the inclusion of the non-religious in states' implementation of the action plan. We would like to remind states that, alongside their religious counterparts, the non-religious can also be subjected to stigmatisation, discrimination, and violence because of their beliefs, and that non-religious leaders and communities, such as humanists, can also be engaged in implementing solutions.

We welcome the report's recognition of the 'Faith for Rights' framework and would like to draw attention to the Beirut Declaration on which the framework is built. The Declaration is inclusive of 'all believers – whether theistic, non-theistic, atheistic or other'.³ It states that '[a]ll religious or belief communities need a resolved leadership' to act 'for equal dignity of everyone'. This inclusive approach need not be limited to the Faith for Rights framework.

We therefore call on states to include the non-religious and the religious alike in the implementation of the action plan. This includes enacting and enforcing anti-discrimination laws on grounds of religion or belief, and engaging all religion or belief leaders and communities who uphold and promote shared, universal principles of human dignity in building plural societies and combating intolerance.

Thank you.

¹ Humanists UK is the operating name of the British Humanist Association.

² UNHRC, *Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against, persons based on religion or belief*, UN Doc A/HRC/61/72, 13 January 2026, <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/61/72>

³ Beirut Declaration, 27 June 2018. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/tools-and-resources/beirut-declaration>