



PUB 07

Together for Justice: A Coordinated Response to the Rise of Fundamentalisms – A Call to Action

COVER NOTE

This statement was led by the Ecumenical Forum of South America, FESUR. The national forums of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, and Peru, which make up FESUR, are also part of the ACT Alliance in Latin America and the Caribbean. The main focus of this statement is the convergence of fundamentalisms and regressive agendas as a primary challenge to be addressed by the Alliance.

In May 2024, the ACT member organisations in Latin America and the Caribbean, together with guests from the North American and European Forums, gathered at the in-person meeting "Guatemala+5". During this meeting, regional phenomena related to regressive agendas and their impact were discussed. Based on this analysis, the region and guests from the Global North worked together to reach a consensus definition of the term "Fundamentalisms", which we share below:

"Fundamentalism is a strict, literal, and uncompromising adherence to doctrinal principles that consider the social roles of class, gender, and ethnicity to be natural, sacred, and unchangeable. Due to their diverse sources (religious, economic, political, and cultural), it is appropriate to speak of a convergence of fundamentalisms. These are expressed through the religious, political, and economic realms for personal gain, representing a threat to democracies because they result in discrimination and the violation of the rights of women, indigenous groups, sexual minorities, and progressive positions. Fundamentalisms hinder transformative ecumenical diakonia aimed at addressing humanitarian, environmental, gender justice, and human security challenges. Far from being a spontaneous effect, the convergence of fundamentalisms follows a highly organised agenda."

TOPIC

The statement addresses the threat posed by regressive agendas and fundamentalisms, which negatively impact vulnerable groups such as indigenous peoples, people of African descent, women, youth, and LGTBQ+ individuals. These agendas are linked to authoritarianism, climate change denial, and the rollback of human rights, particularly in the areas of sexual and reproductive rights. The members commit to revitalising their dedication to combating fundamentalisms through concrete and collective actions. A call is made to governments, donors, and the UN to strengthen legal frameworks, conduct investigations, support critical education, and fund efforts to fight against fundamentalisms.

STATEMENT

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The convergence of regressive rights agendas, political authoritarianism, hate speech, the escalation of armed conflicts, and social polarisation primarily threatens the well-being of indigenous peoples, people of African descent, women, girls, youth, and LGTBQ+ individuals. Given the broad power wielded by actors promoting climate change denial, neoliberal economic views, political and military authoritarianism, anti-immigrant stances, the imposition of a singular family model, and the rollback of sexual and reproductive rights, it is crucial for us, as an Alliance, to unite our efforts in a coordinated and strategic response to this convergence, both at the regional and global levels.

Our Alliance views with deep concern and sorrow that the present is characterised by heightened social polarisation, a rise in authoritarian and restrictive regimes, and legislative projects and public policies that reduce the space for civil society participation, threaten institutionalised democracy (fair elections, freedom of assembly and expression), and result in a rollback of civil, political, social, economic, cultural, and environmental rights.

ACT Alliance reaffirms the importance of recognising and effectively protecting the work of human rights defenders, who are the most affected by the threats and attacks arising from the convergence of fundamentalisms and regressive agendas, both in the various regions where ACT operates and globally.

ACT Alliance urges its members to intensify joint efforts and to work together for justice, the strengthening of democracies, and the full exercise of human, civil, political, economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights.

Together, we aspire to become a global leader in responding to the rise of fundamentalisms, demonstrating that our Alliance turns convictions into actions that drive real change in communities, overcoming the most critical challenges of our time.

The time to act is now, and the way to act is united.

Commitments & Recommendations

Justice demands coordinated action in areas such as education, research, communication, alliance-building, and advocacy to respond to the challenges posed by the convergence of fundamentalisms and regressive agendas at both regional and global levels.

For all these reasons, we:

- Commit to responding strategically and in a coordinated manner, together, to the challenges of the convergence of fundamentalisms and the advancement of regressive agendas.

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- Pledge that leadership from both the Global North and South, recognising their distinct capacities and strengths, will enable joint projects and actions within the framework of the alliance in response to the convergence of fundamentalisms and regressive agendas.
- Prioritise and implement joint advocacy actions to ensure effective responses to the convergence of fundamentalisms and regressive agendas, such as at COP30.
- Operationalise agreements with the United Nations by funding and coordinating local initiatives from alliance members that address fundamentalisms and regressive agendas in the region.
- Commit to revitalising our alliance, making it more unified, innovative, and energetic in its response to this phenomenon.

Likewise, we call on our members with the capacity to support this revitalisation to:

- Provide financial and technical resources or assist in securing funding for ACT Forums to implement joint actions in the areas identified by members in Latin America, the Caribbean, and other regions of the Global South.
- Facilitate global and regional research on the phenomenon of the convergence of fundamentalisms to obtain high-quality quantitative and qualitative data, enabling evidence-based programming.

To Governments:

- Governments must ensure strict enforcement of existing laws against hate speech, discrimination, and violence, and work to strengthen legal frameworks that combat the spread of fundamentalist ideologies that incite violence or weaken democratic institutions and coexistence.
- Invest in educational systems and curriculum reforms that promote critical thinking, tolerance, and inclusion.
- Facilitate open dialogues with religious leaders from all faiths to promote inclusive theologies that support human rights and democratic coexistence.
- Support community initiatives working to counteract fundamentalisms at the local level.
- Address the economic conditions that contribute to the rise of fundamentalisms by promoting transformative, inclusive, and sustainable development—economically, socially, and environmentally.

To Donors:

- Prioritise funding grassroots initiatives from organisations and churches: Allocate more resources to support those at the forefront of addressing fundamentalisms and promoting ecumenical dialogue and interfaith cooperation for the full exercise of human rights.

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- Invest in strengthening the capacity of frontline organisations: Offer long-term support to enhance the ability of organisations working on the frontlines to address fundamentalisms.

To the United Nations:

- Strengthen coordination between UN agencies and ACT Alliance organisations to articulate a cohesive and strategic response to the growing advance of fundamentalisms and regressive agendas.
- Invest in research to better understand the factors driving fundamentalisms and to strengthen the role of faith actors working towards ecumenical dialogue and interfaith cooperation in countering them.
- Continue advocating for and challenging governments to promote inclusive policies that protect the rights of all people, especially those most vulnerable to the impacts of fundamentalisms and regressive agendas.

A majority of the assembly has declared itself in agreement with the opinions expressed in this statement. While many ACT members agree with the public statement, there are members who have expressed differing perspectives on the content or tone. Their decision reflects the diverse viewpoints within our alliance, and we respect their choice to abstain or vote against. As always, we value the collective dialogue and encourage continued discussions on the matter at hand, recognizing the strength of our unity in diversity.