

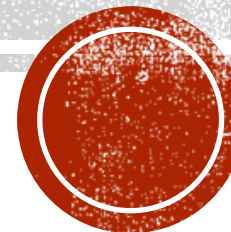
# **FORB AND GENDER EQUALITY IN A CENTRAL ASIAN CONTEXT: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

Indira Aslanova, SFCC

FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF AND GENDER EQUALITY

REGIONAL WORKSHOP,

ARMENIA, 30/05/2022





- Women rights violation;
- FORB violation and women;
- Women's FORB undermines;
- Gendered impact on FORB violation;
- Gender inequality in FORB protection;
- Opportunities





# CENTRAL ASIA

- Total population: 69 million;
- Secular states with Muslim majority;
- Gender equality is enshrined in the constitutions
- WPS index, 2021 (2019):
  - KZ – 59 (43)
  - TR – 60 (60)
  - UZ – 74 (89)
  - TJ – 85 (96)
  - KG – 97 (80)

Map of Central Asia. Image credit: Cartarium/Shutterstock.com



# WOMEN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS, CA

- domestic violence,
- gender-based violence,
- rape,
- kidnapping (Burulai case, KG),
- virginity tests (Tr),
- arranged marriage,
- incitement to suicide (Fariza case, TJ)



# **FORB VIOLATIONS AND WOMEN**

- Reduced access to education
- Forced conversion
- Coercion to wear (or not) specific dress
- Partial administration of justice
- Verbal and physical harassment
- Restriction to participate in political life
- Early and forced marriage
- Incitement to suicide



# UNDERMINES

- **Patriarchal values**
- **Cultural and 'religious' traditions and practices**
- **Religious nationalism**
  
- **Women are also active agents of upholding these systems**



# GENDERED IMPACT OF FoRB VIOLATIONS

- As many FoRB violations for women happen in the private/domestic sphere, they are not always visible
  - Often perpetrated by family and community members
  - Often have social impacts (early marriage, financial insecurity, etc.)
  - Often blend into other discriminatory practices
- FoRB violations impacting women from minority and majority groups differently:
  - Access to education
  - Forced conversions
  - Sexual harassment
- FoRB violations impacting men are more likely to be in the public sphere:
  - Physical violence, economic harassment at work/job/business and imprisonment
  - Can impact their family's financial and physical security



# GENDER INEQUALITY IN FoRB PROTECTION

- Until recently research and data on FoRB violations was gender-blind
  - GBV related to FoRB often blended in with other areas like domestic violence, and not recognized as violations against religious minorities/groups
- Legal protections are often unequal for women and LGBTI+ groups, leaving some more vulnerable to violations and reducing access to justice
  - Muslim women have fewer protections in Muslim communities
  - Women and religious minorities more likely to access informal justice systems, which are still highly patriarchal (refer to local religious leaders)
  - LGBT is not even on the case
- FoRB protection programs often focus on public violations that impact men
- Gender experts and organizations do not see religious women as part of their beneficiaries/clients

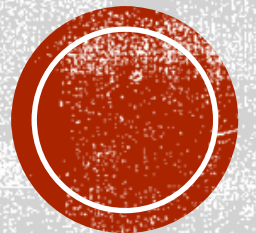






# GENDER BALANCE IN FORB ACTIVITIES?

Photo: Meeting of interfaith council in Kyrgyzstan



# OPPORTUNITIES

- Reframe / localize Gender and FoRB
- Build coalitions and dialogue between women's rights and FoRB activities - increase understanding of their common goal
- Improve data collection practices to capture women's voices and address the gender gap and data bias
- Research to understand intersections of gender and FoRB better
- Discussion and reflections on women's rights and theology to overcome skepticism around both FoRB and women's rights within their religious and cultural contexts
- Improve access to justice and legal standards for all
- Positive masculinity campaign. Work with male leadership to champion women's rights to FoRB



# RESOURCES:

- [Freedom of religion or belief for everyone: Women in Focus](#) - Stefanus Alliance International
- [Women, Peace and Security](#) INDEX, GIWPS
- [Turkmenistan Takes Policing Women's Bodies to the Next Level](#), The Diplomat
- [When will gender inequality in Uzbekistan end?](#) CABAR.ASIA
- [Sample survey on violence against women in Kazakhstan, 2017](#). Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan
- [Examining women's rights in Tajikistan](#), Borgen project
- [The truth about women's rights in Uzbekistan](#), Borgen project
- [Women's Rights in the New Kyrgyz Constitution. Formalizing a 'tradition' of suppression](#), Akisheva, Asyla
- [The Thorny Path to the Development of Feminism in Kyrgyzstan](#), CABAR.ASIA

