

UN Funding Cuts Stall Key Women's Rights Efforts

July 10, 2025

— Categories: Human Rights



Major funding cuts to the United Nations have put crucial women's rights work on hold, raising fears about a growing backlash against gender equality worldwide.

According to a U.N. document reviewed by Reuters, four key international reports on women's rights will not be published this year. These reports included recommendations on how to prevent domestic violence and discrimination. They are among 13 human rights reports delayed because voluntary funding for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has dropped by \$60 million compared to the previous year. This

decline results partly from unpaid contributions and significant cuts to the United States' foreign aid, reportedly reinstated under President Trump.

Human rights advocates warn that the consequences are serious. “We’re silencing policy dialogue,” said Pooja Patel, Programme Director at the International Service for Human Rights in Geneva. Without these reports, policymakers lack the information needed to address threats to women’s safety and equality.

Claire Somerville, Executive Director of the Gender Centre at the Geneva Graduate Institute, emphasized the real-world impact. “It does affect the everyday lives of women and girls when these reports and mechanisms are not functioning,” she explained.

At the 59th Session of the Human Rights Council, several countries voiced their alarm. Ecuador cautioned that suspending these mandates could send the wrong message, especially during what many describe as a “huge backlash” against women’s rights.

The funding crisis has also disrupted the longstanding Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, which has been active since 1979. The OHCHR announced that the commission’s next meeting will not take place due to liquidity issues. Future sessions remain uncertain.

U.N. Human Rights Commissioner Volker Turk called the situation “deeply regrettable” and pledged to update member states by September on whether these mandates can be revived.

In May, U.N. Women reported that 90% of women’s rights organizations in crisis-affected countries have been harmed by funding cuts. Laura Somoggi, Co-CEO of Womanity, a Geneva-based foundation promoting gender equality, said these setbacks reflect a troubling “de-prioritisation” of women’s rights at the global level.

For many advocates, the loss of funding is not just a budget problem; it is a threat to decades of hard-won progress. “We can describe this as a full-on assault on gender and the rights of women and girls,” Somerville said.

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