

Ending corporal punishment of children - A model statement for religious leaders to adapt

The following model statement can be adapted by local inter-faith partnerships as a statement of solidarity on the issue, to use as an expression of support for NGO campaigns, or as a letter from local religious groups and individuals to lobby members of parliament or to gain broader support and forge new partnerships.

“We affirm that our different religions respect the human dignity of every child. This calls us to work together to confront the pain and humiliation inflicted against children through the practice of corporal punishment in homes and families, schools, religious institutions and other community settings. We are available to put our faith into action and to speak out on behalf of all children who endure corporal punishment. There are no circumstances under which this harmful, humiliating practice can be justified either in the name of religion, in the guise of discipline or through the sacred scriptures and the tenets of our different faiths.

We are committed to taking leadership and working in solidarity with people from other sectors, communities, religious networks, NGOs and governments towards ending all corporal punishment of children.

Giving children equal protection from assault is crucial because it says so much about the sort of society we want for all children. Ending the legality and commonplace practice of corporal punishment will reflect the seriousness with which we regard the human rights of every child to grow up free from the fear of being hit and humiliated by those whose duty it is to protect children from harm.

This is not only a moral imperative, it is about giving children the respect to which they are entitled.

Discipline is about teaching and guiding children by adult example – not through hitting children and causing pain. It is important that law reform is accompanied by extensive public education promoting positive, non-violent discipline and access to resources and support for parents. This is an opportunity for our values and hopes for our children and families to shape our laws and to make a positive difference.

If we really want a less violent society and peace in our world we must end the legality of corporal punishment, promote non-violent relationships between adults and children so that they are treated with gentleness, love, compassion and respect.”