

# WHAT IS THE ANTI-RIGHTS MOVEMENT?



A growing, globally connected movement of well-funded people and organisations are reshaping government policy, public opinion, and even how we relate to each other. Authoritarian governments are methodically tearing down progress towards equality while groups looking to consolidate their own power are blocking our ability to access basic rights and freedoms. Their strongest rallying cry? Anti-gender sentiments.

**Here's the basics on the anti-rights movement...**

# WHO ARE ANTI-RIGHTS ACTORS?

Essentially, they are the people behind the constant stream of ‘culture wars’ you might have come across in the media and on your social media feeds.

More than just random attacks on reproductive justice, LGBTQIA+ rights, comprehensive sex education and women’s rights, these ‘culture wars’ are all part of a **broader agenda to undermine the global human rights framework** and increase the power and influence of anti-rights groups and individuals. This includes political leaders, religious institutions, advocacy groups, thinktanks, media platforms, wealthy individuals and extremist influencers.

The movement is **highly flexible and opportunistic** when it comes to building alliances, creating a broad-enough tent under which all sorts of people and organisations have come together to undo progress towards equality. While they might have overlapping goals and agendas, what really unites them is **shared language and vocabulary** that allows the movement to redirect public frustration and anxiety towards a chosen scapegoat (most often women, LGBTQIA+ people and the activists who defend them) instead of real policy issues.

As a result, the anti-rights movement includes groups and individuals from a **wide range of ideologies** – from religious fundamentalists, ultra-nationalists and ultra-conservatives to white supremacists and other oppressive ideologies. It’s also not uncommon for groups who might otherwise appear progressive to support and advance the same agendas as far-right groups in the anti-rights movement, as is the case with LGB groups and Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminists (TERFs).

It is IWDA’s opinion that groups with a variety of interests are knowingly or unknowingly aligning themselves with the global anti-rights movement and working to further their cause. Actors like this can be found across many different sectors, with some examples of groups and individuals we see as working in this way below.

## Governments and political actors

including populist parties like Pauline Hanson’s One Nation and the current government administrations in the United States, Russia and Argentina, amongst others, who are enacting anti-rights policies and supporting anti-rights groups globally.

## Civil society organisations

and lobby groups working both domestically and in international spaces to influence power-holders and shift public discourse on key issues.

This includes groups like:

- **Advance** – one of the most prominent conservative lobby groups in Australia that campaign against issues they deem “left” or “woke” such as trans rights, immigration, climate action and First Nations justice<sup>1</sup>;
- **The Australian Christian Lobby** – part of the global World Congress of Families, who played a prominent role in campaigns against the Safe Schools program, marriage equality and abortion rights in Australia. In 2024 they led a successful campaign against the Federal Government’s proposed Misinformation and Disinformation Bill, framing it as an attack on religious freedom<sup>2</sup>;
- **Turning Point Australia** – an independent off-shoot of the Charlie Kirk-founded Turning Point USA that has previously campaigned against abortion rights and most recently created its first state chapter in South Australia in the lead-up to the 2026 state election<sup>3</sup>;
- **The Alliance Defending Freedom** – a U.S. based Christian legal advocacy and training organisation which aims to influence the judicial and legislative arms of governments globally<sup>4</sup>;
- **The Centre for Family and Human Rights** – a U.S. based Catholic organisation focused on lobbying at the UN, particularly within the Commission on the Status of Women, to advance language and commitments that centre the traditional, patriarchal, nuclear family and undermine the rights of women and children<sup>5</sup>;
- **CitizenGo** – an ultra-conservative campaigning organisation founded in Spain and active in several countries including Australia, where former Australian politician George Christensen now serves as campaigns director<sup>6</sup>.

1. Tim Elliott (2025), ‘Copied the MAGA model’: The ‘grassroots’ lobby group funded by some of Australia’s richest.

2. Justice for Prosperity (2024), [Unveiling Subversive Power: Shedding light on anti-rights actors in the Asia-Pacific region.](#)

3. Tory Shepherd (2026), [From cute dogs to Turning Point: the journey of an influencer aiming to breathe rightwing Christian values into Australian politics.](#)

4. The Observatory on the Universality of Rights (2021), [Rights at Risk: Time for Action.](#)

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

## Religious institutions

from various faith traditions who shape public discourse and aim to influence government laws and policies to align with ultra conservative religious beliefs, often at the exclusion of women's and LGBTQIA+ people's rights.

## Wealthy individuals

like Elon Musk<sup>7</sup> and Peter Thiel<sup>8</sup> who leverage philanthropy, direct funding and their influence and networks to support and promote anti-rights policies and narratives globally.

# WHERE DOES THEIR FUNDING COME FROM?

At a time when feminist movements, women's rights and LGBTQIA+ organisations are facing an increasingly limited and restrictive funding environment, anti-rights actors are able to tap into **large, flexible and often obscure networks of funding** to sustain their work. A lot of this funding comes from the U.S. and Europe through a variety of sources including ultra-conservative religious groups, grant-makers, private donors, businesses and governmental departments.

As large as these figures might seem, we know they're likely to be an undercount of the actual funding going to anti-rights groups. Legal loopholes and a lack of publicly available data is allowing many of these funders to remain hidden.

This is particularly true in Australia, where we have little publicly available information on the funding sources of many anti-rights actors at work here.

Thanks to these large funding pools, the anti-rights movement has been able to pour billions of dollars into media, communications, information-sharing and alliance-building. Money that has allowed them to fine-tune their messaging, establish their own media platforms and thinktanks and replicate successful strategies in new locations through supporter trainings and global convenings.

## DID YOU KNOW?

- The aggregate revenue of U.S. based organisations connected with the anti-gender movement during a ten-year span amounted to at least \$6.2 billion, and likely much more<sup>9</sup>
- In that same period, 11 U.S. based organisations directed over \$1 billion globally to fund anti-rights work<sup>10</sup>
- Between 2019 and 2022, U.S. anti-rights groups increased their total annual spending in Africa by approximately 50% with 17 mostly Christian Right U.S. organisations spending \$16.5 million in the region during that time<sup>11</sup>
- In Europe, similar groups generated over \$700 million for anti-rights activities between 2009 and 2018<sup>12</sup>

7. Sam Levine (2024), [Musk's millions in rightwing gifts began earlier than previously known – report.](#)

8. Steve Benen (2022), [What makes Peter Thiel \(and his Republican donations\) different.](#)

9. Global Philanthropy Project (2021), [Understanding the Resourcing of the Global “Anti-gender Ideology” Movement: executive summary.](#)

10. Ibid.

11. Institute for Journalism and Social Change (2024), [Following the Money: Inside the U.S. Christian right's spending boom in Africa.](#)

12. Europe Parliamentary Forum for Sexual and Reproductive Rights (2025), [The Next Wave: How religious extremism is reclaiming power.](#)

# HOW IMPACTFUL ARE THEY, REALLY?

Anti-rights actors have become experts at exploiting real concerns around issues like the housing and cost of living crisis, women's safety and a declining trust in our political systems for their own gain. But even though the vast majority of people do not agree with their beliefs, this vocal, well-funded minority is still succeeding at spreading their agenda and causing very real harm to the most vulnerable members of our communities.

**At a national level**, their actions are fuelling the rise of authoritarian, populist and far-right parties and governments around the world as they work in tandem to uphold and advance each other's agendas. Their influence is also resulting in real policy shifts that are harming vulnerable people and communities across the world. We have seen this play out in the Queensland government's ban on vital medication for young trans people, Vanuatu's 2024 amendment of the Marriage Act to declare marriage is exclusively between males and females, the overturning of *Roe v Wade* in the U.S., the rollback of abortion access in Poland, and the passing of Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality Act. More than just political decisions, each of these policies (and the countless others they have inspired) are having real, and often violent, effects on the lives and bodies of women and the LGBTQIA+ community.

**At a global level**, their tactics are undermining our countries' capacity to work together to achieve real, tangible progress, and systematically dismantling the global frameworks that allow us to claim our rights. They are defunding essential agencies, watering down global agreements and delegitimising these frameworks to turn them into ineffective guardians of people's basic rights and freedoms.

**Beyond formal politics**, anti-rights movements are also slowly shifting how we understand certain issues and how we relate to each other. Their use of mis- and dis-information is destroying our trust in knowledge and the institutions that work rigorously to uncover this knowledge. Their emotionally-charged narratives, fear-mongering and scapegoating are making our communities less safe and intentionally inciting discrimination, harassment and physical violence towards already-marginalised groups. And they are dramatically changing the tone of public discourse, making us more divided, distrustful and fearful of each other – all to push drastic measures that restrict some people's rights and maintain their power.

## LOOKING TO GET INFORMED AND TAKE ACTION?

IWDA

Attacks from the anti-rights movement are vocal, persistent and well-resourced. But when it comes to real support for their views, the numbers are on our side.

So, what is the most powerful thing we can do to resist them? Come together to **drown out their hate and organise for hope.**

Check out our other factsheets:

- **ANTI-RIGHTS STRATEGIES AT PLAY**
- **YOUR GUIDE TO SPOTTING ANTI-RIGHTS CONTENT**
- **HOW YOU CAN TAKE ACTION**