# International Relations · GS - II

**Examine the tension between cultural and religious regulations imposed by States and the protection of individual freedoms under international human rights law.**

| EXAM YEAR | PAPER | SUBJECT |
|---|---|---|
| DAILY PRACTICE 24/11/2026 | GS - II | International Relations |

| MARKS | WORD LIMIT |
|---|---|
| 15 | ~250 words |

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## Answer Hint

**State sovereignty, freedom of expression, freedom of religion, ICCPR, gender equality, proportionality, non-derogable rights**

## Model Answer

### Introduction

States regulate public conduct to preserve social order and pursue cultural or religious objectives. However, such regulations must remain consistent with international human rights obligations and individual dignity.

### Major Areas of Tension

1. **Freedom of expression:** Article 19 of the ICCPR protects the right to hold opinions and express ideas, including through artistic performances. Restrictions must satisfy prescribed legal conditions.
2. **Freedom of religion and belief:** Article 18 protects freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including the freedom to manifest beliefs, subject to limited permissible restrictions.
3. **Gender equality:** Compulsory dress codes and unequal restrictions on artistic participation can raise concerns regarding discrimination and individual autonomy.

4. **Protection from cruel punishment:** Article 7 of the ICCPR prohibits torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment. This prohibition cannot be justified by cultural or religious traditions.

## Challenges in Enforcement

1. **Sovereignty concerns:** Governments may invoke domestic laws and cultural practices to resist international scrutiny.
2. **Institutional limitations:** International human rights mechanisms often depend on State cooperation and implementation.
3. **Selective compliance:** Geopolitical interests can influence the consistency of international responses to violations.

## Way Forward

1. Strengthen independent judicial institutions and domestic human rights protections.
2. Ensure that restrictions on individual freedoms satisfy legality, necessity and proportionality.
3. Promote gender-sensitive laws and access to effective remedies.
4. Improve international monitoring and constructive engagement with States.

## Conclusion

Cultural diversity and State sovereignty do not eliminate universal human rights obligations. A rights-based approach must protect individual dignity while allowing only legally justified and proportionate restrictions on personal freedoms.

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