



For immediate release - 19 November 2010

PRESS RELEASE

UN General Assembly: UN Member States Should Vote Against Proposed Resolution on “Vilification of Religions”

London 19.11.10: ARTICLE 19 and the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS) urge UN Member States to vote against the draft resolution proposed at the current session of the UN General Assembly on “combating religious hatred and vilification of religions”.

“We are extremely concerned about the draft resolution on ‘vilification of religions’ proposed by the Organization of Islamic Conference,” says Dr Agnes Callamard, ARTICLE 19 Executive Director. “It fails to address our concerns about earlier resolutions on ‘defamation of religions’ or meet the standards set down in Article 20 of the ICCPR. While we welcome the dropping of the phrase ‘defamation of religions’, the content and implications are even more far reaching than earlier resolutions on combating ‘defamation of religions’, which we have found so problematic from an international human rights perspective”.

In response to the draft resolution, ARTICLE 19 and CIHRS have produced a detailed legal analysis which raises three areas of concern:

- ‘Vilification of religions’ is even broader than ‘defamation of religions’ and will have far reaching negative implications for freedom of expression;
- The draft distorts and undermines states’ international human rights obligations, particular with respect to Article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; and
- The draft continues to legitimise the fundamentally flawed notion of ‘defamation of religions’ and, if adopted, will provide international support to national laws on blasphemy and defamation of religions which are often used by repressive states to silence religious and political opponents, government critics, dissidents as well as religious minorities and critics of religions.

ARTICLE 19 and the CIHRS urge all Member States to vote against the resolution.

FURTHER INFORMATION

- Read the full statement at: www.article19.org/pdfs/press/un-general-assembly-un-member-states-should-vote-against-proposed-resolution.pdf
- For the draft of the resolution on combating ‘vilification of religions’ www.article19.org/pdfs/press/draft-resolution-on-combating-religious-hatred-and-vilification-of-religions.pdf

- For more information, please contact Sejal Parmar, Senior Legal Officer +44 20 734 2500 sejal@article19.org, or Jereme Smith, Director-Geneva Office of CIHRS, jsmith@cihrs.org
- ARTICLE 19 is an independent human rights organisation that works around the world to protect and promote the right to freedom of expression. It takes its name from Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees freedom of expression.
- CIHRS is an independent regional human rights organization based in Cairo, Egypt with offices in France and at the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland.