

Outrage at UN Human Rights Council resolution on defamation of religions

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In the resolution it adopted yesterday on the defamation of religions, the United Nations Human Rights Council has yet again demonstrated its inability to defend the values enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Reporters Without Borders said.

“The Council had just dealt a severe blow to the freedom of expression it is supposed to defend,” the press freedom organisation said. “By approving a resolution that seeks to suppress criticism of Islam, this UN body has once again shown that it is incapable of defending human rights effectively.

“This resolution is outrageous. On the grounds of combating discrimination, it assails the news media for the ‘targeting of religious symbols’ and ‘sacred persons,’ especially those of Islam. In other words, the UN is asking the media to stop criticising Islam in the name of combating incitement to religious hatred. This is unacceptable to all those who feel strongly about the defence of free expression.”

Reporters Without Borders added: “The UN is on a slippery slope that poses a danger for freedom of opinion. All the freedoms must be defended with equal strength. It is not acceptable for the UN to take such an extreme stand in defence of one freedom at the expense of another. It goes against all of the UN’s fundamental principles.”

Submitted by Pakistan on behalf of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference and concerning implementation of the Durban conference on racism’s programme of action, the resolution was approved at yesterday’s UN Human Rights Council meeting in Geneva by 23 votes in favour, 11 against (European Union, Canada and Chile) and 13 abstentions.

The resolution urges UN member countries to adopt measures to combat “acts of hatred, discrimination, intimidation and coercion resulting from the defamation of any religion” and deplores “the use of printed, audio-visual and electronic media, including the Internet” to target religious symbols and sacred persons. It voices concern about the failure of certain countries to combat discriminatory practices and stresses the need to combat defamation of all religions, in particular, Islam and Muslims.

A Durban II conference will be held on 20-24 April in Geneva.

P.S.

* From RSF:

<http://en.rsf.org/outrage-at-un-human-rights-council-27-03-2009,30694.html>