



## Combating defamation of religions

### Commission on Human Rights resolution 2003/4

*The Commission on Human Rights,*

*Recalling* that all States have pledged themselves, under the Charter of the United Nations, to promote and encourage universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion,

*Recalling also* its resolutions 1999/82 of 30 April 1999, 2000/84 of 26 April 2000, 2001/4 of 18 April 2001 and 2002/9 of 15 April 2002,

*Reaffirming* that discrimination against human beings on the grounds of religion or belief constitutes an affront to human dignity and a disavowal of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations,

*Convinced* that religious and cultural diversity in the globalizing world needs to be used as a vehicle for complementary creativity and dynamism and not as a rationale for a new ideological and political confrontation,

*Recalling* the United Nations Millennium Declaration, adopted by the General Assembly on 8 September 2000, welcoming the resolve expressed in the Declaration to take measures to eliminate the increasing acts of racism and xenophobia in many societies and to promote greater harmony and tolerance in all societies, and looking forward to its effective implementation at all levels, including in the context of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted in September 2001 by the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (A/CONF.189/12),

*Welcoming* the proclamation by the General Assembly in its resolution 56/6 of 9 November 2001 of the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations and invites States, the organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, within existing resources, other international and regional organizations and civil societies to contribute to the implementation of the Programme of Action contained in that resolution,

*Welcoming also* the progress achieved in the follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance,

*Expressing deep appreciation* to the Government of Turkey for hosting the Joint Organization of the Islamic Conference-European Union Forum entitled "Civilization and Harmony: The Political Dimension", in Istanbul on 12 and 13 February 2002, and welcoming its outcome,

*Alarmed* at the continuing negative impact of the events of 11 September 2001 on Muslim minorities and communities in some non-Muslim countries and the negative projection of Islam in media, and the introduction and enforcement of laws that specifically discriminate against and target Muslims,

*Recognizing* the need to promote tolerance, understanding among different cultures and mutual appreciation of cultural and religious values for world peace, social justice and friendship among people,

*Recognizing* the valuable contributions of all religions to modern civilization and the contribution that dialogue among civilizations can make to an improved awareness and understanding of the common values shared by all humankind,

*Noting with concern* that defamation of religions is among the causes of social disharmony and leads to violations of human rights of their adherents,

*Recognizing* the incompatibility of defamation of religions and cultures with the objectives of a truly globalized world and the promotion and maintenance of international peace and security,

*Alarmed* at the serious instances of intolerance, discrimination and acts of violence based on religion or belief, intimidation and coercion motivated by extremism, religious or otherwise, occurring in many parts of the world and threatening the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

*Stressing* the need to recognize and appreciate religious and cultural diversity and differences in perception and values,

*Underlining* the importance of creating conditions to foster greater harmony and tolerance within and among societies and conscious of the importance of education in ensuring tolerance of and respect for religion and belief,

*Emphasizing* that States, non-governmental organizations, religious bodies and the media have an important role to play in the promotion of tolerance and the protection of freedom of religion and belief,

1. *Welcomes* the report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance (E/CN.4/2003/23);
2. *Expresses deep concern* at negative stereotyping of religions and manifestations of intolerance and discrimination in matters of religion or belief still in evidence in some regions of the world;
3. *Also expresses deep concern* that Islam is frequently and wrongly associated with human rights violations and terrorism;
4. *Notes with deep concern* the intensification of the campaign of defamation of religions, and the ethnic and religious profiling of Muslim minorities, in the aftermath of the tragic events of 11 September 2001;
5. *Deplores* the use of the print, audio-visual and electronic media, including the Internet, and any other means to incite acts of violence, xenophobia or related intolerance and discrimination towards Islam or any other religion;
6. *Expresses deep concern* at programmes and agendas pursued by extremist organizations and groups aimed at the defamation of religions, in particular when supported by Governments;
7. *Urges* all States, within their national legal framework, in conformity with international human rights instruments, to take all appropriate measures to combat hatred, discrimination, intolerance and acts of violence, intimidation and coercion motivated by religious intolerance, including attacks on religious places, and to encourage understanding, tolerance and respect in matters relating to freedom of religion or belief;
8. *Also urges* all States to ensure that all public officials, including members of law enforcement bodies, the military, civil servants and educators, in the course of their official duties respect different religions and beliefs and do not discriminate on the grounds of religion or belief, and that necessary and appropriate education or training is provided;
9. *Strongly deplors* physical attacks and assaults on businesses, cultural centres and places of worship of all religions;

10. *Encourages* States, within their respective constitutional systems, to provide adequate protection against all human rights violations resulting from defamation of religions and to take all possible measures to promote tolerance and respect for all religions and their value systems;
11. *Confirms* the need to enhance knowledge about civilizations and cultures through communication and cooperation for the promotion of common universal values such as those enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other relevant international human rights instruments;
12. *Calls upon* the international community to initiate a global dialogue to promote a culture of tolerance based on respect for human rights and respect for religious diversity and urges the States, non-governmental organizations, religious bodies and the print and electronic media to support and promote such a dialogue;
13. *Calls upon* the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to promote and include human rights aspects in the dialogue among civilizations, inter alia through:
- (a) Integrating them into topical seminars and special debates on the positive contributions of cultures, as well as religious and cultural diversity;
- (b) Collaboration by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights with other relevant international organizations in holding joint conferences designed to encourage this dialogue and promote understanding of the universality of human rights and their implementation at various levels;
14. *Requests* the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance to examine the situation of Muslim and Arab peoples in various parts of the world with special reference to physical assaults and attacks against their places of worship, cultural centres, businesses and properties in the aftermath of the events of 11 September 2001 and to submit a progress report on his findings for consideration by the Commission at its next session;
15. *Requests* the High Commissioner to report to the Commission at its sixtieth session on the implementation of the present resolution;
16. *Decides* to consider this matter at its sixtieth session, under the same agenda item.

*47th meeting  
14 April 2003*

[Adopted by a recorded vote of 32 votes to 14,  
with 7 abstentions.  
See chap. VI.- E/CN.4/2003/L.11 ]