

PRESS RELEASE

**The Human Rights Council needs to stop promoting the prohibition of
defamation of religions**

Geneva, the 23rd of February 2010: Human rights' defense organisations urge the Human Rights Council to reject any resolutions which promote the concept of defamation or include it in a binding international instrument.

The Human Rights Council which will be held from the 1st to the 26th of March will indeed have to vote on a nonbinding resolution of defamation of religions, but also on the opportunity to create complementary standards binding to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Our organisations are concerned that these complementary standards will focus on religious hatred and the protection of religions and not on the fight against all forms of racial discrimination, despite the view of many UN experts who believe that the incitation of religious hatred is sufficiently covered by existing international standards and legal frameworks.

The creation of complementary binding standards is dangerous, not only for the freedom of expression, which cannot be subject to other restrictions under international law as provided by Articles 19 and 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, but may also discredit the struggle against racism within the UN, weakened by the same instruments of existing international law, including the Convention on the Elimination on All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Declaration and Programme Durban Action – won after tough negotiations.

