



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on November 23, 2010

UN Initiative Would Protect Islamic Persecution of Christians in Middle East

At its meeting in Mexico in December, the members of the United Nations General Assembly will vote on an initiative sponsored by the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) entitled the “Elimination of all forms of intolerance and of discrimination based on religion or belief (document A/C.3/65/L.32/Rev.1).”

In advance of that vote, a [draft of the resolution](#) was presented Monday for provisional approval to the members of the Third Committee of the United Nations. The proposed text was approved without a vote by the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (Third Committee).



For six consecutive years the OIC-sponsored measure has been approved by the General Assembly. Lately, judging by the behavior of the principal sponsors of the initiative, there is a feeling among Islamic supporters that the streak will not extend to a seventh year.

During the hearing on the matter before the Third Committee, the representative of Morocco expressed on behalf of the OIC the organization’s commitment to include “all forms of intolerance and discrimination based on religion and belief” in the measure’s definition of defamation. Prior to adoption of this compromise language, earlier draft versions of the proposal authored by the OIC expressly named Islam as a religion that has suffered particular religious-based persecution.

After acceding to the editorial demands of those initially opposed to the measure, the initiative recognizes “with deep concern the overall rise in instances of intolerance and violence, including by non-State actors, directed against members of many religious and other communities in various parts of the world, including cases motivated by Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and Christianophobia.”

Such alterations in the wording of the anti-defamation measure are surely seen as a victory for groups who have fought against the singling out of Islam for protection from state-sponsored oppression. Open Doors USA, a ministry devoted to the abolition of the persecution of Christians worldwide, has built a website where supporters can donate to the cause of calling attention to the sufferings of Christians, specifically in the very countries that are named sponsors of the initiative against intolerance.

To the end of exposing the alleged hypocrisy of the 57-member OIC, Open Doors USA has published a list of 100 human rights, legal, and faith organizations that oppose the codification of “Islamophobia” and the use of that precedent to protect laws promulgated in nations with significant Muslim populations wherein religious freedom and freedom of expression is officially proscribed, particularly any such expression or practice that is deemed contrary to the tenets of Islam.

Open Doors and its allies fear that the ultimate goal of the OIC is the inclusion of the text of this latest anti-defamation initiative in the greater anti-racism restrictions already in place. The amending of the



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International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination to include religion would essentially criminalize the preaching of Christianity in Muslim nations. Proselytizing would be interpreted as an attempt to encourage one to change religions, thus representing an attack on Islam, which would be illegal as a form of racism.

A particularly fearful clause in the measure would “emphasize that States have an obligation to exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate and punish acts of violence against persons belonging to religious minorities; failure to do so may constitute a human rights violation.” That is to say, the plain language of the initiative being proposed would grant the imprimatur of the United Nations to the official persecution by member states of those who profess religious beliefs contrary to those of the majority. In many Islamic nations, this would provide legal cover for the perpetuation of the assault on Christians and Christianity. In fact, any statement that could be interpreted as “blasphemous” to the dominant religion would be punishable as an attack on the civil rights of anyone hearing the statement and claiming oppression under the terms of the proposed measure.

In a recent article published at CNSnews, Jay Sekulow of the American Center for Law and Justice said, “As we explain to countries without large Islamic populations what defamation of religion would mean to Christian and other religious minorities, they understand how this resolution would be a green light for U.N.-sanctioned persecution of religious minorities.”

The increasing persecution of Christians throughout the Middle East has been chronicled in the pages of *The New American*, as well. A [recent article](#) describes the reaction to such official oppression as an “exodus.” The Open Doors USA website cites a few examples of Christians suffering for the exercise of their faith.

Pakistan:

In December 2008 a Christian couple was detained for failing to do a ritual washing before touching Islamic scripture, and for using the Quran for black magic. A lawyer for The Centre for Legal Aid Assistance and Settlement (CLAAS) attested that the accusations concerning the use of the Book for black magic was false, and that the dispute had originally started amongst the couple’s children and the children of the accusing Muslim couple. On March 3, 2010 they were convicted of blasphemy and sentenced to 25 years imprisonment.

On February 25, 2010, Qamar David was sentenced to 25 years imprisonment plus a 100,000 rupee fine for some blasphemous text messages he was accused of sending in May 2006 in spite of the sixteen witnesses at the trial who testified that it was not David who sent the messages, but the owner of the cell phone, Muslim Munawar Ahmad.

Sudan:

Another widely publicized incident of enforcement of “defamation of religion” laws was the November 2007 [Sudanese court case](#) sentencing of a British teacher to fifteen days in jail for “insulting religion,” after she named a class teddy bear Mohammed. The class had chosen the name in honor of a popular student in the class who was also named Mohammed. The teacher was pardoned and deported the next month.

Egypt:

On October 3, 2008 a Christian high school social worker and blogger was arrested for posting a link on his blog to a Coptic website, which had its own link to a controversial book thought to critique Islam. He



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was detained without charge for almost two years under Egypt's Emergency Law. While in prison he was abused, deprived, and pressured to convert to Islam. He was finally released on July 22, 2010 due to a critique in the Emergency Law.

As the binding vote will occur in December, there is yet time for concerned Americans to contact their elected representatives and demand that the United States steadfastly oppose the adoption of any UN measure that would curtail the God-given right to freely exercise any religion or that would permit Islamic governments to continue punishing Christians (and other religious minorities) for openly practicing the tenets of their faith.

Photo: Secretary General of Organization of Islamic Conference Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, far left, attended the UN Third Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations in Rio de Janeiro, on May 28, 2010: AP Images



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