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## ARTICLE 19

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### Human Rights Council: ARTICLE 19 Calls on HRC Members to Vote Against Proposed Resolution on “Defamation of Religions”

**ARTICLE 19** has expressed its deep concern about a draft resolution on “combating defamation of religions” which has been circulated by the Organisation of Islamic Conference at the 10<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Human Rights Council. Whilst **ARTICLE 19** observes that the draft resolution modifies the approach of previously adopted resolutions on the subject, it argues that the draft resolution does not address any of the problems associated with the concept of “defamation of religions”, but rather entrenches them.

In its statement, **ARTICLE 19** notes that, in various ways, the draft resolution builds on resolutions on combating defamation of religions which have been adopted by UN human rights bodies since 1999. For instance, the draft resolution contains express references to Articles 19 and 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), recent initiatives of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and previously adopted resolutions of the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly on combating defamation of religions. It also appears to encompass the “targeting of ... venerated personalities of all religions” and “religious symbols” within the concept of defamation of religions and draws closer links between that concept and the incitement to religious hatred.

**ARTICLE 19** argues that such modifications demonstrate the clear will of the drafters to situate the draft resolution more directly within the framework of established international human rights law and to legitimise and further develop the concept of defamation of religions. Yet the concept lacks any definition in the draft resolution or legal basis in international human rights law. The statement indicates that the draft resolution is inconsistent with the right to freedom of expression and freedom of religion, will not be effective in promoting equality in practice and is likely to be abused by states seeking to stifle criticism of religions and religious institutions. References made in the draft resolution to established international law on freedom of expression and recent initiatives of the OHCHR are also misleading.

**ARTICLE 19** argues that, if adopted, this draft resolution will add to the series of previously adopted resolutions on combating defamation of religions adopted by UN human rights bodies – an alarming trend which should be halted immediately. We therefore urge member states of the Human Rights Council to vote against the draft resolution or at least abstain in a vote on its adoption.

#### **NOTES TO EDITORS:**

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- To view ARTICLE 19's statement, go to: <http://www.article19.org/pdfs/press/human-rights-council-article-19-calls-on-hrc-members-to-vote-against-propose.pdf>
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- 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 free speech.