



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

### Thirteenth session

Agenda item 9

**Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms  
of intolerance, follow-up and implementation of the  
Durban Declaration and Programme of Action**

### **Joint written statement\* submitted by the Association for World Education (AWE) and the World Union for Progressive Judaism (WUPJ), non-governmental organizations on the roster**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[15 March 2010]

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\* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

## **Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of Complementary Standards**

**(2nd session: 19–30 October 2009 — Chair: Algerian Ambassador Idriss Jazaïry)**

1. As there is no official record of the contents of statements by NGOs at the Ad Hoc Committee, the Association of World Education (AWE) and the World Union for Progressive Judaism (WUPJ) have decided to reprint in one written statement their joint oral statements that were delivered by David G. Littman on 22 and 27 October 2009; only one statement is not reproduced as it is covered in HRC/13/NGO/135, §5 – §14.

### **Cairo Declaration of Human Rights in Islam & Universality of Human Rights**

2. We wish to draw attention to a joint UN written statement by our NGO, the Association for World Education, with the International Humanist and Ethical Union and another NGO: It is entitled: “The Cairo Declaration of Human Rights in Islam & the Universality of Human Rights” (A/HRC/7/NGO/96). It addresses in detail the subject being discussed here under item 4. In it, we quoted the statement by the Ambassador of Pakistan Masood Khan addressing the Human Rights Council on behalf of the OIC countries for Human Rights Day on 10 December 2007 when he spoke glowingly of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. He then went on to claim that: The Cairo Declaration of Human Rights in Islam: “is not an alternative, competing worldview on human rights. It complements the Universal Declaration as it addresses religious and cultural specificity of the Muslim countries”.

3. The Cairo Declaration cannot be considered complementary to the UDHR. It makes no reference to the UDHR, while Articles 24 and 25 of the Cairo Declaration explicitly state that: “All the rights and freedoms stipulated in this Declaration are subject to the Islamic Shari'ah”; and also that: “The Islamic Shari'ah is the only source of reference for the explanation or clarification to any of the articles of this Declaration.” Many of the clauses in the Cairo Declaration limit the ‘rights’ contained therein by reference to the Shari'ah, in particular its Articles 2, 7, 12, 16, 19, 22 and 23.

4. In this regard, we note the statement to the Council by German Ambassador Gunter Nooke, also speaking on 10 December 2007, in which he regretted: “the tendency within some parts of the international community to roll back the principle of universality in order to make the enjoyment of fundamental rights dependent on factors such as tradition, culture, religion or the level of development”.

5. The Cairo Declaration of Human Rights in Islam relates to a specific religious community: it is not universal as it limits the rights enshrined in the secular International Bill of Human Rights. In this sense it is incongruous with the Universal Declaration as it addresses Islamic human rights in the context of religious beliefs, rather than the universality and indivisibility of all human rights, and it is NOT complementary to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We urge all States to remain vigilant and to actively resist any attempt to give equal status to the Cairo Declaration, and to oppose any resolution that seeks to limit the universality of human rights enshrined in the UDHR and the International Covenants.

6. Also, in relation to the commemoration of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights last December at the Palais des Nations, we found 2 racist

books publically on display on that special occasion and our joint NGO written statement covers this matter in detail. It is entitled: Defamation of Judaism & Jews by ISESCO (OIC): 60<sup>th</sup> UDHR Anniversary at the UN – A/HRC/10/NGO/29 – March 2009). There has been no reaction as yet from any UN body on such a grave defamation of a religion and a people.

### **Incitement to Genocide and Judeophobia**

7. We wish to endorse what was stated by the representative of the USA in regard to the lack of a political will to act in application of the 1948 Genocide Convention under its article 3, recommending an early warning system as well as national mechanisms to be created for that purpose. As we have stated many times over the years at the Commission and the Council, article 3 (c) states that: “Direct and public incitement to commit genocide” is punishable under item 4, and article 8 allows any State Party to call upon the competent organs of the UN to act in the prevention & suppression of all acts referred to in article 3. This could have been done for Rwanda in 1994 after the broadcasts from ‘Mille Collines’ had begun.

8. We also noted the remarks by the delegate of Algeria, who referred to the statement by Pakistan’s delegate (for the OIC countries) on the subject of racial and religious defamation, recommending an international framework to control such acts. The Nigerian delegate referred to this also, speaking about the ‘gaps’ in the international system. Unfortunately, there is a tendency to overlook what is blatant and we wish to give one example here.

9. Blood-Libel accusation against Jews in Hellenistic times (Alexandria), which was resuscitated in England in 1144 (Norwich) and elsewhere in Europe, especially with Simon of Trent in 1475, and the Damascus Blood-Libel of 1840, led to genocidal crimes against Jews over the centuries. The ‘Damas Affair’ Blood Libel was even resuscitated in 1991 at the Commission when Syria’s delegate urged delegates to read a book by Syrian Defence Minister General Mustafa Tlass *The Unleavened Bread of Zion* “that demonstrates unequivocally the historical reality of Zionist racism ...those who read the book...would clearly understand those masked realities in Zionism.”

10. This book and others like it– such as *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* are sold in the tens of thousands in the Arab-Muslim world, propagating a general hatred against Jews, Judaism and Israel – and do incite to genocidal tendencies and Jihadist hate crimes worldwide. Mr President, it is time to recognise this general Judeophobia / Antisemitism incitement to hate that has already led to genocide and act now in this and other cases which are often ignored at UN bodies.

### **Hate Speech / Press / TV / Teaching in School Textbooks**

11. I take note of what the President said earlier – that ‘hate speech’ is not appreciated at this meeting. Sir, let me say – on behalf of our two NGOs representing up to 2½ million people – that hate speech, hate teaching and a ‘culture of hate’ is what must be shamed and denounced publicly wherever and whenever possible, here at the UN – and especially at this Ad Hoc Committee which is expected to address such matters. Those school books, press articles, using the web, and on private and State TV in many countries are well-known to many delegates here, who deplore such a culture of hate. I need not name names of those responsible States and organisations for it is commonplace knowledge.

12. We listened attentively to the statement by the delegate of Pakistan – speaking on behalf of the OIC – especially when he referred to a current “impunity for hate crimes”. Indeed, this is exactly the point we wish to make. We agree totally with the Canadian and

USA delegates, and others, regarding the importance of each State having a regular review of the curriculums in their national school textbooks. It is, of course, an excellent idea to provide an official 'human rights education' in schools, but it should be based on the International Bill of Human Rights – and on nothing else! We have stressed the importance of examining as CMIP<sup>1</sup> is doing all Middle East school textbooks. (CMIP is now called Impact-SE); see for Saudi Arabia,<sup>2</sup> Syria,<sup>3</sup> Palestinian Authority and Hamas,<sup>4</sup> Egypt<sup>5</sup>, Iran<sup>6</sup>, Tunisia<sup>7</sup>, Israel.<sup>8</sup>

13. One should also consult the indispensable translations [from Arabic] in the media and TV programmes by MEMRI (The Middle East Media Research Institute) and PMW (Palestine Media Watch), which provide irrefutable evidence how this culture of hate is being perpetrated and propagated non-stop in the Middle East. Let us have less talk and more action by UNESCO, the Council & its Ad Hoc Committee.

- <sup>1</sup> The Centre for Monitoring the Impact of Peace (now called IMPACT-SE – Institute for Maintaining Peace & Cultural Tolerance in School Education) examines primary, preparatory and secondary state schools in the Middle East in accordance with UNESCO criteria.
- <sup>2</sup> *The West, Christians and Jews in Saudi Arabian Schoolbooks* (2003); *A Research Update* (July 2008) 'The Culture of Hate in Saudi Arabian Textbooks and Growing Arab Reactions': E/CN.4/Sub.2/2005/NGO/3 (Joint written NGO statement: AWE, AWC, IHEU).
- <sup>3</sup> *Jews, Zionism & Israel in Syrian School Textbooks* (2001);
- <sup>4</sup> *Palestinian Authority Teachers Guides* (2000); *Jews, Israel & Peace in the Palestinian School Textbooks* (2000-2001 and 2001-2002); *Jews, Israel and Peace in the PA Textbooks and High School Final Examination* (2002); *Jews, Israel and Peace in the Palestinian Authority Textbooks, the New Textbooks for Grades 3 & 8* (2003); *Palestinian Schoolbooks: An Updated Conclusion* (2009)
- <sup>5</sup> *Jews, Christians, War and Peace in Egyptian School Textbooks* (2004); 'The Culture of 'Jihad Martyrdom' in Egyptian School Textbooks': E/CN.4/Sub.2/2005/NGO/2 (Joint written NGO statement by the AWE, AWC, IHEU)
- <sup>6</sup> *The Attitude to the 'Other' and to Peace in Iranian School Textbooks and Teachers' Guides* (2006).
- <sup>7</sup> *The Attitude to the 'Other' and to Peace in Tunisian School Textbooks: A Preliminary Report* (October 2006).
- <sup>8</sup> *Arabs and Palestinians in Israeli Textbooks* (2000); *Arabs, Palestinians, Islam and Peace in Israeli Textbooks* (2002)

## Transatlantic Slavery / Arab Slave Trade / Slavery Today

14. We would like to react strongly to what we have just heard from a distinguished African delegate, praising highly the Durban Declaration as a unique text, and stating that Western countries should be reminded constantly of the trans-Atlantic slavery trade and should pay a heavy compensation for what they had done over centuries.

15. Yes, we should not hesitate to recognise and condemn the horrors that accompanied transatlantic slavery, the Inquisition, imperialism, colonialism and much more too, but it is strange that there is never an attempt to acknowledge what happened elsewhere.

16. The African Union does not address the infamous Arab Slave Trade, which – as we stated at the Durban II Conference six months ago – was committed against Africans by their Arab conquerors for over a millennium, and this continues today in some countries, especially Sudan. And there was also mass slavery for centuries elsewhere – in the Middle East, the Balkans and by the Ottomans with the Janissaries and Barbary Corsairs.\*

17. The African Union, the Arab League, OIC and the NAM (Non-Aligned Movement) prefer to ignore these horrors in Africa today in Congo, Sudan, and elsewhere. They stick together and remain 'united'. We wish to state here again, as we have done over the years, that it is necessary to call a spade a spade and a slave a slave! For many years it was a taboo subject to refer to the slavery of Christians and animists in South Sudan – one was

expected, by Sudan\*\*, to refer to ‘abducted persons’ – and now slavery continues in Darfur with the worst form of atrocities, and elsewhere. Why should this subject remain taboo?

\* Documented extensively in Arab, Syriac, Greek, Armenian, Turkish and Indian texts.

\*\* The delegate of Sudan requested a ‘right of reply’ and condemned the speaker for provoking “an insidious discussion.” The president then asked all speakers not to focus on their vision and to accept the mandate of this body and adopt “a convenient approach” – as the Ad Hoc Committee had a specific exercise and “this is not a general debate.” He said that he did not wish to interrupt speakers. The president did not interrupt any speaker and NGOs spoke whenever they wished.

## **Freedom to Change one’s Religion or Belief without any Restrictions**

18. We wish to enlarge upon what was stated just before by the delegate of Sweden, speaking on behalf of the European Union (EU), who referred to the 1995 Barcelona Agreement, the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation – an intercultural Alliance of Civilizations “on both sides of the Mediterranean”<sup>1</sup> – as she described it. She also stressed our cherished “religious, philosophical and humanist values”, the importance of freedom of expression and religion, gender equality, women’s rights, and unrestricted freedom of all to change a religion – and that there should be no “no complementary standards” in regard to universal human rights.

19. Saudi Arabia’s representative stated soon after that: “we are here to learn intercultural dialogue.” He was at pains to assure us that ...we must live together, enjoying peace, that Islam is a tolerant religion which rejects hate, and that Muslims respect the other religions and wish to dialogue with them.

20. On hearing these glowing and well-meaning declarations, we wish to ask whether it would be possible for this Ad Hoc Committee to ‘test’ the optimism hanging in the air by asking each and every representative of the UN Member States here present – those which have adhered to and ratified the UN Bill of Human Rights and the other International Covenants – whether it would be possible for any citizen in their country to decide to change his or her religion and adopt another faith or belief or non-belief? Especially, does their local legislation permit or punish such an individual’s action, which is guaranteed under international law and widely proclaimed here; or is it forbidden for persons of any specific religion or faith to do so? This is a crucial question that needs a clear reply here, otherwise we would be turning back the clock.

<sup>1</sup> The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, formerly known as the “Barcelona Process” (November 1995), was re-launched as the “Union for the Mediterranean” (Paris Summit, July 2008). The “Partnership” now includes all 27 member states of the European Union, along with 16 partners across the southern Mediterranean and the Middle East. The partnership was organised into three main dimensions, which remain today as the broad working areas of the Union for the Mediterranean:

- Political and Security Dialogue, aimed at creating a common area of peace and stability, underpinned by sustainable development, rule of law, democracy and human rights.
- Economic and Financial Partnership, including the gradual establishment of a free-trade area aimed at promoting shared economic opportunity through sustainable and balanced socio-economic development.
- Social, Cultural & Human Partnership, aimed at promoting understanding and intercultural dialogue between cultures, religions and people, and facilitating exchanges between civil society and ordinary citizens, particularly women and young people.