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November 18, 2010

WASHINGTON - The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) today urged UN delegations to vote against the draft resolution sponsored by the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) on combating the so-called “defamation of religions,” recently modified to refer instead to the “vilification of religions.” A preliminary vote in the UN General Assembly’s Third Committee is expected on November 22 or 23, and a final vote in the full General Assembly in December.

“This minor change in terminology, from defamation to vilification, is a distinction without a difference,” said Leonard Leo, USCIRF chair. “Having lost support on this issue over the past few years, the OIC is now trying to fool delegations into believing that the resolution has improved when it has not. This flawed resolution still seeks to protect religions from blasphemous or critical speech, at the expense of individuals’ rights to freedom of religion and expression,” continued Mr. Leo. “It also still erroneously conflates blasphemy or criticism of religious ideas with incitement to acts of discrimination or violence against individuals.”

USCIRF welcomed Secretary Clinton’s strong statement in opposition to the defamation of religions resolution during yesterday’s release of the State Department’s International Religious Freedom Report and urged the United States government to redouble its efforts to defeat any resolution espousing that concept, or any equivalent one, this year.

For more information on the dangers of protecting religions from criticism, see [USCIRF’s recent policy focus on the issue](#)

USCIRF is an independent, bipartisan U.S. federal government commission. USCIRF Commissioners are appointed by the President and the leadership of both political parties in the

Senate and the House of Representatives. USCIRF's principal responsibilities are to review the facts and circumstances of violations of religious freedom internationally and to make policy recommendations to the President, Secretary of State and Congress.

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