



MEMORANDUM

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United Nations

The American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ), together with its global affiliate, the European Centre for Law and Justice (ECLJ), is strongly committed to ensuring the maintenance of freedom and liberty in the United States and around the world. The ECLJ is actively involved in issues of religious freedom and human rights in the United Nations (UN), the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), and various countries. The ACLJ's global work reaches across more than 35 countries and has received special recognition by the United Nations. In fact, the UN has granted the ECLJ special consultative status which enhances efforts to expand ACLJ's religious liberty and human rights work worldwide. The ECLJ regularly accesses international forums like the UN that provide important avenues of relief for Christians. Additionally, the ECLJ has consistently taken action to oppose certain UN Member States that pose substantial threats to religious freedom around the world. Such actions include international litigation, advising individuals and governmental agencies, and counseling clients on global freedom and liberty issues. The ACLJ also supports training law students around the world to protect religious liberty and safeguard human rights and dignity.

“The United Nations is an international organization founded in 1945 after the Second World War by 51 countries committed to maintaining international peace and security, developing friendly relations among nations and promoting social progress, better living standards and human rights.”¹

Working through the United Nations to protect religious liberty and human rights

The ECLJ is actively engaged on the international level on issues of religious freedom and human rights through its status as a non-governmental organization (NGO) in Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Accordingly, the ECLJ actively participates in the work of the various bodies of the United Nations, including in particular the Human Rights Council (HRC).

The Human Rights Council is an inter-governmental body within the UN made up of 47 States responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe.² Its main purpose is to address human rights violations and make recommendations on how States should correct them. It meets for about 10 weeks each year in Geneva. One of the main issues that the HRC examines is the fundamental right to freedom of religion, belief, and conscience. The ECLJ is actively engaged within the HRC's work through its various procedures and mechanisms, in particular the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and the Special Procedures. The ECLJ also participates in HRC sessions and submits written memoranda and oral statements to the HRC.

We have filed a number of international complaints using Special Procedures against the governments of Iran, Egypt, and Pakistan in cases of severe human rights violations, specifically with regard to religious freedom and freedom of speech. We also have submitted country reports to the UPR to report widespread, systematic violations of religious freedom in different countries. For example, In June and September 2009, the ECLJ exposed Iran's violations of its citizens' freedoms of speech and assembly and the arbitrary detention and extrajudicial killings of innocent Iranian citizens to the UN Special Rapporteurs.

The ECLJ has also filed a communication with three Special Rapporteurs, including the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Religion and Expression, following a deadly tirade in July and August of 2009 by an Islamic mob that attacked and set ablaze more than fifty Christian homes throughout two villages in Pakistan in response to an allegation that a Christian had "desecrated" the Qur'an (Islam's holy book).³ The ECLJ's communications highlight a consistent pattern of gross and systematic violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms by Pakistani authorities against Pakistan's Christian minority. In this specific instance, seven people were burned to death by the Muslim mob and hundreds of Christians were affected by the resulting loss of life and damage to their property.

Our affiliate office in Pakistan is representing the specific interests of the aggrieved Christians in Pakistan.

Accessing international forums like the UN provides an important avenue of relief. The ECLJ consistently has taken action to oppose certain UN Member States that pose substantial threats to individuals' and societal religious freedom around the world. For instance, in recent years the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), a group of about 57 Islamic nations, has repeatedly submitted a resolution to outlaw defamation of religions, particularly Islam, to the UN General Assembly.⁴ This resolution effectively justifies oppressive local blasphemy laws which not only severely curtail freedom of speech and religion in Islamic countries, but further are used to persecute religious minorities. The anti-defamation resolution is ultimately intended to usher in a legally binding international anti-defamation law. For these and other compelling reasons, the ECLJ is actively involved with the UN and its Country Missions (representative offices of the UN Member States) in our campaign against the defamation of religions resolutions.

The ECLJ is also actively engaged within the Human Rights Council and its work, in particular the Universal Periodic Review (UPR)⁵ and the Special Procedures. We have submitted country reports to the UPR to report widespread, systematic violations of religious freedom in different countries. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has praised the UPR as having "great potential to promote and protect human rights in the darkest corners of the world."⁶ The ECLJ submitted reports on systematic violations in countries such as Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Rwanda, Myanmar, Nepal, and many more.

In sum, the ACLJ has been and continues to be dedicated to effectively protecting inalienable rights inalienable rights of freedom of conscience and religious expression in the United States and around through world.

¹ UN at a Glance, UNITED NATIONS, <http://www.un.org/en/aboutun/index.shtml> (last visited June 20, 2011).

² See UN Human Rights Council, Membership, UNITED NATIONS, <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/membership.htm> (last visited Jan. 20, 2015).

³ Brian Sharma, *Accused Pakistani Christian Says Muslims Tried to Coerce Him*, WORLD WATCH MONITOR (Dec. 29, 2009), <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2009/12-December/13133/>.

⁴ See Patrick Goodenough, *Waning Support for Defamation of Religion Resolution Undermines Defense of Islam*, OIC Chief Says, CNSNEWS.COM (Apr. 16, 2010),

<http://cnsnews.com/news/article/waning-support-defamation-religion-resolution-undermines-defense-islam-oic-chief-says>.

⁵ The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a process that involves a review of the human rights records of all 192 UN Member States once every four years. The UPR provides the opportunity for each State to declare what actions they have taken to improve the human rights situations in their countries and to fulfill their human rights obligations.

⁶ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, UPR, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/UPRMain.aspx> (last visited Jan. 20, 2015); Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Basic Facts about the UPR, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/BasicFacts.aspx> (last visited Jan. 20, 2015).