



United Nations Human Rights Council, 14th Session, 4 June 2010
Joint Oral Statement - Item 3 – Interactive Dialogue
Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression
ARTICLE 19 and Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)
Delivered by: Sejal Parmar, Senior Legal Officer, ARTICLE 19

Thank you Mr President.

ARTICLE 19 and the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies address the report of the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression.

We deeply appreciate the integrity and professionalism with which the Special Rapporteur has carried out his mandate to date. We welcome his second report, especially its focus on the role of freedom of expression in combating discrimination, the protection of journalists and freedom of the press.

We strongly support the Special Rapporteur's assertion that international human rights law protects individuals and groups and not ideas or institutions, and does not accord with the concept of "defamation of religions". We hope that the emerging consensus in support of this position – demonstrated by the significant decrease in political support for "defamation of religions" resolution at the Council's 13th session and the exclusion of the concept in the Final Outcome Document of the Durban Review Conference – signals a shift in attitude amongst some states that will lead to a more constructive approach towards tackling global challenges of violence, discrimination and hatred on racial and religious grounds. Our organisations support all governments who seek to promote such an approach. As the *Camden Principles on Freedom of Expression and Equality* highlight, it is only when freedom of expression and equality are protected and promoted at the same time that either can be effectively realised.

Our organisations emphasise the need for restrictions on freedom of expression to be reviewable by an independent court or tribunal, as recognised by the Special Rapporteur in his statement yesterday.

We appeal to states – such as Iran, Sri Lanka, Tunisia and Venezuela – to cooperate with the Special Rapporteur by accepting his requests for country visits. We urge all states to positively support the Special Rapporteur in carrying out his mandate.

Thank you Mr President.