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World Association of Newspapers

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World's Press Condemns UN Council's Decision on Defamation of Religion

Français

The World Association of Newspapers and World Editors Forum have condemned a resolution approved by the United Nations Human Rights Council on “defamation of religion,” calling the measure an attack on the basic human right of freedom of expression.

“This decision brings discredit on the UN Human Rights Council, which should not justify censorship and the stifling of dissenting voices,” said the Paris-based WAN and WEF, the global organisations of the world’s press.

“Religion is a legitimate subject for criticism, satire and debate. The concept of defamation of religion is likely to severely stifle that debate,” the statement said. “We are seriously concerned that this resolution will be relied on by authoritarian governments to suppress freedom of expression.”

WAN and WEF called on Council members to “take all steps necessary to ensure that international standards of freedom of expression are fully supported by the UN Human Rights Council and not undermined by resolutions such as this.”

The Council’s resolution, proposed by Pakistan on behalf of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference and approved by the Council on Friday, calls for a global fight against “defamation of religions.” Islamic countries argue that criticizing or lampooning religions is a violation of the rights of believers and leads to discrimination and violence against them.

But such measures also are used to stifle dissent and debate. A list of some recent cases can be found [here](#).

The Paris-based WAN, the global organisation for the newspaper industry, defends and promotes press freedom and the professional and business interests of newspapers worldwide. Representing 18,000 newspapers, its membership includes 77 national newspaper associations, newspaper companies and individual newspaper executives in 102 countries, 12 news agencies and 11 regional and world-wide press groups.

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