



Human Rights Council Creates Historic Mandate on Iran

“Defamation of Religions” Resolution Shelved

In a historic victory today, the Human Rights Council (HRC) passed a landmark resolution to establish a new UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Championed by the Democracy Coalition Project, this is the first country mandate to be established since the creation of the Human Rights Council, and reaffirms the Council's role in monitoring serious situations around the world.

The resolution, led by the United States and Sweden, resulted in substantial cross-regional support with more than 50 co-sponsors from around the world, including Chile, the Maldives, Georgia, and Zambia. Significantly, countries such as Brazil, South Korea and Senegal changed their positions from past resolutions on Iran, to support the new mandate. The resolution passed by a significant margin with 22 states in favor, 7 against and 14 abstentions.

In another critical victory today, the HRC adopted, by consensus, a new resolution which replaced the traditional "defamation of religions" initiative presented in past sessions of the Council, and which threatened the rights to freedom of expression and religion. The resolution, tabled by Pakistan (on behalf of the OIC), removed all the controversial references to "defamation" and "vilification" and instead, focused on combating intolerance, discrimination, incitement to violence, and violence against persons based on religion or belief. This positive result is also due to extensive efforts by the United States and its international partners to ensure that concerns related to discrimination and intolerance do not threaten fundamental human rights.

"Today's victories at the Human Rights Council are unprecedented, and represent significant steps forward for the body," said the Democracy Coalition Project's Executive Director Dokhi Fassihian. "The decisions taken today give hope to human rights defenders around the world, and to the Iranian people who have suffered in pursuit of their innate human rights. The Obama Administration's positive engagement at the HRC is inextricably linked to today's crucial victories. We urge the United States to continue its vital contributions and seek a second term on the Council," she said.

Countries which voted in favor of the new mandate on Iran were Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Chile, France, Guatemala, Hungary, Japan, Maldives, Mexico, Norway, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Republic of Korea, Senegal, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, Ukraine,



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United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, and Zambia.

Countries which voted against the mandate were Bangladesh, China, Cuba, Ecuador, Mauritania, Pakistan, and Russia.

Bahrain, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Djibouti, Gabon, Ghana, Jordan, Malaysia, Mauritius, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, Uganda, and Uruguay abstained from the vote.