

# International Humanist and Ethical Union

UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL: 14th Session (31 May – 18 June 2010)

Speaker: IHEU Representative, Roy W Brown: Tuesday 8 June 2010

Agenda Item 4: Matters requiring the Attention of the Council

## Oppression of Religious Minorities in Pakistan

Mr President

We find it remarkable that one of the states most active in the promotion of respect for religion should be the scene of frequent appalling attacks on religious minorities. Following the massacre of Ahmadiys in Pakistan on 28 May, the Muslim Canadian Congress issued a statement<sup>1</sup> critical of the Pakistani government and its tolerance of incitement of hatred towards Ahmadiys in the media.

The MCC blamed the major media outlets in Pakistan for inflaming the rhetoric against Ahmadiyya, Ismaili and Shia Muslims. In particular, the MCC pointed out that GEO Television has become the voice of al-Qaeda and the Taliban, and spreads hate against these communities as well as against non-Muslims. GEO Television has created an incendiary climate of fear among Pakistan's Muslim minority sects as well as non-Muslim religious minorities.

Have we already forgotten the role of the media, and of the radio station Mille Collines, in promoting the genocide in Rwanda just 16 years ago?

Just one week before the massacre [on 20 May 2010], the European Parliament adopted a resolution on Pakistan,<sup>2</sup> in which it inter alia:

[7. Expresses its deep concern that the blasphemy laws – which can carry the death sentence in Pakistan and are often used to justify censorship, criminalisation, persecution and, in certain cases, the murder of members of political, racial and religious minorities]

11. Expresses its particular concern at the ongoing discrimination against and persecution of the Ahmadiyya community in Pakistan, and calls upon the Government of Pakistan to repeal Section 298 of the Pakistan Penal Code, which severely restricts the daily lives of this group, and to discourage inflammatory events such as the "End of Prophethood" Conferences in Lahore;

[15. Calls on the Government to guarantee the human rights of minorities laid down in the Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, notably Article 18 thereof, which provides that "everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion";]

17. ... invites the Pakistani authorities to remove all propaganda promoting hatred, religious superiority and defamation of religion from the textbooks approved by the national curriculum wing of the Ministry of Education;

Need we remind the Council and the government of Pakistan that it was government and media support for expressions of hatred that led to the Nazi Holocaust and to the genocide in Rwanda?

Thank you sir.

Note: The words in [square brackets] could not be spoken in the time available.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.muslimcanadiancongress.org/20100625.html>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P7-TA-2010-0194+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>