



**OpenDoors**  
Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

## Media Release

*For immediate release*

Wednesday, 3rd November 2010

### **A UN RESOLUTION “DEFAMATION OF RELIGIONS RESOLUTION” YES VOTE IN LATE NOVEMBER 2010 WILL HAVE SERIOUS WORLDWIDE RELIGIOUS RAMIFICATIONS AUSTRALIA STILL TO DECLARE HOW IT WILL VOTE**

**“Prime Minister Julia Gillard and Foreign Affairs Minister Kevin Rudd are yet to inform Australians how a vote will be cast in a vital United Nations (UN) resolution, even though most western countries have clearly announced their intentions to vote ‘no’,” said Mr Nigel Rooke, CEO – Open Doors Australia.**

**“We have written to our leaders informing them of our views with no response,” he said.**

The ‘Defamation of Religions Resolution’, originally ‘Defamation of Islam’ and first introduced to the Human Rights Commission in 1999, seeks to criminalise words or actions that are deemed to be against a particular religion, namely Islam. Although proponents justify the ‘Defamation of Religions’ concept as protecting religious practice and promoting tolerance it really in effect promotes intolerance and violates the freedom of religion, freedom of speech and expression for religious minorities – especially Christians – in many Islamic countries.

The Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), an inter-governmental organisation of 57 countries with majority or significant Muslim populations, has been the driving force behind the resolution to the UN in its various forms since 1999.

The OIC has brought the resolution forward again this year and in its current form has been passed in March by the United Nations Human Rights subcommittee. The OIC is expected to bring the ‘Defamation of Religions Resolution’ to the UN General Assembly once again this November. Many Christians living in these mostly Islamic countries are already severely impacted by restrictive laws – especially those living

under strict Sharia law, from the right to worship freely, to the ability to express their faith without fear of reprisal.

Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights says - *everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.*

“There are existing Apostasy and Blasphemy laws currently in place contrary to Article 18 around the world. With the potential to validate the existing blasphemy laws in countries like Pakistan, the ‘Defamation of Religions Resolution’ threatens to justify local laws that already marginalise Christians. The ‘Defamation of Religions Resolution’ has the potential to give a cloak of international respectability to persecution,” stated Rooke.

“The major concern with this resolution is that it puts the rights of an ideal or religion above the rights of an individual. Once resolutions are set in place that protect groups of peoples or religions the rights of individuals - especially those belonging to minority groups, are at risk of increased persecution,” Mr Rooke said.

\*In previous votes at the UN, Australia has voted ‘no.’

---

**Contact Information:**

Media Liaison: Darryn Keneally 0410 344 761,

Email: [darrynk@chariot.net.au](mailto:darrynk@chariot.net.au)

Web Address: [www.opendoors.org.au](http://www.opendoors.org.au)