

EUROPEAN MASTER IN HUMAN RIGHTS
& DEMOCRATISATION

Deorum Iniuriae Diis Curae?*
Offences to the Gods are the Concern of the Gods?

Analysis of the 'Defamation of Religions' Discourse
in the United Nations Debate.

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* Latin Proverb.

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ABSTRACT

In the last years, international legal initiatives can be perceived surrounding the issue of ‘defamation of religions’. Even though comprehended as somehow hazily problematic, it is seemingly hard to put the finger on what exactly is the conundrum with that concept both for and in human rights terms. Mocking, ridiculing or defaming a religion is a serious wrongdoing in monotheistic world religions. But how does that problem relate to international law that aims at the protection of people, not belief-sets? This thesis, in the first part, explores the theoretical and legal underpinnings of the ‘defamation of religions’ concept. It will be contended that an artificial conflict between fundamental rights is created to allow the concept of ‘defamation of religions’ entrance to human rights forums. In the second part, the thesis turns to scrutinising the ongoing debate in the realm of the United Nations and tests it against the theoretical assumptions. Both political bodies and treaty bodies are assessed. The thesis concludes by presenting the findings and recommendations on how the concept of ‘defamation of religions’ should be dealt with on the United Nations level in the future.

TABLE OF CONTENT

INTRODUCTION	9
PART I: TOOLKIT – IDENTIFYING CONCEPTS AT PLAY	
1. RELEVANT LEGAL CONCEPTS	12
1.1. Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion	12
1.1.1. Freedom of Religion in International Law.....	13
1.1.1.1. ICCPR.....	14
1.1.1.2. Declaration on the Elimination of all Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief.....	16
1.1.2. Dimensions of the Right to Freedom of Religion.....	16
1.2. Freedom of Opinion and Expression	18
1.2.1. Freedom of Expression in International Law.....	19
1.2.2. Scope of Protection.....	20
1.2.2.1. Limitations to the Right to Freedom of Expression.....	21
1.3. Interplay	22
1.4. Hate Speech	25
1.5. Defamation of Religions	27
1.5.1. Defining Blasphemy.....	28
1.5.2. Defining Defamation of Religions.....	28
1.5.3. National Blasphemy Provisions.....	31
1.5.3.1. Predominantly Christian States.....	31
1.5.3.2. Predominantly Muslim States.....	33
1.5.4. Blasphemy and Human Rights.....	34
1.5.4.1. Territoriality of Statehood.....	34
1.5.4.2. Principle of Non-Discrimination.....	34
1.5.4.3. Insecurity vis-à-vis the Law.....	35
1.5.4.4. Minority Protection.....	36
2. CONFLICT OF RIGHTS	38
2.1. Conceptual and Fake Conflicts	38
2.2. Inclusion of External Norms and Side Constraints	39
2.3. Argumentative Force of Human Rights	42
2.4. The Guardian Angels of Freedom of Expression	43
2.5. Translation Strategies	45
2.5.1. The First Translation Strategy.....	45
2.5.2. The Second Translation Strategy.....	47
2.5.3. Buying the Strategies.....	48

PART II: APPLICATION – TRACING TRANSLATION IN THE UN DEBATE

3. EMBEDDING ‘DEFAMATION OF RELIGIONS’ IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS.....51

3.1. The Third World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, Durban I.....52

3.2. The Danish Cartoon Controversy.....53

3.3. The Durban Review Conference.....57

 3.3.1 Preparatory Process.....57

 3.3.1.1. The Written Contribution of the OIC.....58

 3.3.1.2. The Draft Outcome Document of April 15th.....60

 3.3.4. Speeches at Durban II.....61

 3.3.5. Adoption of the Outcome Document.....61

4. TRACING THE DISCOURSE WITHIN THE UNITED NATIONS.....65

4.1. Political Bodies.....65

 4.1.1. United Nations Commission on Human Rights.....65

 4.1.2. United Nations Human Rights Council.....68

 4.1.3. United Nations General Assembly.....70

 4.1.4. Assessment of the ‘Defamation of Religions’ Resolutions.....72

4.2. Treaty Bodies.....74

 4.2.1. Robert Faurisson v. France.....76

 4.2.2. Malcolm Ross v. Canada.....78

4.3. Special Rapporteurs.....79

 4.3.1. Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and Belief.....81

 4.3.2. Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression.....84

 4.3.3. Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.....87

CONCLUSION.....90

BIBLIOGRAPHY.....94