

## **UN rights body ditches call to condemn religious ‘defamation,’ focuses on freedom of belief**

**By Associated Press, Thursday,  
March 24, 3:23 PM**

GENEVA — The U.N.’s top human rights body has replaced its traditional condemnation of religious ‘defamation’ with a resolution underlining the right of individuals to freedom of belief.

The unanimous vote Thursday by the 47-member U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva was welcomed by free speech activists.

U.S.-based Human Rights First praised the resolution as “a huge achievement because for the first time in many years it focuses on the protection of individuals rather than religions.”

Previous resolutions backed largely by Muslim countries had sought to criminalize any criticism of religions that was deemed offensive by believers.

The nonbinding vote calls on countries to guarantee people’s right to have or adopt a religion or belief of their choice.

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