

For Immediate Release

Free To Believe!

Open Doors USA Launches Campaign To Help Defeat UN Resolution That Could Worsen Plight Of Persecuted Christians

SANTA ANA, CA (Oct. 6, 2009) – Two months ago Muslim extremists rampaged for several days through a Christian area in Gojra, Pakistan. The violence killed at least seven Christians, caused 19 injuries and left more than 100 houses looted and burned, according to Compass Direct News.

The rioting was touched off by an unsubstantiated rumor of “blasphemy” of the Quran, reported Compass. Muslims use blasphemy laws in Pakistan against Christians and other minorities in land and other disputes. Under these laws, no evidence is required to accuse and have someone arrested on a charge of blasphemy.

The persecution of Christians goes far beyond Pakistan, and their plight may worsen if a resolution ostensibly against intolerance is approved at the United Nations this fall.

The Defamation of Religions Resolution, introduced annually at the UN, seeks to criminalize 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 promotes intolerance and violates the freedoms of religion and expression for religious minorities – especially Christians – in these countries.

The Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), an inter-governmental organization of 57 countries with majority or significant Muslim populations, has been the driving force behind this resolution. The OIC is expected to introduce another Defamation of Religions Resolution to the UN General Assembly.

“Many Christians living in these countries are already severely impacted by restrictive laws – especially those living under strict Shariah law,” says Open Doors USA President/CEO Carl Moeller. “From the right to worship freely to the ability to share the Gospel, the Defamation of Religions Resolution threatens to justify local laws that already marginalize Christians. As Americans, we have enjoyed a long tradition of religious liberty. The Defamation of Religions Resolution is a blow against religious freedom.”

While the Defamation of Religions Resolution has been introduced and passed by some countries in the past, it is expected to be brought up again in November or December. Policy experts at the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom believe there is a real opportunity to defeat it this year. Members of Congress and non-profit organizations will be urging countries to vote against the resolution. Also, the U.S. government does not support passage of the resolution.

Open Doors USA is helping to lead the advocacy effort at the United Nations to prevent this non-binding resolution from passing. Open Doors will lobby key countries which will vote, organize a petition drive for Open Doors supporters to campaign against the resolution and speak on this issue to the media. The Open Doors advocacy campaign is called "Free to Believe."

To join the Open Doors advocacy team, go to www.OpenDoorsUSA.org. A Free to Believe petition invites signers to "Say NO to the UN resolution that suppresses religious freedom." The Open Doors advocacy team will be conveying the level of support by our members against the resolution as the team interacts with the countries which have abstained from voting on this issue in the past.

"You can make a difference in the lives of thousands of persecuted believers," says Moeller. "It is crucial that this resolution is defeated. Join our advocacy team now. We need to stand in the gap for our brothers and sisters in Christ."

An estimated 100 million Christians worldwide suffer interrogation, arrest and even death for their faith in Christ, with millions more facing discrimination and alienation. Open Doors supports and strengthens believers in the world's most difficult areas through Bible and Christian literature distribution, leadership training and assistance, Christian community development, prayer and presence ministry and advocacy on behalf of suffering believers. To partner with Open Doors USA, call toll free at 888-5-BIBLE-5 (888-524-2535) or go to our website at www.OpenDoorsUSA.org.

(For more information or to set up an interview, contact Jerry Dykstra at 616-915-4117 or email jerryd@odusa.org).