



For Immediate Release

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Coalition Applauds Threatened Boycott of Durban II

The Coalition to Defend Free Speech today welcomed the statement by Denmark’s foreign minister that Europe’s participation at next year’s Durban Review Conference depends on an end to efforts to criminalize criticism of religion.

“The Danish position underscores the significance of the struggle to preserve free speech,” the Coalition stated.

According to a report in Denmark’s leading newspaper, Danish foreign minister Per Stig Møller told his Arab partners during visits to Egypt and Syria that Western states will boycott the conference unless the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) withdraws its proposal to ban criticism of religion.

“If the OIC pushes through this draft resolution, they shall not expect European or Western countries to be present at the table,” the foreign minister told an October 28 news conference in Jerusalem.

“Denmark has drawn a line in the sand,” the Coalition said. “Attempts to criminalize speech critical of religion will undo years of universally accepted international human rights law protecting free expression. We strongly urge other UN states to step up their efforts to block the proposals to criminalize free speech.”

The Coalition to Defend Free Speech was formally launched by Christian, Muslim, Jewish and non-religious groups on October 2nd to counter attacks against freedom of expression, including as part of an a recent international movement to restrict, and in some cases criminalize, speech that is deemed critical or “defamatory” of religions – and of “Islam and Muslims in particular.” The nation’s leading advocate for free expression, Floyd Abrams, is the Honorary Chair.

Honorary Chair Floyd Abrams

Co- Chair John Wohlstetter

American Jewish Congress, American Values, The Becket Fund, Democracy Coalition Project, Freedom House, Dr. Morton Halperin, International Quranic Center, The Rutherford Institute