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ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

PREVENTION OF DISCRIMINATION

Written statement* submitted by Association for World Education,
a non-governmental organization on the Roster

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[17 July 2003]

*This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

An Arab-based culture of racist Judeophobia/Antisemitism

1. Judeophobia/Antisemitism — under the guise of anti-Zionism — is now generally recognised as endemic in the Arab world, being nourished by a deliberate ‘culture of hate’ that is spilling over dangerously into in to Europe. The annual adoption at the Commission of a resolution since 1999 — sponsored by the 56 OIC countries — against defamation of religions has had no affect whatsoever on these attitudes. Resolution 2003/4: Combatting defamation of religions states, inter alia, under §6: *“Expresses deep concern at programmes and agendas pursued by extremist organizations and groups aimed at the defamation of religions, in particular when supported by Governments.”*

2. The dangers of Arab-based manifestations of such racist Judeophobia was indicated over thirty years ago in an introduction to *Arab Theologians on Jews and Israel* by D.F. Green (Geneva: Editions de l’Avenir, 1971; 3rd ed. 1976), being extracts from the proceedings of the 1968 Fourth Conference of the Academy of Islamic Research, linked to Al-Azhar University, Cairo.

3. On 4 April 2002 the Grand Sheik of Al-Azhar, Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi, the highest ranking cleric in the Sunni Muslim world, again referred to the Jews as “the enemies of Allah, descendants of apes and pigs.” This is a common statement today by numerous Arab theologians. (1)

4. This introduction – three-quarters of which is reproduced with the author’s permission – is as relevant today as when it was first published. It may help this Sub-Commission to combat a racist genocidal phenomenon of antisemitism which has become a taboo subject in all the reports of the Special Rapporteur on Racism, since the ‘blasphemy’ charge of 18 April 1997 – initiated by the OIC on the last day of the Commission (53rd session). The recent 41 page Report (E/CN.4/2003/24) by the new Special Rapporteur contains only nine lines under § 38: C. Anti-Semitism.

From D.F. Green’s introduction to “Arab Theologians on Jews and Israel” (3rd ed. 1976)

5. On 23 June 1961 the Academy of Islamic Research was founded and linked to Cairo’s prestigious Al-Azhar University by a resolution passed by the National Assembly of the United Arab Republic. At the same time, the faculties and administration of Al-Azhar were reorganized and the University itself was attached to the office of the President of the Republic, through the appointment of a special Ministry. This resolution of the National Assembly specified that the Academy should comprise fifty Egyptian members and up to twenty foreigners, all appointed by the President of the Republic. Its first three conferences took place in March 1964, May-June 1965, and October 1966.

6. The Fourth Conference of the Academy of Islamic Research was convened in Cairo during September 1968 to discuss the fundamentals of the Middle East conflict, particularly its spiritual-theological significance, and its historical antecedents. Mr. Hussain Al-Shafe’i (Vice-President of the United Arab Republic under Presidents Nasser and Sadat) greeted the participants, seventy-seven Muslim Ulemas and invited guests, on behalf of President Nasser.

7. Some of the proceedings were reproduced immediately after the Conference in Majallat al-Azhar, the University’s monthly. The complete transactions were published in 1970 in Arabic (3 vols.) and in English (1 vol. 935 pp.). In the latter, it is stated on the title page that the book was printed in Cairo by the General Organization for Government Printing Offices, which signifies governmental support. The efforts involved to have these transactions translated into English

indicate that the authorities did not hesitate to publicize the proceedings, thereby propagating to the world the views contained in this volume.

8. The Arab-Israeli conflict is often considered as of a political nature stemming from a territorial litigation. Such conflicts however tend to spill over into other domains. The need to substantiate one's position can lead to an attempt to buttress it by giving it the form of an ideology, or even - as in the present case - the conflict may be theologized as an extreme measure to justify one's position and condemn that of the adversary.

9. It is disheartening to witness some of the principal leaders of the Arab-Muslim world convening for the sake of vilifying another religion and people, shunning neither expressions of abuse, nor the worst invectives. [Vice-principal of Tanta Institute, Egyptian Sheikh Kamal Ahmad Own, The Jews are the Enemies of Human Life as is Evident from their Holy Book.]

10. Islam, from its origins, includes extreme anti-Jewish and anti-Christian components. These traditional attitudes relating to Jews are now being invested with new life and vigour by the spiritual leaders who took part in this Fourth Conference, in the subsequent Fifth Conference, and in similar learned gatherings held from time to time in other Arab centres.

Recurring themes from the Fourth Conference of the Academy of Islamic Research

11. The superiority of Islam over all other religions is brandished as a guarantee that the Arabs will ultimately triumph. The grandeur of Islam must be reflected in future secular successes. Arab defeats and reverses are explained away as having been ordained by a providential design, in order to teach the Arabs a lesson because of their spiritual negligence - and as a purgatorial ordeal.

12. Jews are frequently denoted as the "*enemies of Allah*" or the "*enemies of humanity*." This latter expression is even to be found in the opening speech of Vice-President Al-Shafe'i. The expression "*dogs of humanity*" is used by Mr. Hassan Khaled, the Mufti of the Lebanon.

13. The State of Israel is the culmination of the historical and cultural depravity of the Jews. It has to be destroyed, having been established through aggression, which is its congenital and immutable nature. This task should be achieved by a *Jihad*, a Holy War.

14. Many participants reiterate that it is outrageous for the Jews, traditionally kept by Arab-Islam in a humiliated, inferior status, and characterized as cowardly, to defeat the Arabs, have their own State, and cause the contraction of the "abode of Islam" (*dar al-Islam*). All these events contradict the march of History and Allah's design. (cf. Lebanese Sheikh Nadim al-Jisr: Good tidings about the decisive battle between Muslims and Israel, in the light of the Holy Qur'an, the Prophetic Traditions, and the fundamental laws of nature and history)

15. Furthermore, if the picture of the Jews and Judaism as portrayed by the venerable participants of this Conference is, in fact, as they contend the traditional image of the Jews in the eyes of Islam, it is inconceivable that it would not have affected the feelings and behaviour of Arabs toward Jews over the centuries. For it to have been otherwise would have amounted to a schizophrenia which is very implausible.

16. The ideas expounded in this volume could lead to the urge to liquidate the State of Israel (politicide) and the Jews (genocide). If the evil of the Jews is immutable and permanent, transcending time and circumstances, and impervious to all hopes of reform,

there is only one way to cleanse the world of them – by their complete annihilation. Did the participants of this Conference intend this, and were they conscious of the dangers concealed in such reasoning? Yet its inner logic could easily lead to such a conclusion.

17. The fact that these sages have witnessed the moral havoc that similar ideas of hatred had wrought in Nazi Germany and were not inhibited from resorting to them only testifies to the vehemence of their attitudes. [In his *Mein Kampf*, Hitler often cited *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, using that known crude forgery to justify his ‘final solution’.]

18. The seriousness of this compilation is increased because it is a post-Nazi opus. These learned religious dignitaries and academics knew exactly what they were saying, and meant it. The view sometimes aired that the Arabs are unfortunate victims of their language is merely a slander. Language is an instrument. Choosing abusive terms does not stem from exuberance but is a deliberate choice. Furthermore, the lectures reprinted in this book were made in the serenity of an academic environment and were not frenzied harangues to a euphoric public.

19. Arab spokesmen contend that they differentiate meticulously between Zionism and Judaism and that they are against Zionism and not against Judaism. There cannot be a more trenchant disproof of this explanation than the arguments used at the Fourth Conference of the Academy of Islamic Research, at least as regards its participants. The odium of Zionism is described as emanating from the perversity of Judaism. Zionists and Jews are treated synonymously.

20. One may query the direct influence of the Arabic and English editions of these volumes, as their distribution can hardly have been very large. Their importance, however, lies in their being a symptom. It is known that such attitudes are frequently repeated by preachers during the Friday religious services and are mentioned by Arab political leaders.

21. The position of a State and its policies should not be assessed merely through the narrow vista of its concrete behaviour or the official pronouncements of its leaders. A political analysis which is based only upon such external realities will be inadequate. Ideologies, beliefs, aspirations and emotions are part of the inner realities on which policies evolve, and they should also be taken into consideration. Deliberations such as those that took place at the Fourth Conference of the Academy of Islamic Research may shed some light on the substratum of Arab attitudes towards Jews and Israel. Herein lies their political significance.

22. The absolutist self-righteous tenor which pervades all the deliberations of the 4^e Conference is most repelling. It stands in blatant contradiction to what I consider a moral imperative in moulding positions in international conflicts: relativism, i.e. the understanding that one’s adversary also has rights and virtues. In these deliberations, and the attitudes underlying them, there is not a modicum of such relativism, only a pretentiousness that all justice and all rights belong to the Arabs and the Muslims who represent everything that is good. The Jews and Israel are denigrated as utterly wrong, without any rights and their cause is considered as devoid of any merit.

23. The aim here is not to pour fuel on the flames of this conflict: its blaze has already caused enough suffering, and its calamities have perverted the souls of many. It is to be hoped that this appeal may serve as a general exhortation against the dangers lurking in the ideologization (or worse, in the theologisation) of a political conflict.

24. When such books, published under government auspices, cease to appear a step towards reconciliation will have been made.

– D.F. Green, London, August,
1976

25. In 1998 — the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights — the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies set up a research project on the “Evaluation of Al-Azhar’s (religious education). Curricula from a Human Rights Perspective,” as described on the UN Human Rights website. Article 26 (2) of the UDHR recommends: “*Education ... shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the UN for the maintenance of peace.*”

26. The warning by D.F. Green — on “*the dangers lurking in the idealization (or worse, in the theologization) of a political conflict*” — can no longer be ignored by the international community and by the appropriate, key UN bodies.

27. The Association for World Education is appealing to this Sub-Commission; and to the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Commission on Human Rights, UN Special Rapporteurs, and all other competent UN bodies and representatives to act urgently on this matter – and to actively promote education for interfaith understanding and mutual respect.

1. www.palestine-inf/arabic/palestoday/readers/mashoor/120401/htm. For a detailed study on this racist phenomenon, see Aluma Solnick, “Based on Koranic verses, interpretations, and Traditions, Muslim clerics state: The Jews are the descendants of apes, pigs, and other animals,” and English tr. in MEMRI, Special Report – N° 11, November 1, 2002: (<http://memri.org/bin/opener.cgi?Page=archives&ID=SR01102>). Also: “An Egyptian intellectual campaigns to change the religious discourse led by Al-Azhar,” by Ahmad Abd Al-M’uti Higazi, in Al-Sharq Al-Awsat (London), Sept. 16, 2002 (“*Those who quote [religious scriptures] and impose the word [namely, the chief clerics] are the ones responsible for producing fundamentalist terror.*”): <http://memri.org/bin/opener.cgi?Page=archives&ID=SP43602>, English trans, MEMRI, Special Dispatch – No. 436, Nov. 3, 2003. Al-M’uti Higazi sharply criticized Al-Azhar University and Sheikh Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi and Egyptian Mufti Dr. Ahmad Al-Tayyeb.) In particular, see: “Harbingers of Change in the Antisemitic Discourse in the Arab world” by Yigal Carmon, President MEMRI, English trans. in Inquiry and Analysis Series – No. 135, April 23, 2003: <http://memri.org/bin/opener.cgi?Page=archives&ID=IA13503>: see at IV. A New Recommendation by Al-Azhar: Stop Calling Jews ‘Apes and Pigs’ (March 2003). This decision followed a request to the Islamic Research Institute from the Egyptian Foreign Ministry to examine the matter, after complaints from the Egyptian Embassy in Washington, D.C.