

# WORLD UNION FOR PROGRESSIVE JUDAISM

Beith-GIL – 12, Quai du Seujet – 1201 Genève

UN Human Rights Council: Representative: David G. LITTMAN. Wed. 26 March 2008  
Seventh Session (4 – 28 March 2008). Ambassador Toru Romulus da Costa (Romania)  
Item 9: Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Forms of Intolerance

**Mr. President, in section: C. Religious Intolerance, of his Report [A/HRC/7/19], the Special Rapporteur on Racism** [refers to the dangers of “the stereotypical association of Islam with violence and terrorism.” He then goes on to stress “the growing trend of defamation of religions”; “a clash of religions”; “the fight against terrorism, reduced to its purely religious dimensions” & a new ideology providing “fertile soil for the defamation of religions”. But he] **does not come to grips with the real problem of indiscriminate killing in the name of God.**

Five years ago (on 17 March 2003), the late High Commissioner for Human Rights Sergio Vieira De Mello, made his opening address to the Commission’s 59th session. He expressed his strong revulsion against the growing global terrorist plague whereby: anyone could be killed at any time, in any place, by anyone. Five months later, he and over 20 of his UN colleagues were assassinated in Baghdad when indiscriminate terrorism struck, leaving many widows and orphans. And indiscriminate killing in the name of religion continues without respite worldwide.

At that same session, on 25 March 2003, Rabbi François Garaï, the main representative of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, cited the 1999 Promulgation of the Geneva Spiritual Appeal and its 2003 Confirmation at St. Peter's Cathedral, Geneva, and he then declared:

“We see currently that religions and the One whom we name God, are taken hostage in the political discourse and defamed. Those engaged in this action cannot hold prisoner the One whom we consider as our Creator and the source of all Revelation, who cannot be confined in a simple word, in writing, even less in a slogan.”

He referred to an Appeal made three days earlier – on 22 March 2003– when Christians, Jews and Muslims declared in Geneva’s St Peter's Cathedral:

*Together, we denounce all reference to God to justify and foster hatred.*

*Together, we appeal to resist all use of this conflict to bring communities into confrontation.*

*Together, we wish to consolidate community and religious peace.*

*Together, we bear witness to our hope and our faith in God.*

Rabbi Garaï added: “We await the day when religion will no longer be subverted, nor God taken hostage by political, civil or religious leaders.”

The WUPJ once again calls upon this Council – and in particular the sponsors of any resolution on Combating defamation of religions – to insert two major paragraphs in that text:

(a) Strongly deploras all references to God in order to justify any form of violence, hatred, and the use of any religious motive to kill civilians: men, women and children;

(b) Condemns all who blaspheme and defame religion by claiming to kill in the name of God.

Sir, we wish to conclude with a homage to Sergio by quoting an apposite passage from §5 of his groundbreaking Report (E/CN.4/2003/14), which remains pertinent for this Council:

“Membership of the Commission on Human Rights must carry responsibilities. I therefore wonder whether the time has not come for the Commission itself to develop a code of guidelines for access to membership of the Commission and a code of conduct for members while they serve on the Commission. After all the Commission on Human Rights has a duty to humanity and the members of the Commission must themselves set the example of adherence to the international human rights norms – in practice as well as in law...”

His courageous words 5 years ago apply to this Council – yesterday, today and for tomorrow.

Thank you, Mr. President

[E/CN.4/NGO/88: Human Rights and Terrorism: The most essential and basic human right is the right to life]