

Bahá'í Reflections on 'Defamation of Religions'

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Abstract

Freedom of expression in international human rights law is of very high value. Freedom of expression is foundational to a vigorous civil society, to the space for human rights defenders to ensure the realisation of rights, to political representation and to search for truth and expression of identity. Freedom of expression is not, however, absolute.

In this paper we will be discussing an issue of recent pedigree in international circles - that of the rather elusive topic of 'defamation of religions'. Defamation of religion is a current lively, largely political, debate in international human rights circles. In this paper I aim to chart this debate very generally, outline the challenges it poses, and then consider how some selections from Bahá'í writings relate to the debate. My objective in doing so is to explore theoretically some implications of the factoring in of just one religious reflection on a matter that could hardly have become more divisive at the international level.

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