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Contact: Krista Minter, (212) 845-5207/ MinterK@humanrightsfirst.org

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UN Anti-Racism Review Conference: HRF Calls on Governments to Prevent Repeat of Problems that Plagued 2001 Conference

As UN member states prepare to assemble next week in Geneva to decide on the venue and the agenda for a follow-up conference to the controversial 2001 World Conference Against Racism held in Durban, South Africa (WCAR), Human Rights First is urging participants to take concrete steps in the planning stages to prevent the recurrence of the problems that plagued the WCAR in 2001.

Human Rights First took part in the WCAR and was among the many civil society representatives who were deeply disturbed by the hateful antisemitic atmosphere that plagued the conference and especially the NGO forum that preceded it. Nevertheless, the Conference did produce a Program of Action, which included a number of useful recommendations for states to combat racism and discrimination. The WCAR review conference – planned for 2009 – offers an opportunity to review the steps states have taken to fulfill those commitments.

Like the original WCAR, the review conference and preparatory process leading up to it are likely to be challenging and divisive. Given this, there are three important decisions that the states participating in next week's preparatory meeting can make to ensure that the review conference is held on the basis of internationally-recognized human rights principles, and to prevent the recurrence of the problems that plagued the WCAR in 2001:

- **Venue:** The review conference should be held on UN premises in Geneva or New York, as is typically the case for such UN conferences.
- **Agenda:** The agenda for the review conference should be limited to a review of implementation of the 2001 Durban Declaration and Program of Action, the commitments states undertook to combat racism and protect individuals from discrimination and other human rights violations. Additional issues, such as defamation of religions and other topics outside the scope of these commitments, should not be added to an already full agenda.
- **Civil Society Participation:** A constructive platform for NGO input should be created in accordance with established UN rules regulating their participation in official meetings. Nongovernmental organizations have an important role to play in providing oversight on the implementation of these commitments.
- On a separate track, Human Rights First is working in coalition with others to encourage NGOs who decide to engage in this process to conduct themselves with a respect for human rights standards and principles. Click [here](#) to read about the core principles.

Since 2002, Human Rights First has fought discrimination by seeking to reverse the tide of antisemitic, racist, anti-immigrant, and anti-Muslim violence and other bias crimes across Europe and North America. More information about HRF's Fighting Discrimination Program can be found at <http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/discrimination/index.asp>.