

# Freedom of Expression, Non-discrimination, and the International Regulation of Hate Speech

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**Wednesday, 13<sup>th</sup> December 2017, 13:00 – 14:30**

**Room 723, 7/F., Cheng Yu Tung Tower**

**Centennial Campus**

**The University of Hong Kong**

Since the Danish cartoon controversy first grabbed the international spotlight in early 2006, the media have reported on hostile or anticipated hostile responses from Muslim individuals and groups to various forms of expression. Despite attempts to cultivate a more nuanced understanding of these phenomena, they continue to be illustrated in broad strokes that reduce any discussion to a confrontation between competing values backed by different camps with increasingly entrenched positions.

Western governments and media outlets have opted to emphasize the freedom of expression, paying scant regard for the other human rights interests at stake. The Human Rights Council adopted a very different, but equally unsatisfactory, approach, calling for a prohibition on any “religious defamation.”

The two positions, both purportedly rooted in a system of theoretically universal values, seem diametrically opposed, thus raising at least the specter of incoherence and, more seriously, an outright rejection of the notion of common humanity. Yet a closer examination of the relevant rules of human rights law reveals that neither of these extreme positions flows naturally from the wellspring of fundamental human rights. Although the corpus of international human rights law is far from a perfect system, it provides a framework for articulating the full range of underlying issues. Ultimately, such examination can lead to a more satisfactory spectrum of responses to the problems that have arisen.

**Professor Cerone** holds faculty appointments as the Paul Martin Senior Professor in International Affairs & Law at the University of Windsor Faculty of Law, and as a Visiting Professor of International Law at the Fletcher School of Law & Diplomacy (Tufts University). During the 2014-15 academic year, he was the Fulbright Distinguished Chair in Human Rights & Humanitarian Law at the Raul Wallenberg Institute and Visiting Chair in Public International Law at Lund University Faculty of Law. He has been awarded fellowships at the Max Planck Institute for Comparative Public Law and International Law and at the Nobel Institute. He has been a visiting scholar at the International Criminal Court, and a Fulbright scholar at both the Danish Institute for Human Rights and the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. As a practicing international lawyer, he has worked for a number of different IGOs and NGOs, including the UN, the OSCE, the International Secretariat of Amnesty International, and the International Crisis Group, and has served as a legal adviser to various international criminal tribunals. He also has extensive field experience in conflict and post-conflict environments, including Afghanistan, Kosovo, Sierra Leone, and East Timor. He served as Special Adviser to the first U.S. delegation to the UN Human Rights Council. He received the President’s Award of the Boston Bar Association for his legal work on Guantanamo Bay issues, which includes representing human rights organizations in detainee litigation before US courts and international human rights institutions.



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