**Feedback on Alternative Versions of the Freedom of Expression Draft Statement.**

This document will contain the feedback on the comments posted under “Alternative Versions of the Freedom of Expression Draft Statement”.

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| 1 | Alternative Version 1 is noxious, containing little content of thoughtful substance beyond the author's own clear desire to virtue-signal. At times, this statement borders on incoherence and contradiction (paragraph 3, for example). Other times, the statement makes grand claims that the author has clearly not thought very deeply about. The most egregious example: that speech that "denigrat[es] the religious beliefs... of some community members is speech that performs discrimination, exclusion, and marginalization." I construe "denigrate" here to mean "unfairly criticize." So the author's claim could take two possible forms: (1) that there should exist some arbiter to decide what is "fair" vs. "unfair" criticism, and then ban the criticism deemed "unfair"; or (2) that anyone who views a criticism as "unfair" is entitled to claim discrimination, exclusion, and marginalization. The first proposition is an age-old fool's errand; none of us should agree to allow another person to decide what is "fair" and "unfair" criticism for us. The second proposition will guarantee the suppression of any and all speech that anyone may find offensive, as long as they are loud enough in their objections. These are specifically despicable propositions with regards to "religious beliefs" since, by definition, beliefs are simply ideas. They are not innate physical properties of an individual. One is not born Christian, or Muslim, or atheist. One \*chooses to believe or not to believe\* in religious propositions, just as one chooses to believe in social, political, and economic propositions. When an ideology is mandated as immune from criticism, we align exactly with a fascist ideal. This is unacceptable.Alternative Version 2 is quite good. I am not convinced that any such statement as the one proposed by this Working Group is necessary, but if we must have one, then I would endorse this version.Alternative Version 3 is unacceptable, though not as bad as Alternative Version 1. It contains several problematic assertions (e.g. guaranteeing spaces for counter-positions to "distasteful" expression to be expressed) and some very unclear language (e.g. "freedom of expression requires us to differentiate"). |