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PAPER ABSTRACT

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Chair: Professor James A. Green

The Right to Insult in International Law

States all over the world are enacting new laws that criminalize insults, and using existing insult laws with renewed vigour. I argue that insulting speech is currently insufficiently protected under international law and regulated by confused case law and commentary. The three principal international treaties that regulate speech provide conflicting guidance on the right to insult in international law, and the treaty provisions have been interpreted in inconsistent ways by international courts and United Nations bodies. I will propose eight recommendations to guide consideration of insulting speech in international law.