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MINI-CONFERENCE ON

**“BLASPHEMY AND OTHER LIMITATIONS TO THE
FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION”**

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“Blasphemy and other limitations to the freedom of expression”

REPORT BY

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“Blasphemy and other limitations to the freedom of expression”

In Korea, there is relatively little discussion about blasphemy restricting freedom of expression. The reason for this may be that Korea is still largely a racially homogeneous nation and that extremist religious groups or hostility among different ethnic groups are hard to find. Also, another reason may be that the main religion in Korea, Buddhism, does not exclude other religious beliefs.

According to recent studies, about only half of the Korean people responded that they believe in some kind of a religion. Among these, approximately 22% are Buddhists, 21% are Protestants, and 7% are Catholics. There is little tension among these religious groups, so the question of blasphemy compatible with the freedom of expression has not been an issue. However, if the Korean society becomes more religiously or ethnically diverse in the future, this situation may of course change.

The Korean Constitution guarantees freedom of expression and yet provides that "neither speech nor the press shall violate the honor or rights of other persons nor undermine public morals or social ethics." So in theory if the speech in question should "violate the honor or rights of others" then it may be restricted. Blasphemy is no exception to this rule in theory. In Korea, violation of personal honor and human dignity such as libel, slander, defamation, etc. is more hotly debated, especially with the wide access to internet and instant spread of information made possible.

I believe that such significant change in the forum and medium of freedom of expression should also be taken into account in balancing the relevant interests.