



**National Statement, delivered by Ambassador Khalil Hashmi, Pakistan Permanent Representative to the UN, during Interactive Dialogue with Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief at the 49th session of Human Rights Council**

**10 March 2022**

**Mr. President,**

We disagree with the unwarranted references made about Pakistan in the Report. The report has failed to take into account the wide range of legal, policy and administrative measures taken by my country to safeguard and advance basic human rights of all citizens without any distinction. Our Government has condemned incident involving minorities at the highest level, and taken swift action against perpetrators.

We take note of the Report's findings about the interplay between conflicts and basic rights of religious minorities. Many of these findings are relevant to the grim human rights conditions in UN-recognized situations of foreign occupation.

Even as people living in these situations do not meet the legal threshold of minority, occupation regimes have often instrumentalized religion to perpetrate and justify atrocity crimes against them. In doing so, they invariably aim to eliminate the distinct identity of these people, pursuing legitimate freedom struggle. As chronicled by the Report, this dangerous trend alarmingly resonates with the post-05<sup>th</sup> August situation in occupied Jammu & Kashmir.

Under the so-called 'Final Solution', the occupying Power is illegally colonizing the internationally recognized disputed territory, transforming the indigenous Kashmiri into a minority, and disenfranchising them of their distinct religious, cultural, and linguistic rights and identity.

From arbitrary restrictions on religious gatherings to curbs on burial rights; from illegal detentions of Kashmiri leaders and activists to changes in status of languages associated with Kashmiris; and from illegal land grabs to plans for building Hindu temples in place of mosques, the 'Hindutvatization' of the occupied territory remains unabated.

We therefore urge the SR to continue monitoring and reporting on the dire situation in this occupied territory within the scope of his mandate, and press the country concerned to uphold fundamental rights of the Kashmiris, especially their inalienable right to self-determination. Thank you.