



Joint Statement on Recent Public Desecration of the Holy Quran on behalf of a Group of Countries by Ambassador Zaman Mehdi, Deputy Permanent Representative of Pakistan during the General Debate under Item 2

52nd Human Rights Council Session
7 March 2023

Mr. Vice President,

On behalf of group of states, we strongly condemn the recent public burning and desecration of the Holy Quran in three countries.

We reiterate our grave concern on these pre-mediated Islamophobic acts. These represent a growing global pattern of hatred towards the Islamic faith, its adherents, and their holy scripture.

These actions serve no purpose except to defame Islam intentionally, hurt the sentiments of over 1.5 billion Muslims, and incite violence against minority Muslim communities across the globe.

The inability or unwillingness by some to prevent and counter such actions are tantamount to curtailing the enjoyment of human rights, especially exercising the right to practice their faith and to fully participate in public life.

We attach high importance to the right to freedom of expression and opinion.

Yet, due to the deliberate nature of these acts, the exercise of such right cannot be abused to peddle hate and incite violence against people of faith, their revered personalities or their holy scriptures.

We welcome the public and unequivocal condemnation of these abhorrent actions by the UN Secretary-General and High Representative of the UN Alliance of Civilizations. We call on States, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and relevant Special Procedures Mandate Holders to also call out such acts.

Ahead of the first International Day to Combat Islamophobia, we underline the imperative for all States to:

- a) ensure that the exercise of this right to free speech is fully consistent with the duties and responsibilities enshrined in ICCPR;
- b) prohibit by law “any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence”;
- c) enact laws that place reasonable limitations on the exercise of the right to freedom of expression and opinion; and



d) foster inter-faith harmony and religious tolerance.

Mr. Vice President,

History bears witness that impunity breeds bigotry, leading to tragic consequences.

I thank you!
