



**Statement, delivered on behalf of OIC by Ambassador Khalil Hashmi,  
Permanent Representative to the UN, during Interactive Dialogue with the  
UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, at the 46th session  
of Human Rights Council**

**(04 March 2021)**

Madam President,

The OIC thanks the Special Rapporteur (SR) for his detailed report.

We strongly echo SR's concerns that after 9/11, Islamophobia has become more pervasive and systematic, infringing on the fundamental rights and freedoms of Muslims around the world.

This surge in anti-Muslim hatred bears deep imprints of an 'imperialist mindset', and has found new currency amidst global wave of populism.

The State-sponsorship of an entire Islamophobic ecosystem has emerged as a disturbing contemporary reality. Many public leaders, government officials, and mainstream media continue to incite hatred, discrimination and violence against Muslims, often with impunity.

Unregulated social media platforms have further amplified and reinforced negative stereotyping and stigmatization of Muslims. This is evident from widely recorded socio-economic exclusion, forced expulsion, denial of citizenship rights, and targeted violence against Muslims.

We agree with the Special Rapporteur that Muslim women and girls suffer daily and in silence from verbal and physical abuse in many western societies.

The COVID pandemic has further accentuated these trends.

The OIC re-emphasizes that such unfounded hostility towards and phobia against Islam and Muslims are organically linked and mutually reinforcing. Therefore, it is imperative to effectively combat defamation of religion and denigration of revered religious personalities and symbols.

Free speech does not grant a license to spread hate speech and deliberately ridicule or insult other people's religion, religious personalities and symbols.



In line with the report's findings, the OIC calls for reversal of discriminatory laws, policies and practices against Muslims, ensuring accountability for Islamophobic acts, and upholding of basic rights and freedoms of Muslims.

The OIC also urges the Council, and the wider global community to redouble efforts in enhancing implementation of the 16/18 Action Plan, in particular outlawing willful incitement to hate speech and violence, and promotion of inter-faith harmony and dialogue.

Thank you.