



**National statement by Mr. Muneeb Ahmed, Counsellor, during ID with the SR on
freedom of religion or belief**

61st session of the UN Human Rights Council

(Geneva, 3 March 2026)

Madam Vice President,

We welcome the Special Rapporteur and thank her for the presentation.

Honouring the deceased is also about the living. Last rites are often an integral part of the right to manifest religion or belief. Arbitrary restrictions or hurdles can amount to a violation or abuse when the deceased are denied dignity, the bereaved suffer mental harm and freedom from discrimination is violated.

My delegation is constrained, nevertheless, to reject allegations of systematic discrimination against religious minorities' funeral rights in Pakistan while noting that some are based on non-disclosed sources and the inclusion also of counterfactuals to others.

Pakistan ensures comprehensive protection for religious rights of minorities. Where incidents do occur, society speaks out while the Government provides redress, enforces accountability and – most importantly – protects potential victims from harm.

Madam Vice President,

Our approach is guided by the conviction that, without prevention or accountability, advocacy of hatred can easily take root.

In a neighbouring country, centuries old Sufi shrines (*dargahs*) and Muslim graveyards are being demolished accompanied by rhetoric portraying Islam as an invasive force. Historic Mosques are being repurposed. This marginalisation also extends to other religious minorities. The political elites' majoritarian *Hindutva* ideology demands that minorities accept subjugation, or else face erasure. This project requires that minorities not be allowed to belong, even in death.

Thank you.

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