



**Explanation of vote before the vote by Mr. Muneeb Ahmed, Counsellor, on resolution
A/HRC/61/L.16/Rev.1**

**“Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom
of opinion and expression”**

(Geneva, 30 March 2026)

Mr. President,

Pakistan thanks Canada and the Netherlands for introducing draft resolution L.16/Rev.1 renewing the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression. This freedom is a cornerstone of democratic societies. Its protection requires constant vigilance, particularly as shifting political landscapes and misuse of new technologies create or amplify risks, including the following.

Firstly, advocacy of religious hatred constituting incitement is rising across the globe. Structural and ingrained Islamophobia remains one of its most pernicious manifestations.

This Council must neither forget nor overlook the reprehensible public, pre-meditated acts of desecration of the Holy Qur'an carried out with the intent to incite hostility, discrimination or violence.

Secondly, expressions of solidarity with peoples struggling under foreign occupation are increasingly silenced or met with suppression or reprisals.

Thirdly, the misuse of social media and generative AI creates fertile ground for misinformation and perpetuation of negative stereotypes. The consequences are not confined to cyberspace, but result in real-world discrimination, hostility or violence.

We regret that draft resolution L.16/Rev.1 envisages reduced reporting to the General Assembly. At a time of widespread risks to this right, diminishing visibility before the highest UN body sends a concerning signal and risks a reversal of efforts to mainstream human rights.

Moreover, a technical rollover should not prioritize one aspect of the mandate over another. Resource shortfalls are serious, but they cannot justify narrowing the mandate's scope. Holders of this important mandate must remain empowered to address evolving realities in a comprehensive fashion.

A second reading of the draft text would have been helpful, but we appreciate the spirit of dialogue and constructive engagement that prevailed. Pakistan supports the renewal of this mandate and will join consensus.

Thank you.

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