

OIC-IPHRC commemorates ‘International Day to Combat Islamophobia 2025’ with a renewed focus to prevent the rising trends of religious intolerance and support efforts to criminalize discrimination and incitement to hatred and violence against Muslims based on international human rights law.

Jeddah, 15th March 2025: The Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), while commemorating the ‘*International Day to Combat Islamophobia 2025*’, reiterates that Islamophobia, ‘*a condition of unfounded fear, based on ignorance or misperception vis-a-vis Islam as a religion and Muslims resulting in biased and discriminatory behavior, attitudes and practices*’¹, violates the fundamental human rights and freedoms of individuals provided in international human rights law. Accordingly, the Commission, while reaffirming its commitment to combating Islamophobia in all its forms and manifestations, highlighted the need for renewed international focus to address the rising trends of religious hatred and discrimination, hate speech and incitement to hatred and violence through a coordinated diplomatic, legal, socio-cultural, civilizational and institutional approaches grounded in established human rights norms and mechanisms.

The Commission expressed deep concern that, despite international recognition to counter Islamophobia, the rise of toxic political narratives of far-right continue to fuel Islamophobia and its dangerous manifestations in different parts of the world. A stark reminder of Islamophobia is exemplified by the attempts to undermine freedom of expression in support of Palestinians in many Western universities. Such suppression of voices advocating for the right to self-determination of Palestinian people and human rights is often rooted in prejudiced perceptions of Islam and its followers. Similarly, the political trivialization, intellectual and democratic legitimization and institutionalization of Islamophobia and religious hatred, especially against Muslim women and migrants has created an environment of fear and social exclusion which is anathema to the ideals of pluralism, rule of law and rights based social order.

The Commission underscores that international human rights law and its evolving mechanisms based on promoting universality and upholding human dignity, equality, non-discrimination, and freedom of religion as enshrined in key legal instruments provides a normative framework to counter Islamophobia and its various manifestations. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) guarantee the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion (*Article 18*) while prohibiting discrimination based on religion or belief (*Articles 2 and 26*). Additionally, *Article 20(2)* of the ICCPR obligates States to prohibit advocacy of religious hatred that incites discrimination, hostility, or violence. The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) *Article 4*, reinforces the duty of States to criminalize

¹ Istanbul Declaration on ‘Islamophobia: A Human Rights violation and contemporary manifestation of Racism’ October 2018 available at <https://oic-iphrc.org/home/post/6>

and prohibit hate speech and racist propaganda. UN General Assembly Resolutions (A/RES/76/254 and A/78/L.48 on *Measures to Combat Islamophobia*) calls upon Member States to take all necessary measures, including legislative and policy measures, to combat religious intolerance, negative stereotyping, hatred, incitement to violence against Muslims and prohibit by law incitement to violence and violence against persons on the grounds of their religion or belief.

The Commission, while welcoming the appointment of Ambassador Mehmet PAÇACI, Special Envoy of the OIC Secretary General on Islamophobia, expressed its keen interest in working together for formulation of a comprehensive strategy or road map to counter Islamophobia. To this end, the Commission urged the UN Secretary-General to expedite appointment of United Nations Special Envoy to combat Islamophobia as provided in the relevant UNGA Resolution.

The Commission reiterated that States remain primarily responsible for combating Islamophobia, as they possess the necessary legal, political, and social instruments to create inclusive and equitable societies. In this regard, States are urged to (a) **Adopt international normative frameworks**, including elaboration of complementary standards to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) for commencement of the negotiations on the draft additional protocol to the Convention criminalizing acts of a racist and xenophobic nature such as Islamophobia; (b) **Enact and implement** comprehensive national legislations, that specifically address and criminalize hate crimes and discrimination against Muslims, including digital regulations and social media policies to curb online hate speech, ensuring that perpetrators are held accountable. Also, there is a need to challenge discriminatory laws and policies, such as bans on hijabs, mosque minarets, before relevant regional human rights courts and UN treaty bodies; (c) **Establish Monitoring and Reporting mechanisms** within UN, including establishment of Islamophobia observatory, for accurate data collection and transparency in monitoring and reporting of incidents of Islamophobia, and inflammatory rhetoric, both online and offline. The OIC Islamophobia Observatory, which is performing a commendable task within the limited resources, need to be upgraded with more financial and human resources; (d) **Strengthen international cooperation**, including engagement with UN Special Procedures and Mechanisms and international organizations and reinvigoration of UN Resolution 16/18 and the Istanbul Process to share best practices and develop coordinated efforts to combat Islamophobia globally; (e) **Address roots causes**, which includes structural inequalities that disproportionately affect Muslim communities, and promote intercultural dialogue and advocacy to dismantle harmful stereotypes.

The unanimous adoption of the UN General Assembly Resolution designating 15th March as the International Day to Combat Islamophobia marks a significant step in the right direction. However, there is an urgent need to follow up with concrete practical steps to combat different manifestations of Islamophobia, xenophobia and discrimination effectively. It is equally vital to address and shun double standards in the application of human rights, ensuring that efforts to counter hate and intolerance are consistent, inclusive, and universally applied. *noraalrshoud*



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