



**National Statement by Mr. Umair Khalil, Third Secretary during General Debate Agenda
Item 9**

49 Human Rights Council Session

28 March 2022

Mr. President,

Pakistan aligns with the OIC statement.

Despite international norms and conventions, multiple manifestations of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia are growing across the globe. Individuals and communities are daily victims of various forms of discrimination, hate speech and violence on the basis of their race, colour, ethnicity or religion.

Islamophobia is one of the contemporary forms of racism, nurtured by decades of public rhetoric and policies against Muslim individuals and communities. Often sponsored or tolerated by certain states, it is being amplified through media, fueling hate crimes, pogroms, violence, stigmatization and marginalization of Muslim minorities. In some cases, disinformation campaigns are being launched to de-humanize and delegitimize entire communities thus undermining their dignity and respect. In this regard we welcome the UN General Assembly resolution, declaring March 15 as International Day to combat Islamophobia.

In recent years, we have witnessed that some states are preventing women and girls from wearing hijab or headscarf. Such policies are aimed at depriving certain communities especially Muslims of their equal right to participate in public life and exercise their right to freedom of expression and religion without any discrimination. In this regard, we encourage Switzerland and other states to lift the ban on burqa and honour their obligations under the ICCPR.

Mr. President,

We are also deeply concerned over racially motivated policies and actions by some states to secure electoral gains, perpetuate foreign occupation and marginalize minorities.

The most visible and consequential examples of this phenomenon are evident through the steady rise of extremist right-wing Hindutva ideology in our region that is targeting Muslims, Christians and Dalits among others through communal violence, deprivation of citizenship, attacks on religious sites, forced conversions, prohibition of religious practices and harassment. Violent attacks have resulted in the loss of life, limbs and private properties. Minority communities are being isolated and segregated not only in political sphere but in socio-economic domain. The recent decision of banning the Muslim girls to enter into educational institutions is another reflection of utter disregard for human rights values and freedoms.

The people under foreign occupation are most vulnerable to multiple forms of discrimination. These disturbing trends are most visible in Occupied Jammu and Kashmir where the neo-colonialist regime is changing the demographic structure by converting Muslim majority into a minority and effacing their distinct cultural and religious identity, in clear violation and defiance of international law.

This Council and the international community at large must redouble their efforts to halt and reverse these dangerous developments through:

- a) Speaking out against racially motivated state-sponsored violence;
- b) Ensuring meaningful accountability of the perpetrators involved in human rights abuses;
- c) Insisting on full compliance by concerned states of its respective obligations under international law

I thank you.