



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

(04 March 2021)

Madam President,

We thank the SR for his well researched report that further unpacks the drivers as well as manifestations of growing Islamophobia worldwide. The report is noteworthy for placing the salience of this disturbing phenomenon within the international human rights law.

Much of the report revalidates the well-known, although less acknowledged, facts about the on-going institutionalized bias, pervasive hostility and systemic discrimination against Muslim communities and individuals.

The findings and conclusions of this report are both sobering and disturbing. The cause and effect of this phobia, described by the report, are un-mistakable. The essentialization of Muslims as cultural “others” lay the ground for laws and policies, which in turn have led to securitization and perpetuated stereotypes, tropes and stigmatization of Muslims.

We are particularly alarmed by the complicity of some States, powerful politicians and officials in promoting, perpetrating or tolerating acts of discrimination, hatred and in some cases violence against Muslims, both offline and increasingly through social media platforms. Tropes such as Love Jihad, Corona Jihad, cow vigilantism and termite are just a few examples of state driven anti-Muslim animus and violence.

The report also reinforces our long-standing concerns over the two decade long abuse of counter terrorism measures by some States to target Muslim individuals and communities. It is unfortunate that sections of mainstream media, influencers of popular culture and academics continue to reinforce harmful stereotypes and amplify hostility towards Muslims. This must end.

Countering Islamophobia is both essential and urgent. We must confront the inconvenient truths, acknowledge facts, call out impunity and hold those accountable who aid and abet anti-Muslim hatred, hostility and violence. The report makes a set of useful recommendations which we urge the Council members, OHCHR and other stakeholders to implement in order to halt and reverse this contemporary scourge meaningfully.

Thank you.