



Statement on behalf of OIC, delivered by Amb. Khalil Hashmi, Permanent Representative, during decision of convening of Urgent Debate to discuss the alarming rise in premeditated and public acts of religious hatred as manifested by recurrent desecration of the Holy Quran in some European and other countries
53rd HRC Session
5 July 2023

Mr. President,

We have outlined the purpose of the urgent debate in the letter that was sent to you on Monday.

Let me take this opportunity to share with the Council on why we seek this debate and a meaningful outcome.

First, the burning and desecration of the Holy Quran last week, on the day of Muslim festival and outside a place of worship, was not the only or an isolated act. It was at least *the 6th occasion* in recent months, representing a clear, growing and recurrent act of religious hatred in full public display and under government license.

Second, all of these Islamophobic acts were premeditated. Yet we have seen a consistent defence of these acts by conflating them with the exercise of right to freedom of expression and opinion. Given the far-reaching implications for public order as well as their offensive and provocative nature, none of these acts were either prevented or prosecuted.

Third, the OIC Group has previously and repeatedly registered its grave concerns over these acts of incitement to discrimination, hostility and violence in this Council and called for effective deterrence measures. It is clear that in the absence of legal deterrence, such actions have only continued with a sense of impunity.

Fourth, we welcome the fact that the latest of this provocative act has been widely condemned and strongly rejected. However, given the systemic and recurring nature of this phenomenon, mere words are no longer enough. The status quo which seeks to normalize decertation of sacred books by invoking interpretations grounded in opinions is no longer tenable.

The recurrence, the impunity and absence of legal deterrence risks serious social, political and human rights impacts that may hinder the realization of our shared vision of peaceful and inclusive societies.

The OIC Group also wishes to underline that the existing normative framework developed by this Council has not yielded the results that were foreseen. Clearly, the absence of effective national legal and policy measures has continued to impede prevention and prosecution of these acts deemed repulsive by billions of people.

For these reasons, we have called for this urgent debate and presented a draft resolution, proposing an expert discussion on how to prevent recurrence of such acts and development of normative, legal and law enforcement deterrence measures while recognizing that exercise of the right to freedom of expression and opinion carries with it responsibilities and duties as enshrined in international human rights law.



Our proposals are informed and guided by UNGA Resolution 60/251, which mandated this Council to promote universal respect for all human rights, without distinction of any kind, and in a fair and equal manner.

The OIC Group looks forward to the urgent debate on Tuesday. We propose that apart from the High Commissioner, the Council invites the UN High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations to the debate. Meanwhile, we also invite all member states and civil society organizations to open and constructive consultations on the draft resolution tomorrow.

We see this urgent debate and its outcome as an opportunity to demonstrate this Council's unity, mutual respect and understanding and to reach consensus on a forward-looking text.

We count on the Council members to support the holding of this debate and lend support to an outcome that charts a clear path to address acts and advocacy of hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence, that the world confronts today.

Thank you.