



**National Statement, delivered by Mr. Danyal Hasnain, Third Secretary, during General
Debate Item 9
54th HRC Session
6th October 2023**

Madam Vice President,

We align with the OIC statement and reaffirm the importance of combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance in all its forms and manifestations.

We remain deeply concerned over contemporary racism, nurtured by decades of public rhetoric and policies against minority individuals and communities.

The current resurgence of these trends is neither new nor unforeseen. We have consistently highlighted in the Council, the intersectionality between racism, racial discrimination, and incidents of religious hatred.

This unfortunate trend is neither restricted to any country but a shared problem that requires collective efforts to tackle.

Madam Vice President,

Unfortunately, we have witnessed a significant increase in Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred in many regions of the world.

Such policies aim to deprive specific communities, especially Muslims, of their equal right to participate in public life and exercise their right to freedom of expression and religion without discrimination.

From imposing dress restrictions on women and girls to caricaturing holy personalities and to public desecrating holy books, Muslim communities have mainly been targeted by inciting discrimination, violence, stigmatization, racial profiling, and marginalization against them.

This inexorable surge in actions resulting in the isolation of minority communities is deeply distressing.

Such condemnable and provocative Islamophobic incidents hurt the sentiments of over 1.8 billion Muslims and cannot be justified under the guise of free speech.



We reaffirm that the right to freedom of expression and opinion should only be exercised with responsibilities and duties, in line with articles 19 and 20 of the ICCPR.

We also remain concerned over the steady increase in extremist right-wing ideologies where minority communities are targeted overtly for securing electoral gains or perpetuating foreign occupation by willful state-sanctioned actions against minorities.

These policies have resulted in communal violence, deprivation of citizenship, and forced conversions.

Madam Vice President,

We believe that a lopsided interpretation of Article 19 has weakened the implementation of the normative framework for combating religious hatred.

As a result, it has opened the path to racial hatred being expressed by attacking religious symbols with the understanding there is freedom to escape legal actions.

There is a need to address this normative gap and not to encourage racism to find its expression in religious discrimination, intolerance, and hatred.

I thank you!