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**Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related
forms of intolerance, follow-up and implementation
of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action**

**Joint written statement* submitted by the Organization for
Defending Victims of Violence, the Khiam Rehabilitation
Center for Victims of Torture, the Charitable Institute for
Protecting Social Victims, the Network of Women's Non-
governmental Organizations in the Islamic Republic of Iran,
non-governmental organizations in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[14 February 2011]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

Racism, racial prejudice, xenophobia - Islamophobia

The existence of mass killings, racism, poverty, the growth of corruption and prostitution, drugs, human trafficking all indicate that humanity is still and constantly threatened by violation of fundamental rights. The protection of human dignity requires practical mechanisms and the participation of all of the international community for the realization of common ideals of mankind, i.e. peace, security, elimination of discrimination and respecting human dignity.

The issuing of statements by various human rights organizations and presentation of different reports from international organizations all are indicative of the fact that mankind is always trying to find a way to have a calm and peaceful world, and better and more dynamic societies and families that are violent free.

One of the issues which can threaten societies politically and socially, particularly those that have ethnic, racial and religious diversity, is racial and religious extremism and prejudice. Unfortunately, religious beliefs have over the last few decades become targeted, and with the combination of differences and religious misconceptions, with ethnic and racial conflicts, have taken up greater proportions. Islamophobia is one of the most evident examples of these misconceptions and uncalled for negative attitudes which are often deliberate.

This phenomenon has unfortunately been on the increase over the last decade, and the year 2010 was the worst year in this regard. Over the last decade, some states and anti-Islam groups have in various forms tried to destroy the image of Islam and insult the holies of the religion. The Koran burning ceremonies, the building of a cabaret in the form of a mosque and naming it Mekka, and releasing a computer game called "Goodbye to Islam" and publication of defamatory cartoons of the prophet Mohammad, are some of these Islamophobic actions.

In the approach to the anniversary of 9/11, a new wave of Islamophobia preoccupied the propaganda atmosphere of the west's media and political arenas. With these incitements the Zionist lobby in America and Europe attempted to have the anniversary to be symbolic towards Islamophobia, so that each year on the anniversary of 9/11 tension rises between Christians and Muslims. In of the most significant and shocking measures, the preacher of a small church in Gainesville, Florida announced that on the anniversary of 9/11 he would be burning the Koran in protest to building of an Islamic centre near Ground Zero in New York. He began his campaign through the media and the internet and invited fellow Christians to join him in burning the Koran.

Although, the preacher changed his mind following huge protests by Muslims and pleas of US officials including the President, nevertheless a number of individuals went ahead and burned the Koran and published images of them on the internet. These blatant incitements drew a widespread protest of Muslims around the world, and caused the deepening of religious misunderstandings between two great monotheist religions.

Other recent hate incidents targeting American Muslim institutions and houses of worship have included an arson attack on an Oregon mosque, an arson attack on a mosque in Texas, threats against an Islamic school in Oklahoma, a bias attack outside an Ohio mosque, shots fired outside a New York mosque, an arson attack on the site of a planned mosque in Tennessee, a threat to a previously-bombed Ohio mosque, the defacement of a South Carolina mosque, hate mail sent to mosques, Islamic centers and Muslim organizations in Michigan and Ohio, and a bomb attack at a Florida mosque in May of last year (Washington, D.C., 1/29/11)

As human rights defending organizations, that respects mankind's high values and respects its dignity, and recognizing all individual freedoms and interests of the general public, the strongly condemns any form of defamation of religion which causes violence, and calls upon the Human Rights Council to adopt serious and practical measures to prevent this.

We recommend the Council to establish a network of regional NGOs to create a common language for Council member states, so that with the transfer of the experiences of various cultures, a common point among all the cultures are found, and by sharing these experiences a practical step takes place to eliminate and prevent religious extremism such as Islamophobia. To this aim, the holding of periodic workshops for the transparent introduction of views and beliefs of different religions, can eliminate and remove all the misunderstandings, misinformation and blind hatreds of today.

We also believe that alongside education and capacity building, practical preventative measures must be taken towards stopping the spreading Islamophobia in the west. Practical measures must be taken to realize the defamation of religion resolution which was brought to the attention of the Council can be a solution.

In the hope of a world without violence and prejudice and a world full of peace and friendship.
