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**Human Rights Council****Fifty-third session**

19 June–14 July 2023

Agenda item 1

**Organizational and procedural matters****Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council on 12 July 2023****53/1. Countering religious hatred constituting incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence**

*The Human Rights Council,*

*Guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations,*

*Reaffirming the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination,*

*Reaffirming also the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination based on Religion or Belief,*

*Acknowledging that the exercise of the right to freedom of expression carries with it special duties and responsibilities and that restrictions on this right shall only be such as are provided by law, and in this context ensuring respect for the rights or reputations of others, as stipulated in article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and acknowledging also its article 20, which states that any advocacy of religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law,*

*Noting with deep concern the rising incidents of desecration of sacred books and places of worship as well as religious symbols, which could constitute incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence,*

*Affirming that it is offensive, disrespectful, a clear act of provocation and a manifestation of religious hatred to deliberately and publicly burn the Holy Qur'an or any other holy book with the intent to incite discrimination, hostility or violence, and affirming also that this act shall be prohibited by law, in line with the obligations of States arising from international human rights law,*

*Noting the strong rejection and condemnation of recurring acts of public burning of the Holy Qur'an in some European and other countries, as voiced by States, the Secretary-General, the High Representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, and many others,*

*Taking note in this regard of the report presented by the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief to the Human Rights Council in 2021 on countering Islamophobia/anti-Muslim hatred to eliminate discrimination and intolerance based on*



religion or belief,<sup>1</sup> in which the Special Rapporteur documented, inter alia, the human rights impacts and drivers of this growing phenomenon,

*Welcoming* the unanimous decision made by the General Assembly to proclaim 15 March the International Day to Combat Islamophobia,<sup>2</sup> and noting its first commemoration in 2023,

*Emphasizing* that all human rights, including freedom of religion or belief, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to peaceful assembly and the right to freedom of association are interdependent, interrelated and mutually reinforcing, and stressing the positive role that these rights can play in the fight against all forms of intolerance and of discrimination based on religion or belief,

*Recalling* that racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance are manifested on the grounds of race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin, and that victims can suffer from multiple or aggravated forms of discrimination based on other related grounds, such as sex, language, religion, disability, political or other opinion, social origin, property, birth or other status,

*Recalling* Human Rights Council resolution 52/38 of 4 April 2023 on combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against, persons based on religion or belief, and its resolution 52/6 of 3 April 2023 on freedom of religion or belief,

*Taking note* of the Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence,

*Condemning* any advocacy of religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence, whether it involves the use of print, audiovisual or electronic media or any other means,

*Recognizing* that gaps may exist in national legal, policy and law enforcement frameworks, impeding prevention and prosecution of and redressal for acts and advocacy of religious hatred that constitute an incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence committed against persons based on religion or belief,

*Acknowledging* that tolerance, pluralistic tradition, mutual respect and the diversity of religions and beliefs promote human fraternity, and in this regard recalling all United Nations resolutions on human fraternity,

1. *Condemns and strongly rejects* any advocacy or manifestation of religious hatred, including the recent public and premeditated acts of desecration of the Holy Qur'an, and underscores the need for holding those responsible to account in a manner consistent with the obligations of States arising from international human rights law;

2. *Calls upon* States to adopt national laws, policies and law enforcement frameworks that address, prevent and prosecute acts and advocacy of religious hatred that constitute incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence, and to take immediate steps to ensure accountability;

3. *Urges* the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and all relevant special procedures of the Human Rights Council and treaty bodies, within their respective mandates, to speak out against advocacy of religious hatred, including acts of desecration of sacred books that could constitute incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence, and to make recommendations on addressing this phenomenon;

4. *Requests* the High Commissioner to present at its fifty-fourth session an oral update on the various drivers, root causes and human rights impacts of religious hatred constituting incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence, highlighting gaps in existing national, legal, policy and law enforcement frameworks, in particular in the context of the urgent debate, held at the fifty-third session of the Human Rights Council, to be followed by an interactive dialogue;

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<sup>1</sup> A/HRC/46/30.

<sup>2</sup> General Assembly resolution 76/254.

5. *Decides* to organize an interactive panel discussion of experts at its fifty-fifth session to identify drivers, root causes and human rights impacts of the desecration of sacred books and places of worship, as well as religious symbols, as a manifestation of religious hatred that could constitute incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence, and to outline gaps that may exist in laws, policies, practices and law enforcement that impede the prevention and prosecution of such public and premeditated acts, and to propose normative, legal, policy and administrative deterrence measures, both offline and online, to counter such acts of religious hatred that constitute incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence against individuals based on their religion or belief, and also hinders full enjoyment of their fundamental rights and freedoms, and invites the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to liaise with States, relevant United Nations bodies and agencies, relevant special procedures, civil society and other stakeholders with a view to ensuring their participation in the panel discussion and that the panel discussion is made accessible to persons with disabilities;

6. *Requests* the Office of the High Commissioner to present a report on the deliberations of the panel discussion to the Human Rights Council at its fifty-sixth session;

7. *Decides* to remain seized of this matter.

*33rd meeting  
12 July 2023*

[Adopted by a recorded vote of 28 to 12, with 7 abstentions. The voting was as follows:

*In favour:*

Algeria, Argentina, Bangladesh, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Cameroon, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Eritrea, Gabon, Gambia, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Morocco, Pakistan, Qatar, Senegal, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam

*Against:*

Belgium, Costa Rica, Czechia, Finland, France, Germany, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Romania, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America

*Abstaining:*

Benin, Chile, Georgia, Honduras, Nepal, Mexico and Paraguay]