

**Oral Statement Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion 52nd Session Human Rights Council, 10 March 2023 Agenda Item 3, Promotion and protection of human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development**

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Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC) is a not-for-profit campaign, research and advocacy organisation founded and based in the United Kingdom. It was set up in 1997 and works for redress of human rights violations and a better understanding of rights and norms across confessional, ethnic, national, political and other boundaries.

IHRC has consultative status with the UN – ECOSOC.

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We are acutely concerned about the continuing onslaught against the religious freedom of Muslims around the world.

Fanned by a deliberately created environment of hate, levels of Islamophobia have reached unprecedented levels resulting in almost daily attacks on Muslims and their ability to freely practice their faith.

In India, rampant Hindu supremacism has been institutionalised and become the basis for legislating against Muslims, their places of worship and their fundamental rights. This has manifested itself in the destruction of mosques, police participation in mob violence against Muslims and the lynching of innocent Muslims. Hindutva priests and leaders openly make calls for the genocide of Muslims.

Across Europe, countries are introducing bans on attire worn by Muslim women and closing down mosques and in doing so stigmatising Muslims as outcasts, a process that encourages discrimination and violence against them in everyday life.

More and more countries are securitising their Muslim communities by presenting them as potential fifth columnists, specifically drafting anti-terror legislation that targets them and also seeks to mould their religion to the desired liberal secular norms. The legislation goes far beyond the purported aim of counter-terrorism and as we see in the operation of the Prevent programme in the UK, seeks to police religious and political views in a chilling enactment of the "thoughtcrime" of George Orwell's novel "1984".

Officials have aided and abetted attacks on Islamic symbols, the most prominent of them being recent burnings of the Holy Quran by extremists, defending them as legitimate expressions of freedom of expression. Unless the international community takes urgent steps to arrest this rising tide of Islamophobia there is a strong possibility that it will lead to genocides