



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
XX January 2025

English only

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## Human Rights Council

Fifty-eighth session

24 February–4 April 2025

Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,  
political, economic, social and cultural rights,  
including the right to development**

### **Written statement\* submitted by Organization for Defending Victims of Violence, a non-governmental organization 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.

[27 January 2025]

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\* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.

## Islamophobia: Addressing Structural Discrimination and Hate

Despite the explicit prohibition of discrimination based on religion in international instruments such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Islamophobia regrettably has been increasingly normalized in political and media discourse, with Muslims often facing disproportionate levels of hate crimes. For instance, in the UK, Muslims constitute only about 5% of the population, yet they are victims of more than half of all religious hate crimes.<sup>(1)</sup> Moreover, the first half of 2024 saw a continued rise in anti-Muslim incidents in the U.S., with discrimination and attacks against Muslims and Palestinians increasing by about 70% compared to the previous year. <sup>(2)</sup> Most recently, the women's football league in London banned Somali Muslim player over clothing. <sup>(3)</sup>

This alarming trend highlights the need for a robust response that redefines Islamophobia as a specific form of racism, thereby enabling the application of established anti-racist strategies to combat it effectively. In this regard, the United Nations, and other international organizations such as the European Union as well as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have underscored the urgency of addressing this issue, particularly in light of increasing hate crimes and discriminatory rhetoric directed against Muslim communities. Resolution 78/264 adopted on 15 March 2024, by the UN General Assembly addresses measures to combat Islamophobia. This resolution condemns any advocacy of religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility, or violence, particularly against Muslims. It requests the UN Secretary-General to appoint a UN Special Envoy to combat Islamophobia. Additionally, it urges member states to take legislative and policy measures to combat religious intolerance, negative stereotyping, hatred, incitement to violence, and violence against Muslims and encourages member states to engage in interreligious and intercultural dialogue to promote tolerance and respect for religious diversity. Moreover, in September 2020, the EU presented a five-year action plan against racism, which recognizes the link to religion or belief in cases such as anti-Muslim hatred. It has also established a Coordinator on combating anti-Muslim hatred, whose mandate is to address anti-Muslim hate speech, hate crime, and discrimination. Furthermore, organizations like The Carter Center emphasize that combating Islamophobia is not solely the responsibility of Muslims but a collective moral obligation for all individuals who value justice and human rights. Their strategies advocate for solidarity across different communities and emphasize the importance of interfaith collaboration in addressing this issue.

While we do not overlook the measures taken by the international community to counter Islamophobia, these measures have not been sufficient to contain this issue and there is a need for special attention to this matter. For example, Islamophobia has also found its way into academic environments. Reports indicating that over a third of Muslim American students experience bullying due to their faith, with similar experiences reported among Sikh and Arab American students,<sup>(4)</sup> necessitate educational initiatives that not only raise awareness about the diverse contributions of Muslim communities but also foster an inclusive environment that actively counters hate.

Educational institutions play a critical role in countering Islamophobia. By integrating discussions about various cultures and histories into curricula, schools can help dismantle stereotypes and promote understanding among students. Initiatives encouraging community engagement and dialogue are essential in fostering a more inclusive society. Currently advocacy groups are increasingly focusing on structural Islamophobia, highlighting issues such as biased legislation and media portrayals that perpetuate negative stereotypes about Muslims. Addressing these systemic issues is crucial for creating lasting change.

### Recommendations

We respectfully request the Special Rapporteur for freedom of Religion to:

- Recommend states to work with Muslim communities, rather than imposing policies on them, to address and mitigate the impacts of Islamophobia.
- Promote educational initiatives that challenge negative stereotypes that portray Muslims as cultural "others".
- Urge media outlets and internet companies to take responsibility in combating online hate speech and the spread of Islamophobia conspiracy theories.
- Encourage states to address the insidious nature of anti-Muslim discrimination, particularly when it takes the guise of anti-terrorism measures.
- Recommend developing comprehensive strategies that link efforts to combat Islamophobia with broader initiatives promoting the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda.

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- 1) Muslims most targeted group for hate crimes in England, Wales.
  - 2) US anti-Muslim incidents rise by 70% in first half of 2024: CAIR.
  - 3) Women's football league in London 'bans' Somali Muslim player over clothing | Islamophobia News | Al Jazeera.
  - 4) Muslim students face higher rates of bullying in US schools: watchdog.