

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs
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Press Release

Pakistan condemns systematic Islamophobic campaign under the garb of freedom of expression

Pakistan condemns in the strongest manner the systematic resurgence of blasphemous acts of republication of caricatures of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) and desecration of the Holy Quran by certain irresponsible elements in some developed countries. We are further alarmed at highly disturbing statements by certain politicians justifying such heinous acts under the garb of freedom of expression and equating Islam with terrorism, for narrow electoral and political gains.

Under international human rights law, the exercise of the right to freedom of expression carries with it special duties and responsibilities. The dissemination of racist ideas, defamation and ridiculing of other religions, denigration of religious personalities, hate speech, and incitement to violence are not allowed expressions of this fundamental freedom.

Such illegal and Islamophobic acts fanning inter-religious hatred, hostility and confrontation, are the very basis of horrendous terrorist acts like Christ Church, thereby imperiling future prospects of peace and harmony among civilizations.

Whilst having anti-blasphemy and criminal laws for sensitive issues such as denial of Holocaust, the justification by a few politicians in some Western countries for insulting sentiments of Muslims, is a blatant reflection of double standards. Such justifications seriously erode their human rights credentials.

Pakistan has always supported and continues to lead international efforts for combating intolerance, discrimination and violence on the basis of religion or belief. Both in our national capacity as well as part of the OIC group, we have advocated arduously for the alliance of civilizations and developing mutual understanding and respect for all religions, faiths and beliefs. We unequivocally condemn all acts of violence on the basis of religion or belief.

Prime Minister Imran Khan in his address at the 75th UN General Assembly session highlighted the recent incidents of Islamophobia and such unlawful provocations and urged the international community to take all necessary steps to universally outlaw

willful provocations and incitement to hate and violence. The Prime Minister also proposed to declare an International Day to Combat Islamophobia.

At a time of rising racism and populism, the international community must show a common resolve against xenophobia, intolerance, stigmatization and incitement to violence on the basis of religion or belief. It is necessary to work together for peaceful co-existence as well as social and inter-faith harmony.

Islamabad

25 October 2020