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**STATEMENT BY
MR. DMITRY POLYANSKIY, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1558th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

19 March 2026

On the International Day to Combat Islamophobia

Mr. Chairperson,

For centuries, the Russian Federation has remained a multi-ethnic State in which people of different nationalities and faiths coexist peacefully. They preserve their religion, language, traditions and customs – passing them down from generation to generation.

Our country was among the co-sponsors of the United Nations General Assembly resolution that, in 2022, established the International Day to Combat Islamophobia, which has been observed annually since then on 15 March.

Russia holds observer status in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the League of Arab States, and actively maintains foreign policy and business ties with Arab, Turkic and other Muslim countries. Co-operation between religious organizations and civil society institutions and their international partners continues to expand.

Russia is experiencing a process of Islamic revival: mosques, educational institutions, Sunday schools and various community organizations are being established, and Muslim organizations are becoming increasingly active in charitable work.

We firmly believe that the diversity of religious traditions and specificities of historical development should serve as a unifying force for the international community, rather than a source of division.

Mr. Chairperson,

We must point out that a favourite topic of Ukraine and its Western “patrons” remains the alleged infringement in Russia of the rights of the Muslim population, notably the Crimean Tatars, and other issues relating to the Crimean peninsula. Things got to the point where these “champions of freedom” tried to convince even the International Court of Justice of this. Accusations were levelled regarding the implementation of a policy aimed at erasing people’s identity, imposing citizenship, Russification, and so on. Such frenzied propaganda does not stand up to any scrutiny and is easily demolished by the facts.

Anticipating possible insinuations in this regard, let us recall that, on 31 January 2024, the International Court of Justice issued a final judgment on Ukraine's claims under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, thereby settling the matter once and for all. The Court rejected virtually all of Ukraine's claims and recognized that Russia's policies were in compliance with its obligations under the Convention. There is no discrimination against Crimean Tatars and ethnic Ukrainians in Crimea.

In particular, the Court dismissed Ukraine's allegations regarding Russia's supposed involvement in targeted "killings" and "abductions" of Crimean Tatars and ethnic Ukrainians in Crimea. It rejected all of Ukraine's claims regarding citizenship, finding no evidence of racial discrimination in Russia's legal regime for the granting of citizenship on the peninsula since 2014. Ukraine's allegations regarding the supposed infringement of the rights of Crimean Tatars and ethnic Ukrainians in Crimea to access national media outlets, to hold assemblies and rallies, and to preserve cultural heritage sites were also deemed to be unfounded. Russia's restoration of the Khan's Palace in Bakhchisaray turned out to be by no means a "cultural disaster", as the Ukrainian representatives had portrayed it, but a necessary measure to address the consequences of the Kyiv regime's neglect, which had left this historical and cultural monument in a dilapidated state.

As we can see, Ukraine's propaganda failed to convince the International Court of Justice. We hope that it will also fail to convince the majority of our sensible colleagues present in this room.

As regards the spread of Islamophobia in the OSCE area as a whole, the situation remains extremely unfavourable. What is more, this depressing state of affairs is partly due to a number of European countries condoning intolerance. Everyone is familiar with the high-profile incidents involving the burning of the Qur'an in Denmark and Sweden.

We emphasize our position of principle that there can be no justification for actions that offend the feelings of believers and incite interreligious enmity. No reference to the allegedly absolute nature of freedom of speech can justify such blasphemous actions.

According to a 2026 report by Belgian human rights activists, anti-Muslim racism constitutes a structural phenomenon in Austria. Citing official statistics from the Austrian authorities, the report notes that 1,336 anti-Muslim incidents were recorded in 2024.

According to the Documentation and Advice Center for Islamophobia and Anti-Muslim Racism, there were more than 1,500 cases of religiously motivated intolerance towards this ethnic group in 2023, with almost 67 per cent of these incidents occurring online. A surge in Islamophobia has been observed among students and teaching staff in educational institutions. According to local law enforcement agencies, members of the Muslim community regularly receive threats from right-wing extremists.

In addition to instances of everyday Islamophobia, there is systematic legislative harassment on the part of local authorities. Pursuant to amendments made back in 2015 to the Act on the Recognition of Followers of Islam as a Religious Society, foreign funding of religious organizations and imams is prohibited. However, there is no such ban in place with regard to other faiths. The new version of the law *de facto* "erases" Islam from the public educational sphere.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) report that, in 2025, anti-Muslim acts accounted for approximately 44 per cent of all religious hate crimes recorded in England and Wales, making Muslims the

most targeted religious group. Of the Muslims questioned, 92 per cent said they did not feel safe in public spaces, while more than half reported increased stress linked to social media use.

Across the United Kingdom as a whole, there has been an increase in crimes motivated by religious and ethnic intolerance. This is happening primarily against the backdrop of the escalating crisis in the Middle East. Around 5,000 Islamophobic acts were recorded between October 2023 and September 2024 alone.

Human rights activists have repeatedly drawn the attention of the British Government and police to the inadequate measures being taken to protect the rights and ensure the safety of members of the Islamic faith. NGOs have criticized legislative initiatives in the field of counter-terrorism. Campaigners had sufficient grounds to believe that these initiatives contravened the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

Denmark continues to serve as a sobering example of the far-reaching negative consequences that can follow from an arbitrary interpretation of the limits of freedom of expression. The authorities' tolerance of public acts involving the burning of the Qur'an will forever remain a blot on the country's history.

The Centre for Muslims' Rights in Denmark is concerned that Muslims are becoming "citizens under surveillance" in the country. In this respect, women are the most vulnerable group, including when it comes to finding employment. The conclusions are disappointing: formal equality before the law does not translate into real equality in the public sphere.

For 2026, the Danish budget has allocated 1.22 million US dollars to combat hate crimes. However, human rights defenders remain sceptical. According to a 2025 report by the Danish branch of Amnesty International, victims of hate speech experience a lack of legal protection. The legislation is outdated and has failed to keep pace with the development of social media, where hate speech flourishes. The police are closing cases without bringing them to court. Some 72 per cent of cases are dismissed before they even reach a judge. Amnesty Denmark came to this conclusion by analysing judicial practice in nearly 1,500 cases.

According to a survey by the research institute Verian, 76 per cent of Danes believe that hate speech is a serious social problem for Danish society. And this affects not only Muslims.

Things do not look so rosy in Italy either. The Vox-Italian Observatory on Rights (an NGO) is running the "Map of Intolerance" project, which compares the content of discriminatory posts on social media with their geolocation data. Geographically speaking, the highest concentration of negative posts of an anti-Muslim nature is recorded in northern Italy.

Turning to Canada, a particular cause for concern is the fact that Islamophobia has become entrenched within Canadian Government bodies. It is worth noting that a high level of intolerance towards followers of Islam has been observed previously. For instance, a study by Canadian researchers published in February 2023 confirmed the existence of Islamophobic attitudes within the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS). After conducting a survey among 95 Muslim communities in five major cities, the researchers found that the CSIS is engaging in mass surveillance of followers of Islam. Mosques are viewed as breeding grounds for extremism and terrorism, and clerics are being forced to pass on information about people who worship at the mosque. Such surveillance even extends to minors – there have been cases of schoolchildren being questioned by the security services without their parents' consent. Particular attention is paid to those who criticize the Canadian Government's policy on the Middle East.

A sociological survey conducted by the Angus Reid Institute in March 2023 showed that 39 per cent of Canadians have a negative attitude towards Islam.

In November 2023, the Canadian Parliament's Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights published a report entitled "Combating Hate: Islamophobia and its Impact on Muslims in Canada". The report notes that Muslims living in the country face discrimination on a daily basis. What is more, Canada leads the G7 countries in terms of targeted killings of Muslims. Against this backdrop, followers of Islam in Canada constantly feel vulnerable. Islamophobia is systemic within State bodies; intolerance towards Muslims is particularly widespread in the intelligence services and federal correctional institutions.

Overall, crimes motivated by racial intolerance are an everyday occurrence in the country, and their numbers continue to rise.

In Norway, instances of anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, xenophobia, racism, discrimination and related intolerance are not uncommon. There has been an increase in the number of statements aimed at inciting hatred or hostility, including those posted online.

According to research by human rights defenders, Islamophobia remains a serious problem: 22 per cent of the Norwegian population harbour hostile attitudes towards Muslims and Islam, while 31 per cent hold strong prejudices against Muslims.

The problem of Islamophobia in France is largely a consequence of a long-standing systemic migration crisis and the reaction of a section of society to the rise in radical Islamist sentiments and the increased level of the terrorist threat.

According to data published in 2026 by the Belgian NGO Collective for Countering Islamophobia in Europe (CCIE), human rights activists recorded 876 reports of discrimination, 85 per cent of which concerned incidents that occurred in France.

Muslim women are most frequently the targets of such aggression, although there have also been cases where cemeteries, cultural centres and mosques have been desecrated, along with acts of desecration against the Qur'an. Some Muslim associations also claim that the statistics cited by the Ministry of the Interior are erroneously low.

Far-right radicals are behind a whole series of high-profile acts of anti-Semitism and, especially, Islamophobia.

According to the latest figures available, 17,000 hate crimes targeting specific groups were recorded in Germany in 2023 (a 47 per cent increase compared with 2022). In particular, 15,000 xenophobic offences were recorded (1,200 involving violence, 3,800 motivated by racism and 1,400 of an Islamophobic nature).

According to figures from the CCIE, in 2025 alone, the Finnish police recorded 1,808 hate-motivated offences, representing an increase of more than 12 per cent compared to 2024. It is claimed that this is the highest figure since such monitoring began in 2008. Among the victims are persons "perceived as Muslim", especially people of Syrian or Somali origin. A significant proportion of these crimes now take place online.

The Muslim community in Sweden, a community that is constantly growing, is also subjected to discrimination. Covert Islamophobia is a very widespread phenomenon in various spheres of public life. Muslims in Sweden frequently encounter problems in the form of unemployment and violations of their fundamental rights and freedoms.

Swedish far-right radicals supported by the neo-Nazi organization “Stram Kurs” (Hard Line), led by the Swedish-Danish politician Rasmus Paludan, regularly stage Islamophobic provocative actions, including the desecration and burning of the Qur’an. On 21 January 2023, Mr. Paludan staged such an action outside the Turkish embassy in Stockholm.

A series of incidents involving the Qur’an being wrapped in bacon and subsequently burned were organized in 2023 by Salwan Momika, a migrant from Iraq. Legal proceedings were initiated against Mr. Momika on charges of “inciting hatred against an ethnic group”. However, on the eve of the court’s verdict on 30 January 2025, Mr. Momika was shot dead at his home in a Stockholm suburb.

This incident is yet another example of the Swedish authorities’ short-sighted policy, which envisaged the integration of immigrants provided they adopted Swedish “values”.

Unfortunately, short-term opportunistic interests in these countries are taking precedence over a genuine concern for human rights within their own borders. How else can one explain the refusal of the Brussels bloc and the United Kingdom to support the annual United Nations General Assembly resolution on combating the glorification of Nazism? After all, the text of this fundamental document, which also deals with combating Islamophobia and other manifestations of intolerance, has remained unchanged for many years. Meanwhile, the stance of the “champions of freedom”, who had previously voted in favour of the document, has undergone a complete U-turn.

It is important to understand that Islamophobia, Christianophobia and anti-Semitism are all links in the same chain. They are the “product” of a humanity-hating ideology to which we must not turn a blind eye. How can European countries hypocritically speak of the need to respect freedom of religion when, literally right under their noses, the Kyiv regime’s repressive policies are systematically destroying canonical Orthodoxy? And violence against worshippers and members of the clergy, the seizure of churches and the desecration of holy sites have become an everyday reality in Ukraine? Where, then, is the reaction from the relevant executive structures?

We are convinced that paramount importance must be given precisely to the fight against religious intolerance. It is absolutely inadmissible that the tasking from the 2014 Basel Ministerial Council meeting with regard to drafting declarations on combating discrimination against Christians, Muslims and members of other religions has yet to be implemented to this day. Why is the Swiss Chairmanship-in-Office remaining silent on this matter? We will not allow this issue to be swept under the carpet and will continue to keep it on the agenda, no matter how hard certain Western alliance countries try to hush it up.

Thank you for your attention.