

From Norms to Action: Addressing Islamophobia and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief – The Nexus to Human Rights

A **High-level Event** on the Occasion of the **International Day to Combat Islamophobia**

📅 16 March 2026, 14:30 to 18:00

📍 ECOSOC Chamber, United Nations, New York

Background and Rationale:

Islamophobia – the prejudice, hostility and discrimination directed at Muslims and Islam – has grown into a pervasive global phenomenon. According to United Nations experts, incidents of threats, violence, harassment and incitement targeting Muslim individuals and communities have reached what they describe as “alarming levels”. These rising hostilities have contributed to an atmosphere of fear, mistrust and alienation for many. This reality has prompted increased international attention.

In response, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 76/254, declaring March 15 as the “**International Day to Combat Islamophobia**” beginning in March 2022. The day is meant to promote dialogue, raise awareness, and encourage a shared global commitment to peace, acceptance and mutual respect.

Further underscoring the urgency of the issue, in May 2025, the United Nations Secretary-General appointed Under-Secretary-General Mr. Miguel Ángel Moratinos, the High Representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), as the United Nations Special Envoy to Combat Islamophobia in line with the United Nations General Assembly resolution 78/264 “Measures to Combat Islamophobia”. The landmark resolution reflects the growing consensus that tackling religious intolerance – especially anti-Muslim hatred – requires coordinated, high-level international cooperation. Ultimately, Islamophobia is not an isolated issue but a global challenge; it calls for a response that is just as far reaching, principled and determined, as the problem itself.

Moreover, the resolution reaffirms the obligation of States to address discrimination, hostility, and violence against individuals based on religion or belief, while fully respecting international human rights law, including freedom of expression and freedom of religion or belief.

The resolution also recognizes that Islamophobia manifests through discrimination, stigmatization, hate speech, and violence against individuals perceived to be Muslim, and that such acts undermine human dignity, equality, and social cohesion. It further underscores the importance of addressing incitement to discrimination and violence, including in digital spaces, while ensuring that measures do not restrict lawful expression or debate.

This side event aims to provide a balanced and inclusive platform for dialogue among Member States, the United Nations system and non-State stakeholders, grounded in existing international human rights norms and standards.



PERMANENT OBSERVER MISSION
OF THE ORGANIZATION OF
ISLAMIC COOPERATION

From Norms to Action: Addressing Islamophobia and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief – The Nexus to Human Rights

A **High-level Event** on the Occasion of the **International Day to Combat Islamophobia**

 16 March 2026, 14:30 to 18:00

 ECOSOC Chamber, United Nations, New York

The event is organized by the **Office of the High Representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC)** and the **United Nations Special Envoy to Combat Islamophobia**.

Normative Frameworks:

- United Nations General Assembly resolutions 76/254 and 78/264;
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Articles 18, 19, and 20);
- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- The United Nations Charter;
- Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence.

Objectives:

- Support the implementation of the United Nations General Assembly resolutions 76/254 and 78/264 through practical, rights-based approaches.
- Promote a shared understanding of how to address discrimination while safeguarding freedom of expression.
- Examine contemporary drivers of Islamophobia, including digital and media environments.
- Highlight the impact of racial discrimination and discrimination based on religion or belief on individuals, communities and social cohesion.
- Promote preventive approaches through education, dialogue and community engagement.

Expected Outcomes:

- Enhanced understanding of Islamophobia within agreed international human rights frameworks.
 - Identification of national and regional good practices and preventive approaches.
 - Strengthened cooperation among Member States and stakeholders.
 - Reinforcement of a balanced United Nations narrative promoting dignity, inclusion and social cohesion.
-