



**The Permanent Mission of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste
to the United Nations in New York**

Statement by

His Excellency Ambassador Dionísio Babo Soares
Permanent Representative of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste to the
United Nations

**High-level event on “Addressing Islamophobia and Discrimination Based on
Religion or Belief – the Nexus to Human Rights”**

16 March 2026, 3:00 PM
ECOSOC Chamber, UNHQ, New York

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Mr./Madam Chair, Excellencies,

At the outset, we wish to thank the Office of the High Representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) and the United Nations Special Envoy to Combat Islamophobia for organizing this high-level event.

Timor-Leste is honored to join this important discussion on combating Islamophobia—an issue that has become a pressing global human rights concern. Around the world, Muslim individuals and communities continue to face discrimination, stigmatization, hate speech and violence. Such acts undermine human dignity, equality and social cohesion, and they contradict the very principles upon which the United Nations was founded.

Timor-Leste welcomes the adoption of General Assembly resolutions addressing Islamophobia and the appointment of the United Nations Special Envoy to Combat Islamophobia. These steps reflect a growing international consensus that combating religious intolerance requires coordinated, principled and sustained global action.

At the same time, we recognize Islamophobia as part of a broader and troubling rise in religious hatred and discrimination worldwide, often fueled by misinformation, digital incitement and polarized political narratives. Antisemitism, anti-Christian persecution, discrimination against Hindus, Buddhists and other religious communities, as well as hostility toward persons with no religious belief, continue to threaten peaceful coexistence. Combating Islamophobia must therefore be part of a wider commitment to confront all forms of religious hatred, racism and discrimination, including antisemitism and xenophobia.

Our own Constitution guarantees freedom of religion or belief, freedom of expression, and equality before the law. These values are reinforced by Timor-Leste's commitments under the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and

Political Rights, particularly Articles 18, 19 and 20. As a State Party to CERD, CEDAW, CRC and ICESCR, Timor-Leste remains firmly committed to preventing discrimination and promoting peaceful coexistence among all communities.

We also recognize the importance of the Rabat Plan of Action, which provides a balanced framework for addressing incitement to hatred while safeguarding legitimate freedom of expression. Combating all forms of religious hatred must never be used to restrict lawful debate, nor should freedom of expression be misused to justify hatred, discrimination or violence.

Mr./Madam Chair, Excellencies,

Islamophobia does not exist in isolation. Addressing it requires a comprehensive response rooted in international law, human rights and shared responsibility.

First, the international community must strengthen the implementation of existing human rights obligations. States should ensure that national legal frameworks effectively prohibit religious-based discrimination and violence, while fully respecting freedom of expression and freedom of religion or belief.

Second, education and dialogue must be prioritized. Educational systems should promote intercultural and interreligious understanding, historical awareness and the values of tolerance and mutual respect.

Third, digital platforms must be part of the solution. Governments, technology companies and civil society should cooperate to address online hate speech, disinformation and incitement targeting religious communities, while ensuring transparency, accountability and protection of legitimate expression.

Fourth, Member States should support and cooperate with relevant United Nations mechanisms, including the Special Envoy to Combat Islamophobia and other UN initiatives addressing antisemitism, racism and religious intolerance, and share good national and regional practices to strengthen global cooperation.

Fifth, counter-terrorism measures must never stigmatize or target any religious or ethnic community. Policies must be grounded in international human rights law and must avoid profiling or discriminatory practices.

Sixth, we encourage strengthened data collection, research and monitoring of hate crimes and discrimination based on religion or belief. Reliable data can help inform evidence-based policies and enable more effective prevention strategies.

Seventh, the voices of civil society, faith leaders and community organizations should be supported and protected. Their work in promoting dialogue, reconciliation and solidarity across religious communities remains essential.

Mr./Madam Chair, Excellencies,

Timor-Leste's own history teaches us that societies thrive when diversity is respected and protected. We stand with all nations committed to combating Islamophobia, antisemitism and all forms of religious intolerance, racism and discrimination.

Timor-Leste remains committed to working with the United Nations and all partners to advance a world where every person—regardless of faith, belief or background—can live in safety, equality and mutual respect.

Thank you.