



UN Special Adviser on Prevention of Genocide, High Representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion decry rising Antisemitism and Islamophobia around the world

GENEVA (21 December 2023) Urgent action must be taken by all to ensure members of religious minority communities are able to enjoy their rights on an equal basis and receive effective protection, UN experts said today. The Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, the High Representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and the Special Rapporteur on freedom of Religion or Belief issued the following statement:

“All stakeholders, including States, media, social media and technology companies, and universities should respond promptly to sustained and widespread reports of incidents reflecting Antisemitic and Islamophobic hatred in countries around the world in a manner consistent with international human rights standards.

Acts of harassment, intimidation, violence and incitement based on religion or belief across the world, which have been sharply rising in recent months and have spiked to alarming levels in recent weeks, have shocked our conscience and created a climate of fear and deep distrust across many societies. In some countries, national authorities and civil society organisations have reported a dramatic increase in Islamophobic and Antisemitic incidents. Other religious minority communities are also experiencing acute and unprecedented insecurity.

Mosques, synagogues, other places of worship and cemeteries have been attacked, desecrated, and vandalised in many countries; so too have schools, cultural centres, and memorials; even private homes and properties belonging to Jews and Muslims; whilst other religious and belief communities too have not been spared.

We have credible reports from different regions of the world that document physical attacks, including killings, verbal attacks and death threats that appear to be motivated by the perceived religious affiliation of the victims. Other reports appear to indicate that actors, including governments, may be exploiting these painful times as cover and distraction for dramatically increasing the oppression of religious or belief minorities, assaults on vulnerable populations, and the suppression of other rights in misguided attempts to address societal polarisation.

People have been killed, and many have been threatened and harassed, even children and students in schools and universities. Expressions of religious hatred and incitement to violence are proliferating rapidly on social media.

At a time when conflict is fuelling great political tension, it must be recalled that such tensions never justify expressions of identity-based hatred, and that the humanity of all must be respected and equality and justice ensured.

