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S/2025/347**Annex to the letter dated 30 May 2025 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General****Address of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the participants of the International Conference themed “Islamophobia in Focus: Unveiling Bias, Shattering Stigmas”, held on 26 and 27 May 2025 in Baku, Azerbaijan**

Dear Conference participants,

I welcome you to the International Conference titled “Islamophobia in Focus: Unveiling Bias, Shattering Stigmas”, being held in Baku.

Today’s Conference is dedicated to the third anniversary of the “International Day to Combat Islamophobia” established by the UN. This important event, organized in our country and now a tradition, serves to raise awareness of the problem of Islamophobia, an issue that concerns all of humanity.

Azerbaijan welcomes the resolutions on combating Islamophobia adopted by the UN General Assembly and calls for the immediate implementation of all measures envisaged in those documents.

Regrettably, Islamophobia has recently become more pronounced and systematic on a global scale. Currently, this negative trend extends beyond the borders of any single country and is observed in many parts of the world. Hostility towards Islam, hatred and intolerance against Muslims, and anti-Islamic sentiment are becoming increasingly widespread and severe.

Islamophobia manifests in various forms, including everyday racism and discrimination, hate speech, physical attacks, stigmatization in the media and on social media platforms, institutional bias, and other expressions of intolerance. Such unjust and prejudiced attitudes significantly hinder Muslims’ ability to integrate into society and to feel like full-fledged members.

In some countries that once engaged in the slave trade, pursued policies of occupation and colonialism, and committed acts of genocide – yet now present themselves as democratic countries safeguarding human rights – Islamophobia today has, in effect, become a state policy. In those countries, laws are enacted to restrict the rights and religious freedoms of Muslims, while their rights to education, housing, and employment are systematically violated – all under the guise of defending secular values.

Meanwhile, acts intended to insult the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him), the burning of the Holy Qur’an, attacks on mosques and other places of worship, the desecration of Muslim cemeteries, and similar actions are becoming increasingly common and are clearly aimed at offending the sentiments of Muslims. Attacks on the Islamic faith and Muslims under the pretext of “freedom of speech” are unacceptable.

It is deplorable that some countries not only fail to combat a universal scourge and threat like Islamophobia, but even encourage it. Supporters of radical movements and far-right parties seek to win the hearts and minds of the people by portraying Islam and Muslims as a threat to Western values and identity, thereby expanding their base and securing more seats in various parliaments.

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Meanwhile, bodies like the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, driven by bias and double standards, contribute to the spread of anti-Muslim sentiment.

Another factor contributing to the spread of Islamophobia is the activity of certain media organizations, which play a destructive role in shaping public opinion and fostering a negative image of Muslims. Such media outlets deliberately equate Islam with extremism, terrorism, and similar concepts, promoting a biased perception of our religion, portraying it as a source of threat, and unjustly labelling it as a religion of terror. They foment mistrust and fear in society by linking the country's sociopolitical and socioeconomic problems to Islam and Muslims.

Azerbaijan is a country that has faced – and continues to face – Islamophobia. During the 30-year-long occupation of our lands, the Khojaly genocide was committed against our people. We were subjected to ethnic cleansing, and as a result, over one million of our fellow Azerbaijanis became refugees and internally displaced persons. Nearly one million mines were planted across our territory, accompanied by acts of uricide, culturicide, and ecocide.

Much to our regret, driven by pure religious bigotry and Islamophobia, certain circles in the West have turned a blind eye to Armenia's occupation of our lands, distorted the essence of the conflict, and attempted to portray it as a religious conflict.

During the occupation, our centuries-old historical and cultural monuments, including Islamic sites such as places of worship, mosques, shrines, and cemeteries, were destroyed, desecrated, and razed to the ground. Number of cultural heritage sites have been looted, their purpose altered and affiliation falsified. At present, as large-scale reconstruction efforts are underway across our liberated territories, destroyed mosques and religious sites are being restored, and some are being built anew.

Unfortunately, in the historical lands of Western Azerbaijan, from which our fellow Azerbaijanis were also expelled, our people's rich tangible and intangible heritage was deliberately and systematically annihilated or falsified as part of a policy aimed at erasing all traces of Azerbaijanis from their historical and ethnic lands.

The decision to restore the Irevan Qadi Council, made at the meeting of the Caucasus Muslims Board Qadi Council a few days ago, was an important step toward restoring historical justice and conveying the truth to the international community about the destruction of our cultural, religious, and moral heritage located in Western Azerbaijan.

With the exception of a handful of countries, most nations of the world are made up of multiethnic and multiconfessional societies. Therefore, the coexistence of representatives of different nationalities, ethnic groups, and religions in an environment of mutual dialogue and understanding is of paramount importance for civil peace and solidarity in the country. Azerbaijan can serve as a role model for many countries with its experience in this area.

As an integral part of the Islamic world, Azerbaijan is a country where representatives of various faiths and cultures have historically lived in an atmosphere of brotherhood and friendship. The Islamic faith, as a bearer of universal values, has played a vital role in shaping and advancing these exemplary relations. To this day, the Azerbaijani people continue to uphold their rich traditions of tolerance and multiculturalism, contribute actively to intercivilizational dialogue and Islamic solidarity, and take meaningful steps to promote Islamic values globally.

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Islam is a religion of peace, solidarity, and mercy. Despite ongoing smear campaigns, it continues to embody the highest moral values, justice, and compassion, serving as both a moral anchor and a guiding force for billions of people around the world.

Current global challenges and crises, the new trials and tribulations confronting the Islamic world, as well as rising Islamophobic trends and attempts to belittle our religion, make it imperative for Muslim nations to unite, strengthen our solidarity, and extend mutual support. We must stand as a unified front in combating Islamophobia, which afflicts the entire Muslim world, and raise our voices in protest against this injustice and these harmful trends.

I wish this Conference every success and express my confidence that it will make a valuable contribution to fighting Islamophobia, unveiling bias and shattering stigmas surrounding Islam.

Ilham Aliyev  
President of the Republic of Azerbaijan

Baku, 26 May 2025

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