

**STATEMENT DELIVERED THE DELEGATION OF THE BOLIVARIAN
REPUBLIC OF VENEZUELA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, DURING THE
HIGH-LEVEL EVENT TO COMMEMORATE THE “INTERNATIONAL DAY
TO COMBAT ISLAMOPHOBIA”**

New York, 15 March 2024

Mr. President,

1. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has the honor to take the floor on behalf of the Group of Friends in Defense of the Charter of the United Nations.
2. At the outset, allow us to convey our appreciation to the Islamic Republic Mauritania, in its capacity as Chairman of the 49th Council of the Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), for convening this High-Level Event to Commemorate, for the second time, the International Day to Combat Islamophobia, established by virtue of General Assembly resolution 76/254.
3. Similarly, we would like to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the President of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General of the OIC, the High-Representative for the UN Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), and to all other speakers in the program for their much valuable reflections on this important day in respect for all religions or beliefs, including Islam, and, above all, the promotion of tolerance and a culture of peace.

Mr. President,

4. The Member States of our grouping ratify their absolute condemnation to the stigmatization, prejudice and attacks against the Islamic faith, which have had manifestations of different kinds in various regions of the world, in some cases regretfully tolerated or promoted by some political and social sectors.
5. In this context, we stand in full solidarity with all the victims of hatred against Islam and share the conviction expressed by its leaders and believers about the legacy of peace, empathy and progress that the practice of their religion has sown, while strongly advocating for their human rights, including their inalienable right to freely practice and profess their faith.



6. We ought to recognize that, unfortunately, the noble aspirations enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations for living in peace, in a world of dialogue and coexistence, despite political, religious and cultural differences, and both praising our commonalities, while embracing our diversity, have been tarnished by extremist political, economic and religious advocacy groups that base their ideas, among others, on prejudice, discrimination, hatred, persecution, racial profiling, negative stereotyping, stigmatization, terrorism and violent extremism conducing to terrorism. In this regard, we also cannot overemphasize the importance of ensuring that terrorism and violent extremism conducing to terrorism should not be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic group.

Mr. President,

7. Unfortunately, in recent years, devotees of the Islamic faith have been subjected to increased persecution and stigmatization in multiple parts of the non-Muslim world, which constitute unacceptable manifestations of intolerance and hatred that must be condemned, redressed and assumed as a crime. Likewise, we strongly reject the burning and desecration of the Quran – the holy book of Muslims – and further reject attempts and acts that disrespect symbols and sacred figures of the Islam under an abusive use of their so-called freedom of expression, which constitute inadmissible actions against the Muslim world, or against any other religion, for that matter.
8. We seize this privileged opportunity to express our serious concerns as to the detrimental impacts of deliberate Islamophobic practices and systematic defamation against Muslims and their holy book and shrines, especially on Muslims in minority or vulnerable situations such as those under foreign occupation. In this regard, while expressing our deep concern about the dire situation of the people of Palestine resulting from the systematic and widespread attacks of the occupying regime, particularly during the recent aggression against Palestinians in Gaza.
9. We reject the Occupying Power's Islamophobic practices and narratives, which, as part of a bigger campaign, is aimed at, *inter alia*, promoting and inciting violence against Palestinians, futilely divert the attention of the world from the catastrophic situation of Palestinians as well as to justify brutal, bloody and inhuman attacks against Palestinians, which are in flagrant violation of the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and of the most basic norms of international law, including international humanitarian law.



10. The dead, mainly of women and children, now number in the tens of thousands and the global clamor for a ceasefire is unheeded, with impunity and ruthlessness. We therefore demand, once again, a complete halt to this brutal aggression and the immediate opening of humanitarian channels, which is critical for saving lives. In this regard, we continue to denounce the double standards of some States, in flagrant violation of the UN Charter.
11. The United Nations, we shall recall, was established to achieve, among others, cultural diversity in peaceful coexistence, and interreligious dialogue, despite our differences. All religions must have a place and space in the values of the UN. Our Organization was also created with the purpose of preventing a repetition of the untold horror of war, the consequences of which we are still suffering, in the aftermath of the Second World War. It is, therefore, the political responsibility of *all* members of the international community to prevent the revival of the nightmare of human extermination, and it is not too late to put an end to the ongoing carnage against the Palestinian people.

Mr. President,

12. We seize this opportunity to note the ongoing international initiatives aimed at advancing interreligious, interfaith and intercultural dialogue, including those promoted by the OIC and the UNAOC, as well as those foreseen in the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, coupled with the multiple programs coming from faith-based organizations themselves, mindful of the importance of coexistence in peace, as part of common efforts to advance international peace and security, sustainable development, and human rights.
13. To conclude, the Group of Friends in Defense of the Charter of the United Nations reaffirms its unwavering determination to ending all manifestations of violence and hatred based on religion. Realizing this common goal will require the genuine commitment of *all* States, as well as of faith-based organizations and society as a whole, to recognize, once and for all, that cultural and religious diversity enriches us and generates paths towards sustainable development, to the extent that guarantees are provided, so that everyone can exercise their religion or belief freely and without impositions or limitations, in line with the spiritual call for love and coexistence that all faiths equally profess.

I thank you, Mr. President.