

AAL Hussain Recorded Remarks  
USCIRF Hearing on “Anti-Muslim Policies and Bias in Europe”  
February 9, 2022

Hello. I’m Rashad Hussain, the U.S. Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom. I’d like to thank USCIRF for hosting this hearing and inviting me to provide remarks. I value USCIRF’s work and their longstanding partnership with the State Department’s Office of International Religious Freedom in defending and promoting freedom of religion or belief around the world.

Anti-Muslim hatred does not occur in a vacuum. It is often part of a political context that includes political leaders and parties that espouse hatred and intolerance; laws and policies that unduly restrict religious freedom; the denial of justice and accountability resulting in a culture of impunity; and unchecked societal intolerance towards members of religious minority communities. Our focus today is on anti-Muslim hatred. But other forms of racism, xenophobia, and intolerance – including antisemitism and anti-immigrant discrimination – flourish under these conditions as well, which ultimately undermine peace and security.

Monitoring and combating anti-Muslim hatred has always been a part of my office’s mandate. We document cases of violence and discrimination against Muslims around the world in our annual international religious freedom report. We also engage diplomatically and programmatically to address the overt and underlying drivers of these issues.

In recent years, we’ve seen how anti-Muslim hatred has often corresponded to other societal trends. These include an influx of migrants from conflict areas, the rise of populism and nationalism, and an increase in xenophobic language in political rhetoric. Muslims – along with Jews, and other religious and ethnic minority groups – face growing threats of violence from racially and ethnically motivated violent extremism or REMVE. REMVE individuals and groups are motivated by intolerant and ethno-supremacist ideologies, particularly white supremacy. While these violent extremist actors are diffuse in their organization, they capitalize on societal grievances by way of technology to further their hatred and intolerant ideas. Disinformation, misinformation, and stereotyping both in online and offline media contribute to the rise of anti-Muslim hatred.

In my capacity as Ambassador at Large, I look forward to working with European governments at the highest levels to address these issues.

The witnesses we will hear from today are bridge builders and problem solvers. They understand how anti-Muslim hatred infringes on the rights to freedom of religion or belief. They recognize that the consequences of policies and actions born of this hatred stunts the development of safe, inclusive, and equitable societies.

I look forward to hearing their thoughts on how we can collectively stem the disturbing tide of anti-Muslim hatred we are witnessing in Europe. We must determine how to push back on hurtful ideologies and actions and find constructive ways to build communities not only free of fear, but full of hope.