



**Statement of the Permanent Mission of the Holy See
to the United Nations and Other International Organisations in Geneva
at the 49th Session of the Human Rights Council**

Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief

Geneva, 10 March 2022

Mister President,

In recent years, the rise in situations of conflict and insecurity has negatively impacted religious or belief communities, which are often targeted through persecution, violence, false detention, seizure of property, forced exile, murder, ethnic cleansing and other crimes against humanity.

The Holy See is concerned about the scale, severity and systematic nature of human rights violations against Christians, Jews, Muslims and members of other religions, based on their religious identity. This Delegation condemns the use, in certain contexts, of oppressive counterterrorism measures to infringe on the rights of religious or belief minorities in the name of combating “extremism” or threats to security.

*The “ability to express and practice one’s faith, including the freedom of worship, is one of the most intimate and sacred human rights, and remains essential especially in times of crisis and insecurity”.*¹ For this reason, the Holy See is convinced that the protection of religious minorities “*must extend beyond merely preventing the intended or actual annihilation of minorities, but must include examining and addressing the root causes of discrimination and persecution against them and spur the vigorous defence and protection of their human dignity, the rights to life and to freedom of conscience and religion*”².

While reaffirming that each religious tradition has the right and responsibility to elaborate and express its beliefs, the Holy See insists “*that religions must never incite war, hateful attitudes, hostility and extremism, nor must they incite violence or the shedding of blood. These tragic realities are the consequence of a deviation from religious teachings.*”³ In this regard, persons of faith and religious leaders, in a concerted effort with local, national and international authorities, have a pivotal role to play in combatting violations of the right to authentic religious freedom and in stemming violent extremism, purportedly perpetrated in the name of religion.

Thank you, Mister President.

¹ Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States of the Holy See, Statement at the High-Level Segment of the 49th Session of the Human Rights Council, 1 March 2022.

² H. E. Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States, Head of the Delegation of the Holy See, Intervention-at the Side Event entitled “Protection of Religious Minorities in Conflict”, during the Seventy-second Session of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, 22 September 2017.

³ Pope Francis and The Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, *Document on Human Fraternity*, 4 February 2019.