



Oral Statement

53rd session of the Human Rights Council

Urgent Oral Debate

NGO: Jubilee Campaign

Speaker: Hulda Fahmi

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen;

Jubilee Campaign would like to raise to the Council's attention to the concerning religious hatred motivated by anti-apostasy and anti-blasphemy laws.

We firmly oppose these laws that restrict an individual's right to choose a faith, practice a faith, change their religion, not have a religion, tell others about their beliefs and practices, or openly debate and discuss aspects of faith or belief. Restricting the freedom to choose one's religion, to change it or to question religion or belief doctrines is an assault on the very core of human nature.

Currently at least 12 countries maintain the death penalty for apostasy or blasphemy. The UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief has noted how where domestic laws criminalize apostasy or blasphemy, "it is more likely that the existence of such laws will encourage vigilante mobs or zealots to murder those alleged to have violated those laws."¹

We denounce the recent threats of violence called for by Sunni militant groups on innocent and unrelated Christian communities in Pakistan following the recent protest in Sweden.

We call on the Council to:

- Prioritise the repeal of anti-apostasy and anti-blasphemy laws which encourage violence against individuals solely for choosing or expressing their religion or belief.

¹ UN Human Rights Council, *Freedom of religion or belief*, ** *Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief*, 5 March 2019, A/HRC/40/58, para. 59.

- Encourage peaceful and human rights rooted counter-demonstrations in response to expressions of religious hatred.

Thank you.