



Baku, July 7, 2023

THE JOINT STATEMENT
of the Leaders of the Religious Denominations in Azerbaijan
In the name of the One Creator!

We, the Leaders of the Muslim, Jewish, Christian Orthodox and Albanian-Udi denominations operating in Azerbaijan, consider the act of insulting and burning the Holy Book of Muslims - the Noble Quran, which alongside with the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) mentions Abraham, Moses, Jesus and the Holy Mother Maria, and carried out on June 28 nearby the Mosque, under police protection in Stockholm, the capital of Sweden, an Islamophobic provocation and a savage act of vandalism and strongly condemn this disgusting incident.

It should be noted that unprecedented manifestations of Islamophobia, such as insulting the Prophet of Islam by means of caricatures, and open support for these actions from the head of State, has begun with France, claimed to be a cradle of democracy. At present, adhering to its Islamophobic essence, France, a vindicator of the ideas of colonialism, supports the aggressive separatism in Azerbaijan and creates obstacles to peace process in the region. The actions of a number of unscrupulous individuals, inspired precisely by the ugly example of France - such as the acts of insulting the Islamic religion, and its blessed Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), and the Holy Quran and all Muslims, committed in

Stockholm under the Swedish state bodies' permission and protection, under the pretext of democracy and freedom of speech, by the head of the ultra-right "Hard Line party", as well as in the Netherland, have been unequivocally condemned by people of faith as a call to hatred, and a moral crime committed against people's beliefs and dignity.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the ministerial meeting of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Baku on July 5 this year, His Excellency the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Mr. Ilham Aliyev, voiced the following thoughts: *"One of the countries that is still pursuing neo-colonialism is France... Nearly 1.5 million Algerians were killed during genocidal French rule. Algerian freedom fighters' skulls still remain in Paris Museum as war trophies. This is cynical and disgusting. We demand President Emmanuel Macron of France to hand over to Algeria the remains of its heroes."* We support these thoughts, as well as the decisions and resolutions adopted by the Non-Aligned Movement. At the same time, we welcome the Document on "Human Fraternity for World Peace and Coexistence" signed by His Holiness Pope Francis and His Eminence Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Al-Sherif Sheikh Ahmed Al Tayyib in Abu Dhabi on February 4, 2019, as well as the resolution No. 2686 adopted by the UN Security Council on June 14 with expression of deep concern about the cases of discrimination, intolerance and extremism, particularly those caused by Islamophobia.

We declare that the purpose of such despicable acts, which have been committed repeatedly and are still being committed today, is to encourage extremism and terrorism on the international scale, and to incite hatred between people and religions, thereby encouraging terrorism. The regular nature of happening such cases in Sweden, the brute violation of the rights

of Muslim believers living in this country, is the humiliation of the dignity of almost two billion Muslims around the world. Therefore, we call on the government of the Kingdom of Sweden to accept its culpable responsibility for the incident that occurred on June 28 and take practical steps to prevent and avoid the recurrence of desecration of religious shrines and attributes.

We are seriously concerned about the information circulating in the media in recent days that the Swedish police have received new requests for permission to burn the Koran, as well as the Torah and the Bible. Such calls that encourage conflicts on religious grounds, and acts that incite aggression and violence are becoming a threat for a Human. Cases of abuse of religion for political purposes, and manifestations of xenophobia serve to disrupt the internal stability of societies and states, create conflicts and discord. The world community and all religious denominations have a duty to act together against this shameful violation of the rights of the believers.

We, the leaders of religious denominations in Azerbaijan, call the statemen, public figures, international organizations and religious figures and institutions of the world to strongly condemn the committed act, as well as all manifestations of radicalism, extremism and xenophobia under the guise of religion; to respect people's spiritual values regardless of the faith and belief, and to pay more serious efforts to prevent cases of hate speech and insulting from happening. For this purpose, we consider it appropriate to adopt at the UN level a resolution strongly condemning cases of vandalism and hate speech against religions` holy persons, symbols, attributes and sites, and to reflect relevant provisions in the legislation of the world states to prevent and prohibit such actions.

Humiliation and insult, whether it be the Holy Quran, or the Torah and the Bible, or any other religious books and attributes is a crime that creates

discord and conflict between people. Any acts of violence, especially in churches, mosques, synagogues and other religious sites, are criminal acts of aggression against all world religions.

We would like once again to emphasize that freedom of speech should not be about touching moral feelings, and inciting calls to hatred, but on the contrary, inviting people to spirituality. The world is a common home we share all together, and it is the duty and obligation of each of us to maintain peace in this home. We call on the world's statemen and public figures, international and religious organizations to join our voice.

May the Almighty God protect the world from actions that bring harm to humanity and from the evil deeds of the ignorant people! Amen!

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Chairman of the Caucasus Muslims` Board

Milikh YEVDAYEV
Head of the Mountain Jewish Community in Azerbaijan

Archimandrite ALEKSIY
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