

UNHRC condemns Sweden Quran burnings

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Why in news?

- The UN Human Rights Council voted to condemn recent Koran burning incidents, but many countries declined to back the resolution, fearing it encroached on free speech.
- The resolution was introduced by Pakistan on behalf of the 57-nation Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).
- India was among the 28 countries who voted in favour, 12 voted against and seven countries abstained.

What is United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)?

- **About**

- The Human Rights Council is an inter-governmental body **within the United Nations system**.
- **Based in Geneva**, the council was created in 2006 by the UNGA.
- The High Commissioner for Human Rights is the principal human rights official of the UN.
- The council meets three times a year to examine human rights violations worldwide.

- **Members**

- It is made up of 47 States responsible for the promotion and protection of all human rights around the globe.
- 47 Member States are elected directly and individually by secret ballot by the majority of the members of the General Assembly.
- Human Rights Council candidates are elected in geographical groups to ensure even representation.

- **Tenure**

- The members of the Council **serve for a period of three years** and they are not be eligible for immediate re-election after two consecutive terms.

- **Primary functions of the UNHRC**

- **Promoting human rights**
- **Monitoring and reporting** – It monitors human rights situations worldwide and conducts investigations or commissions inquiries into alleged human rights abuses.
- **Universal Periodic Review (UPR)**: The UPR is a unique mechanism where each UN member state's human rights record is reviewed by other member states.
- **Special procedures**: The UNHRC appoints special rapporteurs, independent experts, and working groups to examine and report on specific human rights issues or themes.
 - These experts conduct fact-finding missions, raise awareness, and make recommendations to address human rights violations.

What is Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)?

- **About**

- OIC (formerly known as Organization of the Islamic Conference) is the second largest inter-governmental organization after the United Nations.
- OIC is the collective voice of the Muslim world to ensure and safeguard their interest on economic socio and political areas.
- It has **membership of 57 states** spread over four continents.
- It has a **permanent secretariat in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia**.

Image caption: OIC

- **Origin**

- The Organization was established upon a decision of the historical summit which took place in Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco on 25 September 1969.
 - This summit was a result of criminal arson of Al-Aqsa Mosque in occupied Jerusalem.

- **Criticism**

- This organization has been termed a toothless tiger by many analysts when it comes to dealing with squabbles among member states.
- Every member has a veto. As a result, the organization fails to take a critical stand on serious disputes that are shaping in the middle east.

- **India's Relationship with OIC**

- At the **45th session of the summit in 2018**, Bangladesh suggested that India should be given observer status. It was vetoed by Pakistan.
 - This suggestion was on the basis that more than 10% of the world's Muslim population live in India.
- It was Qatar that first proposed '**Observer' status** for India at the OIC Foreign Ministers' meet in 2002.
- India was invited to attend the OIC meeting in 1969 but Pakistan prevailed upon and got the invite withdrawn.
- However, **India, in 2019, made its maiden appearance at the OIC summit, as a guest of honour.**
 - The then External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj addressed the inaugural plenary in Abu Dhabi.
- Despite this, **the organisation is known for its anti-India rhetoric under the influence of Pakistan.**

News Summary: UNHRC condemns Sweden Quran burnings

- The United Nations Human Rights Council approved a disputed resolution on religious hatred in the wake of the burning of a Quran in Sweden.
 - An Iraqi immigrant to Sweden burned the Quran outside a Stockholm Mosque last month.
 - This sparked outrage across the Muslim world and demands by Muslim states for action.
 - Sweden has condemned the Quran burning but maintains the country has a constitutionally-protected right to freedom of assembly, expression and demonstration.

Key highlights: UNHRC condemns Sweden Quran burnings

- **What does the resolution seek?**

- The resolution calls:
 - for the U.N. rights chief to publish a report on religious hatred and
 - for states to review their laws and plug gaps that may impede the prevention and prosecution of acts and advocacy of religious hatred.

- **Resolution opposed by USA**

- The resolution was strongly opposed by the United States and the European Union, who say it conflicts with their view on human rights and freedom of expression.

Q1) What is the geographical location of Sweden?

Sweden is a country located in Northern Europe. It is situated on the Scandinavian Peninsula, which extends from northern Europe into the North Atlantic Ocean. To the west of Sweden is Norway, while to the northeast it shares a border with Finland. The country is also connected to Denmark via the Öresund Bridge, which spans the Øresund Strait between Sweden and the Danish island of Zealand. Sweden has a long coastline along the Baltic Sea to the east and southeast. Overall, the geographical coordinates of Sweden range from approximately 55.34°N to 69.06°N latitude and 11.11°E to 24.17°E longitude.

Q2) What is Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of UNHRC?

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a unique process conducted by the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) to assess the human rights situations in all UN Member States. It is a mechanism established in 2006 with the goal of improving the human rights situation in every country through dialogue, cooperation, and recommendations. The UPR involves a review of each member state's human rights records approximately every four and a half years. During the review, the state under review presents a self-assessment of its human rights situation, highlighting achievements, challenges, and developments. This self-assessment is supplemented by information from various stakeholders, including national human rights institutions, civil society organizations, and UN entities.

Source: [Quran burning in Sweden | India backs Pakistan's motion at U.N. rights body against religious hatred](#) | [United Nations Human Rights Council](#) | [Organisation of Islamic Cooperation](#) | [Hindustan Times](#)

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