In Collaboration with

Directorate of Youth Affairs
Sports & Youth Affairs Department
Govt: Of Sindh

Ministers of Youth
Creating Pathway for Utilizing the Potential Youth of OIC Countries

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Creating Pathway for Utilizing the Potential of Youth of OIC Countries

Societies, culture, believes, norms, practices and tradition moves from one era of society to another stratum throughout the generations. Wherewithal the younger generation of society is regarded as societal inheritance and future hope of any nation. OIC as organisation is blessed to have the significant stake of youth among the member states. The OIC states possess almost the 1.75 billion young populations between ages 15-29. (Rasooldeen, 2017). Highest population of the youth is found predominantly in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, Uganda, Iran and Nigeria. (Lord, 2016)

Scholars discuss vividly on importance of Youth and their prerequisite for society. Youth is believed as medium of bringing social change and a source of raising popular demand. Dr. Hamzah in his article shares the impression given by Sayyid Abul A’la Maududi on Youth. Maududi compares Youth with ‘flaming blood’. Accordingly, the youth has strength of the ‘sharp sword’ that can be utilized to achieve greater goal (Hamzah, 2017, p. 101). Youth is rightly regarded as an asset of society. The episode of Arab spring in the year 2011 noticeably determined the significant role of youth in the world. It also manifested the potential of Muslim youth to the world. OIC is bestowed with the task to streamline this youth potential for their wellbeing, for the development of member states and progression of the Muslim Ummah.

The youth is strong elementary force for any society, but in current global contest they are not void of perils, they are facing multiple challenges of the time. The 20th century ended with low note for Muslim majority countries as some of those were overshadowed by terrorism, extremism, fragile governments and social backwardness. At this backdrop, the
rapid shoot of young population is not less than a challenge. The young population in this scenario are facing serious problems. Non availability of education and employment opportunities is making the youth of the Muslim world vulnerable. The youth have no more way either to adopt an extremists approach or spend same life in the same susceptibility. The 2011 incident in Arab world and the most recent Students led Protest in Bangladesh are significant to notice that most of the youth in Muslim majority countries are not passive and not even prone to fanaticism. They are more aware of the political, cultural norm and have the enough valour to speak up for their perquisite rights. The state’s role in dealing with younger generation popular demands of freedom is not satisfactory. In August 2018 Bangladesh protest was blow over with hundreds of protestors getting injured (Pokharel, Ahmed, & Wilkinson, 2018). Iran and Saudi Arab students on most events has have been perturbed by strident states policies. States see younger population demands as anti-state and adopt hard line policies (Friedman, 2018). The OIC states at this time need to understand younger generation demand and must realize that the youth could never have any anti-state feeling and approach if they are equally and righteously treated.

The rising young population is putting more pressure on society with demand of employment, social change, flow of freedom, and desire more educational opportunities. M. Dunne in his article discuss this idea that youth devour a profound attachment to their belonging nation with the sense of ownership but State must reorganize their national belonging if their affiliation begin tilt towards the ethnic belonging (Dunne, Durrani, Fincham, & Crossouard, 2017, pp. 267-268). Youth can never have the intention to carry out anti state demagogue. OIC as whole must look upon the conflicts around the Muslim world. The state of affairs in
war torn countries like Yemen, Syria and Iraq are lamenting for the young population. They are being excluded from the social affairs, networking, marginalised economically and ignored by countries leader if drawing any policies eventually the future of these young population in war torn countries is seemingly devastating and so a serious matter of concern (See, Simmons, 2018).

OIC is definitely fortune to have the bulk of younger population but it is also necessary for OIC committee of IPHRC with collaboration of Youth ministry to probe the reason for the elevating numeric of Young population. A number of reports proved that child marriages are still prevalent, especially where conflicts are on height. Countries like Philippines, Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Sudan and Afghanistan are found top on the list. Certain countries in the region of Africa, and Asia allowed the early marriages in between ages 15-18 (Gray, 2016). This is the serious problem for young girls that restrict their empowerment. The youth of the time realizing these ills of society led a protest in Syria against child marriages. Curtailment of child marriages is necessary with the fact it is creating demographic imbalance in some countries, on the other hand restricting women empowerment and sensing gender impartiality in those regions.

The younger population in the Muslim majority world having their reservation over socio-political state obfuscating affairs are also dealing with some serious problem of unemployment, health issues and non-access to higher education. The enrolments in Education sector increased during last decade but it is not satisfactory, considering the increased population. While unemployment rate noted in the year 2016 is 7.4%. (OIC Labour Market Report, 2017). Most of the younger population in slum areas of the countries are
subject to the health issues or even death due to “war and disaster, musculoskeletal, narcotics, HIV/AIDS & tuberculosis, cirrhosis, digestive diseases, nutritional deficiencies, chronic respiratory diseases, NTD and malaria”. Research conducted in seven OIC states shows that the least physical activities are becoming a cause of ‘Metabolic Syndrome (MetS) among adolescents’. Due to ‘armed conflicts post-traumatic stress disorder (PTDS) among younger population was found in Palestine of about 23–70% and Iraq about 10–30%’. (Obermeyer, 2015)

The present generation is meeting with the challenge of globalized technological development and scientific innovations. Muslim countries are lagged behind in these sectors, since the countries are coping up with the issues of economic backwardness and other aforementioned problems. However, in face of these problems the countries are unintentionally overshadowing the science and technology sectors and the youth potential is also not been applied in same sectors. In 2005 OIC published a report highlighting upon the Muslim countries non enthusiastic attitude over the matter. The report mentioned that merely ‘2.5% of the scientific papers had been published between the years 1995-2005”. Muslim countries are downplayed in the sector of research and development. About only 0.3% of GDP is devoted on Research and Development sectors (Mohamed Nawab, 2009, pp. 98-99). OIC states have the cluster of 500 universities, among those only ten universities ranked top among 400 world universities by the Times Higher Education World Universities. The institutes are not serving enough in research and technology (see to know more about universities, Osama & Guessoum, 2016). Similarly the OIC countries active participation in sports and physical activities are at low pace, especially in terms of women input in such
activities. Sometimes the societal norm in some countries came into their way, however the women have the great heroism to embark upon the field of sports. That’s why we have a ladies like Ibtihaj Muhammad (American), Shinoona Al Habsi, Mariya Stadnik, Zhazira Zhapparkul, Kimia Alizadeh Zenoorin, Hedaya Wahba, Sri Wahyuni, Samina Baig and many more (Harvard, 2016). These are some groundbreaking realities on which OIC states must pay their serious heed. The youth of the Muslim world seems unsecured with the rise of Islamophobia in world. As to quote here “the early decades of the twenty-first century, they have become a focus of concern globally. This attention has been intensified for Muslim youth in a period when fears about Islam are highlighted in the West and religious-based tensions and conflicts proliferate”. (Dunne, Durrani, Fincham, & Crossouard, 2017, p. 268). This insecurity is not a sign of weakness rather provide an incentive to youth for uniting to deal with misconception. The potential power of Muslim Youth can be utilized here to impinge upon disregarding about Islam and tell the world that youth are not prone to extremism.

If the serious attention is not paid on the aforementioned problem than young generation could have become a dependent and would disturb the strata of society. It is very necessary to initiate the policies from the platform of OIC to cater the unprivileged youth from member states and provide them with basic necessity to spend a better life and that can end the illiteracy and unemployment. Youth of the Muslim world can never be excluded since they have the great potential, they cannot be ignored because they have a profound awareness and great sound to unleash wider pragmatic changes. They have a power to ameliorate the system. They can be better provided with proper platform so they can determine the autonomy for all
and unity for ummah. OIC must utilize this potential in every sector of life, though it is humanities, science & technology, Research & development, policies making, sports and trigger youth activism.

References


Suggested Reading


In Collaboration with

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Ministers of Youth
Promoting Youth Activism for the cause of Al Quds

Author: Sundus Alam

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Youth has a great potential to contribute to the Islamic world. In order to make use of this untapped youth’s potential this committee was designed. The objective of this committee is to foster youth forums and programs in order to fight extremism and all kinds of social illnesses by promote capacity building, youth exchange programs, youth employment and provision of high quality education.

Promoting Youth Activism for the cause of Al Quds:

Young population is one of the most important strengths of the OIC member countries and according to the current population projections it will remain a major strength over the coming decades. It is projected that one-third of young population worldwide will be living in OIC countries in 2050. While this offers a great opportunity for OIC countries, it also makes them face critical challenges in utilizing this great potential. A large population of youth is experiencing tremendous levels of stress due to limited opportunities for social mobility and restrictions on in-depth participation in social, cultural, economic and political life. This state of affairs leads, in many cases, to social turmoil and political unrest (SESRIC File 2015).

Youth is the pillar of any society, and if not trained or educated well, it can also hinder the development and progress of the society. There is an urgent need in the Islamic world to educate the youth, so that they understand the importance of exercising their political rights. Lack of education leads to ignorance and, in the case of Al Quds, it is one of the reasons why this issue has not been resolved yet. The youth should be taught to use various platforms to voice their opinions on religious, social and political issues, which would increase awareness, and would help them understand the world affairs.
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There are several examples in history where youth and students lead activism brought a massive change or transformation within the society. ‘Students and youth leaders fueled the American Civil Rights movement from the very beginning. Six years after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled segregation of public schools to be unconstitutional, four black students from the North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College sat down at a “whites-only” lunch counter in Greensboro, NC to protest the racial exclusion of blacks. This moment sparked a movement. A few days later, the students returned to the same lunch counter with 300 more students, and soon activists were staging sit-ins and other demonstrations in nearly every major city in the South. The actions of those young black leaders and countless others who followed their example, paved way for the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, spurring progress where some thought impossible (One Campus org).’

How can youth activism be used to combat the issue of Al Quds? Peace and prosperity of the Muslim World can only be achieved by engaging and developing every young person in the Islamic world for a better future. Young people have the power to transform a society for better or worse; it depends on the opportunities and the environment that they are provided with, which shape their attitude towards different situations. The youth should not be underestimated. Youth from all around the OIC geography, need to develop their leadership skills by putting themselves into challenging environments and through that they shall learn how to grow and progress.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” — Margaret Mead.
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The issue of Al Quds hasn’t gone unnoticed by the young generation of the Muslim World, there are several conferences and sessions which are being held in various parts of the world to raise awareness about the issue as well as to show solidarity with the people of Palestine. One such conference was organized by Turkey-based Anadolu Youth Association and the International Coalition of Youth and Student Unions in 2017. Youth organizations and student unions from 30 countries participated in the two day conference held in the Turkish city of Istanbul. The conference was held to condemn the atrocities that Israel is inflicting on the Palestinians, and to show support to the Palestinian cause. "We organize such conferences to send a message to the whole world that the Palestinian cause cannot be erased from our daily agenda," Ihab Nafi, head of the International Coalition of Youth and Student Unions to Support Palestine stated (Al Jazeera, Muslim youth gather in Istanbul to support Palestine, 2017).

New Instruments to promote Youth Activism for the cause of Al Quds:

New and improved modes of communication are rapidly emerging; the latest sensation is the internet, particularly the social media which is quite popular among the young generation. Youth relies on the internet to learn the latest developments occurring around the world, and it is of utmost importance that the internet must be used to raise awareness among the young generation about the issue of Al Quds. The aim is to work on mechanisms for advancing, protecting, promoting and strengthening the position of the Muslim Youth in the world. The young people spend most of their time on the internet, and so the social media should be used as a tool to educate the youth about the importance and weightage of their opinions and voice. The social media platforms present a great opportunity to communicate with a large
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number of audiences from across the world. Online campaigns should be initiated, with the aim to engage the youth in the process of activism, and to involve them in the process of possibly bringing a revolutionary change in the case of Palestine. A youth lead blog collective The Gaza Youth Break Out (GYBO) released its manifesto online in December 2010, which received a lot of attention from the international media and human rights activists.

‘Gaza Youth’s Manifesto for Change is an extraordinary, impassioned cyber-scream in which young men and women from Gaza – where more than half the 1.5 million population is under 18 – make it clear that they've had enough (The Guardian, 2011).’

Methods of Activism the Youth can adopt:

These methods include nonviolent and peaceful public protests, for example a march, rallies, or public demonstrations etc. During these protests slogans and banners, may be used, speeches can be delivered to various crowds to convince them to fight for the cause of Al Quds. Chanting various slogans during protests in the favor of the Palestinians, or against the government of Israel is another way to show your support for the people of Palestine. Boycott of Israeli products on a large scale can be another way of showing disagreement and anger on the actions of Israel against Palestine. Using art and photography can be a very effective instrument, as can videos and live speeches; these are all useful skills that young people can adopt. Online campaigns can be started with the aim to gain more and more support from people across the world, and to spread awareness of the inhuman acts and policies of Israel towards the people of Palestine. These online protests will also provide Palestinians with the opportunity to share their stories with the world. The use of social media platforms such as
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Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and online petitions are just a few examples of how youth can incite quick and effective action.

Help students understand that bringing publicity to their issue amplifies the message, gets more people concerned and potentially has a greater impact. They can write a press release, do an interview, write an op-ed in their local paper or invite a reporter to see what they are doing and write something about it. This sharpens their own message and serves to bring that message to a larger group of people (ADL Org).

The debate or discussion in this committee will revolve around the ideas and techniques of how the youth should be taught about the major issues that the Palestinians are facing, and they need to be encouraged to get involved through activism. The young generation needs to be educated on the roles that they can play in the international community and how they can best utilize their skills to fight for the cause of Al Quds. “Youth account for many of those adversely affected by armed conflicts. Disruption of youth’s access to education and economic opportunities has a drastic impact on durable peace and reconciliation”, states United Nations’ Security Council resolution 2250 (2015).

The main focus of this committee will be to come up with strategies to promote youth led activism, and also to discuss the factors due to which the young generation is not involved in political activism. The people of Palestine have been under Israeli occupation since 1948 and they’ve been through immense torture. They have been stripped of their rights, homes, and identities. So, there is an urgent need to involve the youth of the Islamic World, in the peace process. There are several examples in history and even in the current world where the youth played a very influential role in bringing change or revolution. The purpose of this committee
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is to devise an effective plan or appropriate techniques that the youth can use to influence the entire Muslim Ummah, to take action and to stand up for Palestine.

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