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The Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission

Empowering Women in the Muslim World

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National MOIC Pakistan
The Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission

The Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) was established by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) as an independent organ to work in area of human rights. The idea for its establishment was delivered by the leadership of OIC in the Ten-Year Program of Action (TYPOA) adopted by the 3rd Extraordinary Islamic Summit held in Makkah in 2005. The program called for the establishment of "an independent permanent body to promote human rights in the member states" and for the "elaboration of an OIC Charter for Human Rights." The program also asked the OIC to "introduce changes to national laws and regulations in order to guarantee the respect of human rights in Member States" (Kayaoglu, 2015). The next Summit in Dakar (2008) accorded IPHRC a statutory status in the OIC Charter. In June 2011, the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers met in Kazakhstan to approve the draft statue, effectively establishing the first Muslim human rights commission, the IPHRC.

Objectives of IPHRC: Advancing Human Rights

The objectives of the IPHRC are outlined in the statutes of OIC, based on Articles 5 and 15 of the Charter and the Ten Year Program of Action and recalling the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam. According to the statutes of OIC in Articles 8 and 9, the Commission shall work to "advance human rights" and "support Member States' efforts to consolidate civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights". (Petersen, 2012)

Since its inception the commission has deliberated on a number of important issues. The committee focused on problems in Palestine, Islamophobia/Muslim Minorities, Rights of Women & Child, Right to Development and Right to Education/Human rights education.

<u>Empowering Women in the Muslim World:</u>

Women have been playing an active part in all social, political, cultural and economic fields and also participated in the building of civilizations and training of generations throughout the history. Despite their active contributions in all the areas, women and girls today are still suffering from exclusion, marginalization and face difficulties impeding their participation in social life and other areas. The reasons behind them are non-Islamic traditions and practices as well as misunderstanding and misinterpretation of religion. The empowerment of women and improvements of their political, social, economic and health status are very important as well as it is essential for the achievement of sustainable development. In all parts of the world, women are facing threats to their lives, health and well-being as a result of being overburdened with work and of their lack of power and influence. In most regions of the world, women receive less formal education than men, and at the same time their own knowledge, abilities and coping mechanisms often go unrecognized (UNFPA, n.d).

Women in Muslim societies are considered as key to social continuity and the preservation of the family and culture. The status of women is seen as directly connected to maintaining or reforming tradition. Muslim governments have been promoting education for both boys and girls in order to achieve economic growth but the percentage of girls enrolled in schools in developing countries has been relatively low. Limiting women's access to higher education, either openly or by tacit discrimination as happens in some countries, is a violation of Islamic injunctions. It is true that in some places, parents tend to favor their sons over their daughters, however, this is in clear violation to the Prophetic tradition. Social evils such as

"honor" killings, domestic violence and the abuse of women exist in both, Muslim and non-Muslim cultures. They are completely anathema to the Islamic concept of justice. To associate these evils with Islam is a grave injustice to the cause of women empowerment (Why Islam, 2011). Reportedly, various harmful traditional practices take place which contribute to complications in mother and newborn life, including child marriage, early pregnancy and female genital mutilation. There are also social and cultural barriers that prevent women from accessing information and services on maternal and reproductive health.

Marital age is a critical driver of women's health outcomes. Pressure to marry early and have many children, increase the risk of spontaneous abortion and the risk of losing a fetus by four times. In developing countries, complications of pregnancy and childbirth are the leading cause of death in young women aged between 15 and 19 years. Of the 10 highest-risk countries, eight are in sub-Saharan Africa, countries where "pregnant women are much less likely to receive assistance," due to poverty, conflict or weak institutions, according to the UNICEF. Those eight countries are the Central African Republic (1 in 24 chance of death); Somalia, Lesotho, Guinea-Bissau and South Sudan (all with 1 in 26 chance of death); Cote d'Ivoire (1 in 27) and Mali and Chad (both with 1 in 28 chance of death). Each year, some 2.6 million babies do not survive through their first month (The Express Tribune, 2018).

The practice of female genital mutilation is still widespread in some countries of the Eastern Mediterranean region. Studies show a prevalence of 98% in Somalia, 93% in Djibouti, and 91% in Egypt. The negative health impact of this practice is well known, and it is therefore alarming that studies reveal an increase in the

medicalization of female genital mutilation. For instance in Egypt, 31.9% of female genital mutilation is performed by health professionals (World Health Organization, Media Centre, 2013).

Although the Muslim countries are developing quickly in many areas, the other conditions of women empowerment are still at a low pace, their contribution in economy and political participation is lacking in comparison to other world. For instance, in Europe the percentage of women ministers is 15%, in the Pacific 11%, followed by Asia at 10% and the Arab States remain the lowest at only 7% (UN Women, 2012).

The IPHRC will investigate the problems women are facing in Muslim Countries and explore the reasons of all discriminations against women. Women empowerment is necessary for Muslim countries in order to eradicate the social and economic problems. Women empowerment does not only make the lives of women better but it also helps in bringing positive change in the society. With a healthy mind and body Muslim women can bring prosperity in this world. This committee will put all of its efforts in finding out all the possible measures that need to be taken for the well-being of women in Muslim World.

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