



# DEFENDERS

Autumn & Winter 2015 & 2016





## Editor's Note

2015 came to an end with all its ups and downs, under circumstances in which not only most parts of the world did not become any safer compared to the year before, but we witnessed more violence. The rise in terror attacks in the world which is the result of the rise in extremism and violence, has caused great concern. To this aim, this issue of Defenders reviews the terror attacks that occurred this year along with interviews with international experts to review the roots of terror attacks by extremists. Violence against minorities that include Shia minorities is also reviewed in another article.

Another of the issues and challenges the world experienced last year, was the refugee crisis, and for the first time since the end of the Second World War, the world faced a huge refugee challenge, something unprecedented. Another part of this issue deals with a review of the refugee crisis, root causes and ways to solve it in an analytical article.

Unrest and conflicts in Yemen, Syria and Iraq were some of the most important human rights violations that occurred in the world last year, which is highlighted and reviewed in this issue.

Also in the year that has just gone, the world faced the threat of ISIS, Boko Hara, Al-Shabab and other terrorist groups which requires the special attention of the whole of the international community. For this reason, in this issue of Defenders there is a review of the terror attacks that have taken place and the reason why terror threat spread.

But alongside the aforementioned terrible events, the global working agenda in ratifying the MDG till the end of 2030, the Iran and world powers nuclear agreement, the Paris agreement on climate change are some of the positive human rights achievements of last year, which has raised the hopes of many human rights activists.

Overall, the promotion of human rights in the world and Iran are some of the objectives that Defenders magazine tries to promote through transparency of information. Therefore alongside dealing with human rights issues, Defenders takes a pathological look at human rights in Iran. To this aim, an article in this issue reviews violence against women in Iran laws. The subject of child labour and street children is also discussed in this issue in the form of a report.

There is a brief look at ODVV's activities including the commemoration of International Volunteer Day, participation in international conferences, alongside statistics on psychological counselling of victims of violence and a review of human rights developments in Iran.

In the hope that human rights NGOs activities will be a positive step towards the expansion of human rights and reduction in their violations, the ODVV welcomes the cooperation of international organizations with NGOs active in the field of human rights.

# Editorial





# Refugee Crisis in Today's World

BY: Zahra Mirabian  
Political Analyst

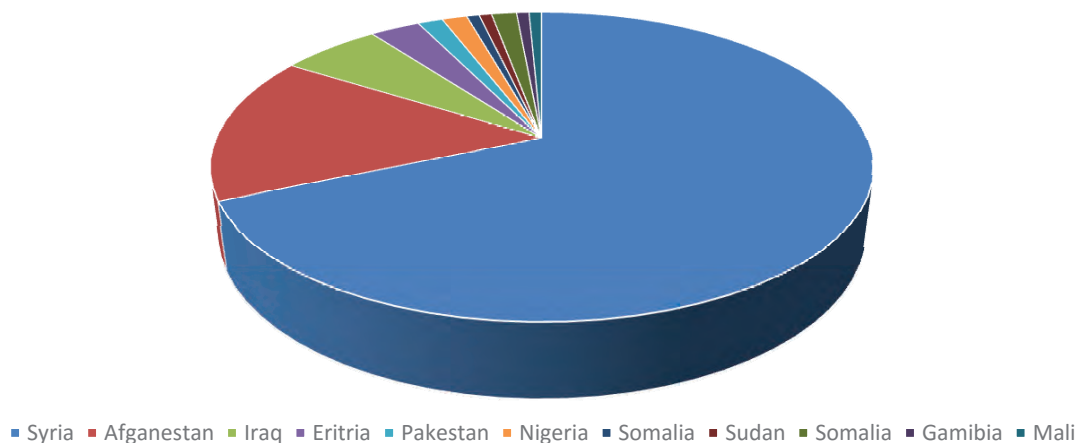
In 2015, the world faced one of the greatest human crisis in contemporary history, a crisis which seems does not want to subside and its ramifications increase on a daily basis.

Till the end of 2015, over 4,384,512 Syrians fled their country, and are staying in near and far away countries. Also, 578,050 Iraqis were driven from their homes for various reasons and fearing their safety chose different destinations. Aside from Iraq and Syria both of which

are involved in all out wars against terrorism and extremism, countries such as Afghanistan and Libya too have experienced migration and refugee crisis in varous forms, have all eperienced such as a change in their demographics or being temporary or fulltime hosts to refugees. Till the end of 2015, at least 2771 people lost their lives trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea.

With the start of the New Year, thousands of people

The natinalities of refugees arrival to Europe across Mediteranean2015



have taken upon themselves and their families the dangers of a tiresome journey through land and sea, in the hope of finding safe refuge in Europe.

The EU who tried to take in refugees in the beginning of the crisis, is closing the door to thousands of migrants through adopting new laws. And while still suffering from the effects of the past economic crises, the EU has still not managed to create a coordinated mechanism for accepting refugees, and the member countries do not have the inclination to do anything in this regard, either. Even countries like Germany and Austria who initially welcomed refugees with open arms, today are being more cautious in this regard. Europe is facing a serious challenge today, a challenge that on the one hand targets thousands of refugees and on the other hand its arrow is targeting international laws, to which Mankind has gone through countless ups and downs to achieve. Human rights principles, the 1951 Convention on Refugees Rights being one of them.

### **Middle East's refugee problem history**

Crisis region neighbouring countries in the Middle East have played host to refugees for some years. Countries such as Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon are not able to be hosts without NGOs' and international support, because these countries do not have enough economic stability and power to support the refugees and this issue alongside other challenges, results in a secondary migration of these refugees towards Europe via land and sea.

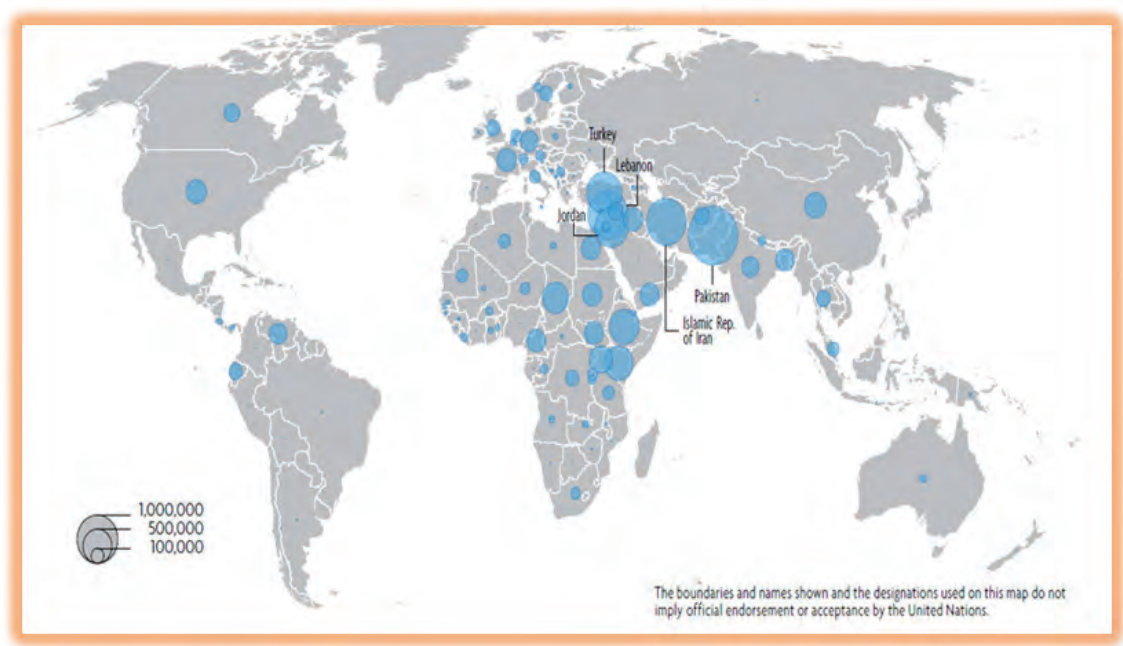
For many years, many countries of the world – particularly in the Middle East – have been in the thick

of refugee crises, countries such as Iran, Pakistan, Lebanon and Jordan.

From the outset of the occupation of Palestinian Territories by Israel and the commencing of migration and refuge of Palestinians, the neighbouring countries such as Jordan and Lebanon have been hosts to thousands of Palestinian refugees. Despite their own numerous political and economic problems, Iran and Pakistan have shouldered the burden of being hosts to millions of refugees, responsibilities that mostly have had to endure alone and without international assistance, and thus have managed to prevent crises to occur beyond the region.

Over the past decades, the Middle East region has constantly been the scene of competition between powers outside the region, due to having strategic significance. There countries whose support of totalitarian governments in the region, ignited the flames of ethnic and religious violence and caused wars and the displacement of millions of people. The occupation of Afghanistan, the Iraq-Iran War, failing to recognise the rights of the people of Palestine in defending their national identity, are examples of the support of these players of war and chaos in the Middle East region. Despite years of war and violence, the people of the region have never shut the door on millions of refugees, have always carried out their human duty towards their guests very well, and over decades, by carrying out international commitments and accepting the Convention on Refugees, they have never threatened to leave these conventions.

### **Global distribution of refugees (UNHCR map)**



### **Europe and International Community's Approach to Refugees**

With the escalation of the war in Syria and continuation of the domination of extremism in the Middle East and North Africa, an unprecedented wave of migration of refugees to Europe began.

Some of the reasons for the unprecedented migration towards Europe are as follows:

- Escalation of the proportions of the unstoppable extremism violence and as a result, the filling of refugee taking capacity of neighbouring countries.
- Rise in human trafficking activities and the profiteering from this inhuman act.
- The fall of the previous regime in Libya and the inability of the new government to control the rush of African refugees towards the Libyan coast and the Mediterranean.
- Turkey's indifference towards controlling its sea and land borders.

All these factors and other precursors resulted in EU member states in being caught unprepared in taking in the huge influx of refugees. Europe's approach in accepting refugees from the beginning has faced with various ups and downs. Eastern European countries such as Hungary, do not have a suitable process for accepting refugees, and this caused the protests of human rights defenders. Also Germany and Austria, who initially welcomed the refugees with open arms, are faced with extensive protests. The adoption of strange laws such as confiscation of refugees' valuables by Denmark shows the mental uncertainties of the leaders of this country in how to deal with the refugees.

The thing that is certain is that the adoption of laws that are contradictory to the Geneva Convention and make life difficult for asylum seekers to prevent them from migration, and threatening to leave the Refugees Convention, as Denmark did in January, will not reduce the complications of the refugee crisis, but will rise racist and inhuman sentiments.

### **Human Rights Achievements under Threat**

With the rise in movements that do not tolerate the presence of refugees on EU soil, Europe today is faced with a serious challenge.

Now, in the second decade of the third millennium, modern and developed Europe, a continent that has been a forerunner in human rights developments, must adopt a new and fundamental approach and pursue finding a solution for the refugee crisis, away from political games and its short term interests, with the help of other world powers whose roles are key in solving the Middle East crisis. And pay attention to the fact that, the key to solving the refugee crisis, is ending violence and extremism and providing regional and

international support for universal peace – peace that covers the rightful rights of people.

### **Extremist Terrorism and the Refugee Crisis**

Without a doubt the most important factor in the occurrence of the recent refugee crisis is war, instability rise in extremism and terrorism, which has put the Middle East region and subsequently the world up against an expanding problem.

When we look at the global extent of refugees and the displaced, when terror is present in any form, whether state sponsored and or extremist groups against the government, the flow of migration and forced fleeing commences.

The start of a civil war which occurs with the instability of governments, further escalates this human chaos. Over the last few years, with the start of the Arab Spring and the appearance of power vacuums in some regional countries, the scene was set for groups who had spread extremist ideology in the heart of the Arab society, for many years.

Groups such as ISIS who came from the Al-Qaeda ideology, appeared overnight and in radical ways. In a short period of time, in an unbelievable speed, through the use of unknown and limitless resources and modern military hardware, they managed to occupy large swathes of Syria and Iraq and establish an illegitimate self-claimed state. The horrifying ISIS rule which came to power through terror and uncontrollable violence, strengthened its base, and caused the displacement of millions of people. Over just a few years, the inhuman acts of this group which do not corroborate with any of the human rights ideals, created the biggest refugee crisis in today's world. Since ISIS deems the visualisation of violence as a factor in creating fear and reaching victory, it does not stop committing brutal violence.

To control the refugee flow and prevent the escalation of human crisis, the world needs to recognize the basis for the growth and maintenance of the power of extremist groups, close the door to the spread of influence of these groups and prepare the basis for stability of the people of the region. Otherwise with the change in the demographics of the Middle East region and Europe, the world will faced challenges much greater than the refugee crisis.

If today's international community does create sustainable peace in the Middle East, the world will be faced with challenges more concerning than the refugee issue, some of these challenges are:

- Mass migration from villages and towns facing the society with a huge cultural change, which can have dangerous consequences for human societies.
- The human rights achievements will noticeably





be threatened by new challenges. Germany's change in asylum seeking laws, due to recent events that occurred during New Year's Eve celebrations in Cologne, and protests in Europe against governments taking in refugees, are clear examples of these new challenges.

- Social and psychological damages will affect asylum seekers which years of war and violence has inflicted them with. Moving from the extremist violence under ISIS control and stepping into displacement has inflicted irreversible damages to the mental health of asylum seekers and if it is ignored by the international community and host countries, will cause numerous social, political and cultural problems and anomalies.

- Another challenge in today's refugee crisis is the conditions of host countries. Countries that are currently faced with great economic problems must further be supported by the international community. Parallel to international community's support for host countries, these countries must do more efforts to promote human rights and encourage of NGOs to take steps towards the protection of refugees.

#### **Reaching Sustainable Development Goals : a Solution for an End to the Crisis**

One of the ways to put an end to the current crisis can be the establishment of political and economic stability in the volatile Middle East and North Africa. For as long as war and violence casts its shadow on millions of people, the huge influx of refugees will continue.

Developed countries that the refugee crisis has caused them serious challenges, can provide assistance for the all-out development of countries where extremism and violence have destroyed their infrastructures through more accountability and above their national and regional interests.

Goals 16 and 17 of the Sustainable Development Goals, is a clear document showing the international community commitment to reach peace and sustainable development.

According to the Sustainable Development agreement, signatory countries are committed to cooperate together towards reaching these goals, for international peace and stability.

Reaching the ideals and goals of sustainable development in a short term process, and in the long run will bring lasting peace for countries whose human, social, political and economic foundations have been undermined by violence and extremism; and this aim will not be attained without international cooperation.

#### **Conclusion**

- In the framework of the objectives and principles that are stated in the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, by recommending a resolution at the UN General Assembly regarding the urgency for reaching a comprehensive view in fighting extremism and conditions that cause its spread, with the cooperation of a number of countries, the Islamic Republic of Iran prepared the basis for the adoption of the resolution by the General Assembly, a resolution that stresses on the expansion of peace and rejection of violence in today's world. The adoption of this resolution can be a beginning of a new path for the start of international partnership in achieving lasting peace.

- Today's refugee crisis is a result of lack of attention to peace, and a reminder of the importance and necessity for the establishment of security in all corners of the world. We now live in a world that indifference towards what is happening around us will soon engulf us and its damaging consequences will have a deep impact on the lives and future of the children of this planet.

#### **Sources:**

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# A Discussion on Islamophobia

An Interview with Dr. Chandra Muzaffar

President of the International Movement for a Just World (JUST)<sup>1</sup>

By: Leila Shabani

## **Brief introduction:**

Islamophobia means an unnecessary and groundless culture of fear against Muslims [anhttp://www.veteranstoday.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Chandra-Muzaffar.jpg](http://www.veteranstoday.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Chandra-Muzaffar.jpg) Islam. Namely, “Islamophobia term may be defined sociologically as the fear that mostly the Western society has against Muslims”.

The causes and characteristics of Islamophobia are still debated. Some scholars have defined it as a type of racism. Some commentators have posited an increase in Islamophobia resulting from the September 11 attacks, while others have associated it with the increased presence of Muslims in the United States, the European Union and other secular nations.

Today, unfortunately the Islamophobia and anti-Islamism, which are growing fast, are subconsciously inherent in Westerners along with abuse and aggression of some political, religious, radical Western groups and some Muslim groups’ murdering innocents people, that subconscious fear comes out and become a serious threat for Muslims.

Due to the importance of the issue and since extremism and violence are major challenges to civilization today as well as the necessity of distinguishing extremism from Islamic behaviour, the ODVV delegation had an interview with Dr. Chandra Muzaffar, president of the International Movement for a Just World (JUST), who had come to Tehran to speak at an international conference on “Commemoration of Dr. Ali Shahriati and the future of Human sciences” in Espinas Hotel on 16th December 2015.

In this regard there is a need to raise awareness on analysing Islamophobia, root causes of terrorism and how to combat the menace.

Not only JUST and ODVV could for instance interact with one another through different channels on this issue of terrorism and extremism, but also all other humanitarian organizations and human rights defenders can work jointly in this field and define the issue as their goal for the year 2016.

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1. For further information about JUST you can visit their website: <http://www.just-international.org/>

**Q: What are the key features of Islamophobia? Tell us about its causes and roots.**

A: Islamophobia is a negative attitude towards Islam and Muslims borne of prejudice and hatred towards the religion and its followers manifested in the speech and behavior of segments of the non-Muslim populace in the West and elsewhere.

Though the terminology is contemporary, the phenomenon itself is deeply rooted in history. A negative outlook on Islam began to develop within Church circles in the Christian world from around the 9th century onwards as a result of the dramatic rise of Islam in the 8th and 9th centuries as the new faith spread rapidly across the Mediterranean and North Africa and on to the Iberian Peninsula in Europe itself. Because it was perceived as a challenge to Christian power, the Church and Christian groups began to disparage Islam and the Prophet Muhammad. It was partly because of this antagonism towards Islam, that the Church and a section of the European aristocracy embarked upon the Crusades from the end of the 11th century. When the Crusades aimed at restoring Christian suzerainty over Jerusalem and the Holy Land failed, after an initial triumph, Christian groups became even more antagonistic towards Islam and Muslims. Concerted attempts at demeaning Islam and demonizing the Prophet reached a crescendo during the epoch of Western colonial dominance from the 18th to the 20th centuries when most Muslim countries came under colonial sway.

It is against this historical background that one should view contemporary Islamophobia. It came to the fore again after the Palestinians and other Arabs began to act, through militant and non-militant ways, to win back their territories

usurped by Israel, backed by a number of Western powers, in 1948. When Muslim states began to assert their rights over oil in the early seventies and oil prices hitherto dictated by Western oil companies began to increase, the Western media once again began to smear Islam and to denigrate Muslim leaders especially those who were brave enough to stand up to Western dominance.

In the first two decades of the 21st century, three additional factors seem to have contributed to Islamophobia. One, the violent reaction of some Muslims to renewed Western conquest



of, or intervention in, some Muslim countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Sudan and Somalia. Two, acts of terrorism committed by some Muslims in various parts of the world which may not be related to Western policies of conquest or intervention or hegemony in general. Some of these acts of terrorism may even be part of some misguided dream of establishing a global Muslim Caliphate. Three, the growing presence of Muslims in Western countries and certain aspects of their lifestyle related to their





**But there is something else that Muslims should also do. When an act of terror is linked to Muslims or for that matter any other religious or even a secular group, ask openly what are the root causes? What explains the readiness of these young men to commit acts of terror? Who is funding these terrorists? Where are they getting their weapons from? In the case of groups like Daesh which is purportedly responsible for the recent 13th November Paris massacre who provides these terrorists with ‘terror’ skills?**

practice of Islam ranging from attire to abstinence from alcohol which segments of the European or American or Australian majority as the case may find unacceptable. This in turn reinforces prejudice leading to Islamophobia.

**Q: How can Islamophobia be a form of racism as Islam is not a race?**

A: I do not regard Islamophobia as a form of racism since the communities that are targets of the phenomenon in Europe and the United States are from diverse cultural communities. Besides, if one reflects on the origin of this negative outlook on Islam and Muslims going back more than a 1000 years, as I have pointed out, it is linked to religion. It was not just the irrational fear of another religion but the fear in Europe of a new power. Indeed, power was, and is, a fundamental factor in the relations between Christian and Western communities, on the one hand, and Islam and Muslims, on the other.

**Q: To what extent would you agree that ‘Islamophobia’ is more a form of racism than religious intolerance?**

A: As the above answer shows, it is religion

not ‘race’ that is at the core of Islamophobia. But it is more than religious intolerance. In the early centuries it was religious hatred, religious prejudice that shaped the outlook of influential Christian elites in Europe towards Islam and Muslims. Today, partly because Europe as a whole is less inclined towards religion, it is antipathy towards the Muslim ‘other.’ In the US, negative sentiments towards Muslims and Islam are driven by religion, in the form of Christian Zionism, influential pro-Israel lobbies, and, of course, politics.

**Q: What are the consequences of terrorist attacks, e.g. Paris attacks, on Muslim communities?**

A: Every time a Muslim group commits an act of terror on Western soil or against Westerners in some non-Western country, Muslims living in the West and I dare say Muslims living in other non-Muslim majority countries feel the backlash. There are many instances where Muslim women in hijab have been subjected to severe harassment and have even been physically abused. Arab looking males have also been attacked physically and in one or two cases, even murdered. The demonization of Islam and Muslims in the media also becomes more pronounced in the wake of terrorist attacks. And, as one should expect, politicians start exploiting Islamophobia, hoping to reap a political harvest. Hence, reckless statements by people like Donald Trump calling for the banning of Muslims from the US. In a nutshell, whenever acts of mass violence are committed by Muslims, it is Muslims who pay the price and Islam is sacrificed at the altar.

Of course, Muslims have been vocal in denouncing terrorism. They never cease to emphasize that the terrorists are an insignificant minority within the Muslim community and their ideology and their actions do not represent Islam in any way. It is unfair, they often argue, to tarnish an entire religion or community because of the heinous deeds of a few.

But there is something else that Muslims should also do. When an act of terror is linked to Muslims or for that matter any other religious or even a secular group, ask openly what are

the root causes? What explains the readiness of these young men to commit acts of terror? Who is funding these terrorists? Where are they getting their weapons from? In the case of groups like Daesh which is purportedly responsible for the recent 13th November Paris massacre who provides these terrorists with ‘terror’ skills?

Since terrorism is so inextricably intertwined with Islamophobia --- it has exacerbated Islamophobia --- by delving into the roots of current terrorism, we are in fact also exposing the underlying causes of Islamophobia.

**Q: Practical response – what can be done to prevent the expansion of Islamophobia? Whose responsibility is it to address Islamophobia, the West, Muslim world or civil societies?**

A: The West has the greatest responsibility for checking and eradicating Islamophobia. If it is true that certain governments and intelligence agencies in the West are sponsoring terrorism in order to achieve their geopolitical goals such as regime change in Damascus, --- and it is a fact that terrorism has aggravated Islamophobia --- they should be named and shamed by the Western media which claims to be a champion of freedom and democracy. Islamophobia, we have shown, is also a consequence of Western conquest and hegemony. If policies that seek hegemony come to an end, the reaction to hegemony which feeds Islamophobia will also cease.

The West should undertake a massive programme to educate its citizenry about the presence of ‘the other’. The mass media, schools and communities should be mobilized to the hilt. While similarities in value-systems and social practices should be highlighted, the differences between the majority Western societies and the Muslim Other should also be recognized and appreciated. How these differences contribute to the enrichment of religious and cultural diversity and how such diversity enhances the vitality and dynamism of the larger nation is a message that should be put across to the entire population.

It is not just establishing genuine empathy with the other that is important. The West, especially the influential stratum of society and the young, should through education and awareness-raising,



**Muslims should also examine critically their own attitudes and actions which may have contributed towards the fostering of negative perceptions of Muslims. In this regard, the use of violence to achieve one’s goals, however noble they may be, should be jettisoned totally. Let Muslims struggle for justice and change through non-violent means. Indeed, liberating the entire Muslim world from terrorism and violence should be the aspiration of every Muslim.**

develop a more holistic understanding of how Islamophobia originated and evolved through the ages. This requires a willingness on the part of the West to be self-critical and introspective. It must be prepared to admit that it continued in the past and continues at present to fuel Islamophobia.

Muslims should also examine critically their own attitudes and actions which may have contributed towards the fostering of negative perceptions of Muslims. In this regard, the use of violence to achieve one’s goals, however noble they may be, should be jettisoned totally. Let Muslims struggle for justice and change through non-violent means. Indeed, liberating the entire Muslim world from terrorism and violence should be the aspiration of every Muslim.

Islamophobia will also decrease if some Muslims in the West and in non-Muslim majority societies became less exclusive, less dogmatic and less bigoted in their approach to Islam. Muslims in Muslim majority societies should also be more inclusive and more universal in their understanding of religion. The time has come for Muslims and people of other faiths to give substantive meaning to a highly cherished religious ideal: the oneness of the human family.

# Geography of Shia Killing

BY: Mohammad Karbasi  
Middle East Analyst



This report aims to cast a quick glance at a few examples of countries where Shia minorities or even majorities are target of massacre, restrictions and acts of violence.

## **Saudi Arabia: A suppressed minority**

Shias in Saudi Arabia have been suppressed for years. However, during recent years, they have been able to make their protesting voice heard by media and have been frequently vociferous against acts of violence and other kinds of assaults against them. On the other hand, human rights organizations have time and again protested to violation of the rights of Shias and the suppression of Shia minority in this country, and have issued warnings against this problem. Preachers of hate in Saudi Arabia have been the source and origin of many cases of attacks against Shias in this

country and elsewhere across the region.

Killing Shias in Saudi Arabia has been promoted by the government of Saudi Arabia for years through textbooks taught at schools, and young people in this country are systematically learning hateful viewpoints about Shias. Since 2011, protests have started to rise in the eastern part of Saudi Arabia, which is inhabited mostly by the country's Shia Muslims. Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr, a Shia jurist and leader to those protests, however, was arrested by Saudi officials in 2012 and has been sentenced to "execution with sword and crucifixion in public" for acting against the national security and trying to overthrow the government. Shias make up more than 2 million of Saudi Arabia's population, but for years, they have been living under discriminatory conditions and all kinds of pressure have been exerted on



them by the country's government. Although they live in the oil-rich part of Saudi Arabia, they have been suffering the worse economic conditions. No Shia Muslim in Saudi Arabia can occupy important administrative or military posts as a result of their religious denomination.

Daesh is following suit with Saudi Arabia's muftis in massacring Shias. Sa'd bin Atiq al-Atiq, is a mufti, who is close to Saudi government and is an example of those hatemongers, who appeared on the state-run television of Saudi Arabia quite recently, describing Shias as people whose existence defiles the earth.

#### **Nigeria: Massacre amid media silence**

Nigerian Shias are the most populous Shia group in Africa. At present, nobody knows where Sheikh Ibrahim Zakzaky, the leader of the Nigerian Shias, whose bloody pictures were published by media after his arrest by Nigerian forces, is being kept. Now that various dimensions of the killing of Shias in Nigeria have been relatively clarified, even international media like the New York Times have described this incident as the massacre of Shias.

Ibrahim Zakzaky has lost almost all his family members simply because of being a Shia Muslim. His wife and one son were killed in the recent bloody crackdown while his other three sons had been killed by the Nigerian army during last year's Quds demonstrations in the country.

The problem, however, is not only the Nigerian army because Shias in this West African country are regular targets for Boko Haram Takfiri extremist group. It is said that Ibrahim Zakzaky has followers, who have never taken up arms and this is why they have been described as the weaponless army. With only their empty hands, Shias following Zakzaky have tried to block the onslaught by Nigerian army, but they were answered with hot lead and heavy weapons. The



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fact, however, is that the number of Shias in Nigeria has increased manifold during the past 30 years.

#### **Pakistan: Shias a regular target**

An attack on Pakistani Shias in Parachinar region, which happened quite recently, was the latest instance in which the country's Shia population has been massacred. Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, an extremist group which has made massacring Shias part of its regular agenda, has assumed responsibility for this incident in which at least 25 people lost their lives. According to figures released so far, Shias account for 15-20 percent of Pakistan's population of 176 million, and bloody attacks on them have a long record. One of the biggest examples of the massacre of Pakistani Shias took place in 1988 under the

former Pakistani president, Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq. In that pogrom, more than 80,000 Sunni extremists attack Shia-inhabited villages, razed them to the ground and massacred the Shia population there.

For this reason, religious ceremonies held by Shias, especially on the day of Ashura, have been regularly marked with suicide attacks in such Shia-dwelling regions as Parachinar, Kashmir, and Quetta. International human rights institutions have frequently accused the Pakistani government with indifferences and oversight in this regard. Even the Human Rights Watch has urged the government in Islamabad to take serious measures to curb massacre of Shias by Wahhabi groups. Most leaders of anti-Shia terrorist groups such as Sipah-e-Sahaba, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Taliban officials, and Lashkar-e-Taiba have studied in Dewbandi religious schools, which have powerful anti-Shia roots.

#### **Afghanistan: Protest to killing of Hazara people**

Over a month ago, Afghanistan was scene of street protests for several days in which demonstrators voiced their protest at the killing of the country's Shias. What triggered these protests, which were also held in front of Afghanistan's presidential palace, was the beheading of seven Hazara Shias, who were said to have been beheaded by forces affiliated with Daesh terrorist group after being taken into captivity. Their beheaded bodies were found by people a while later. About 99 percent of people in Afghanistan are Muslim of whom about 70-75 percent is comprised of Hanafi Sunnis and 30-35 percent is Shias. Hazara Shias, however,

have been regular targets for various extremist groups. Now, it seems that it is turn for Daesh terror group to kill Shias in Afghanistan. The forces of Daesh terrorist group have now made the country's Shias one of their main targets in Afghanistan. Shias maintain that the government of Afghanistan is not taking necessary measures in order to protect them against such attacks.

#### **Bahrain: Shias who don't die**

How much blood must be shed for a revolution to be suppressed and for protesters in a country to



be silenced? How many people must be tortured, arrested and killed until popular protests are quelled? The answers to these questions are not clear, at least, for the officials of Bahrain's Al Khalifa regime when it comes to the country's Shias, who make up the majority of Bahrain's population. Threat, arrest, torture, exile, incarceration and massacre have never been able to reduce the intensity of protests by Shias in this tiny Persian Gulf country. Shias account for 70 percent of the population in Bahrain, but they have been subject to discriminatory treatment

of the Sunni Al Khalifa ruling family. A people that make up the majority of the population in the country say that for years, they have been dealt with as second-degree citizens.

Such discriminatory treatment of Shias has caused many analysts to describe Bahrain as a country of apartheid. Al Khalifa regime does not allow Shias to occupy key posts or become members of the police force or join the army. According to a report by Bahrain Center for Human Rights, although Shias account for 70 percent of the population in the country, they only occupy 18 percent of government positions.

#### **Iraq: Shias, main goal of Daesh**

They say that every time Daesh faces a setback in Iraq and Syria, it takes it out on Shia civilians. In Iraq, Shias account for 65 percent of the population, making the country's biggest religious group. Iraq is home to many sacred cities of Shias, including Najaf and Karbala, which host shrines that are visited by millions of Shias every year. However, the country's Shia population has been regular target of terrorist groups in Iraq in past years and is now considered as the foremost target of Daesh terror group.

Some human rights groups have warned that Daesh is targeting Shias in Iraq with various kinds of explosive attacks with the final goal of purging the country from Shia Muslims. It was only through Iran's assistance that religious ceremonies held by Shias in the lunar month of Muharram have been made secure for Shia pilgrims.

#### **Yemen: Shias under Saudi Arabia's bombardment**

Saudi Arabia is one of the biggest customers of arms and advanced bombs in the world. The main use of these bombs in recent months has been in air raids against Shias in Yemen, which has left thousands of civilians dead in the impoverished county. In addition, millions of Yemeni Shias

have been forced to flee their homes as a result of Saudi attacks while Saudi blockade of its southern neighbor has faced people with many difficulties for meeting such primary needs as access to potable water.

According to available figures, 55 percent of the country's population is made up of Shias who have constantly lived under suppression. Even before the beginning of the ongoing unrest in Yemen, the country's army carried out frequent bombardment missions against Shia-inhabited regions. Yemen's former dictator, Ali Abdullah



Saleh, had also suppressed Shias in 2004 through support of Saudi Arabia.

Source: Hamshahri Daily

<http://hamshahrionline.ir/>

Translated By: Iran Review.Org

More By Mohammad Karbasi:

\*Lebanon at Crucial Historical Juncture: Unity, Resistance Key to Repelling Takfiri Threat:<http://www.iranreview.org/content/Documents/Lebanon-at-Crucial-Historical-Juncture-Unity-Resistance-Key-to-Repelling-Takfiri-Threat.htm>

\*Photo Credit: Geo Currents



# Violation of Human Rights in Some Middle Eastern Countries in the Past 6 Months

By: Negar Paidar  
MA in Human Rights

2015 has drawn to a close. A year like previous years while the Middle East is still witness to various conflicts, crises, and problems that coincide these conflicts and animosities which violate the rights of the citizens of these countries. In this report we'll take a look at examples of human rights violations of these people via thematic studies on a number of regional countries including, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Afghanistan.

**Saudi Arabia:** A number of examples of the violation of freedom of religion and belief can be brought up which makes the kingdom one of the most restrictive countries with regards to these freedoms. Religious minorities, the Shia in particular, are faced with extreme discrimination and human rights violations. Some of these instances are prevention of holding religious ceremonies, prohibition and restriction on the construction and maintenance of places of worship, prevention for getting civil service jobs, restriction of access to education and discrimination in the justice system.

In October 2014 the Saudi courts sentenced Sheikh Nimr al Nimr and a number of Shia activists to death. They had been in prison since the summer of 2012 following street protests in the country on charges of creating unrest and paving the way for foreign intervention. In

October 2015 the appeals court upheld the verdict, and the prisoners were executed in January 2016, which caused widespread international reaction. According to the research that Human Rights Watch has conducted on the trial process of these individuals, while the charges are vague, it has been stressed that lawyers were denied in the trial process, there has been no preliminary



investigation and torture had been used to get a confession. Human Rights Watch representative has said that these unfair trials are tools for suppression of the prisoners long term demands.

The thing that has added to the problems of religious minorities in Saudi Arabia, the Shia in particular, is attacks by ISIS which targets the

Shia. From November 2014 to September 2015, five serious attacks took place against the Shia in Saudi Arabia, leaving scores dead and injured. Saudi officials have verbally condemned these attacks but they have done nothing to review the root causes of this violence.

According to Finances Online, Saudi Arabia is the fifth most restrictive country in the world. Although employment of women is not prohibited in the kingdom, there are many preconditions and limitations, and women have to get a permit from the Islamic Affairs Ministry to work; and until the end of 2015 women made up only 13 percent of the workforce of the country. Today, Saudi Arabia is the only country in the world where women are not allowed to drive, and women can only appear in public chaperoned by their relatives. On 12 December 2015, for the first time, women were able to participate in council elections. In other words for the first time women were able to serve as representatives, and as citizens had the right to vote and choose, which is a positive step towards one of women's fundamental civil and political rights in Saudi Arabia. But according to Amnesty International this can be a good sign in the long journey towards the realization of women's rights in the country.

According to Human Rights Watch from the beginning of 2015 till 7 January 2016, Saudi Arabia executed at least 158 people, which is the highest number of executions from 1995 to-date. According to Al Jazeera 71 of those executed were foreigners and migrants that had entered the country for work, had no information about their trial process because they did not speak Arabic, and they were not given an interpreter either.

**Iraq:** the human rights situation in Iraq is getting worse because of the ongoing conflict between the Iraqi military with ISIS and also other countries air strikes in the fight against terror. In 2015, Iraq saw an escalation in the displaced and refugee crisis. Currently over 2 million Iraqis are internally displaced. Hundreds of thousands have been forced from their homes. The so-called Islamic State has had a major role in the violation of the rights of the people of the country: inhuman treatment, suicide attacks in towns and



cities, arbitrary executions, sexual abuse, forced marriages, killing religious and ethnic minorities. Also, in December 2015, 980 Iraqis lost their lives in violent and terror attacks, approximately 506 of which were civilians, and in total 12000 Iraqis lost their lives in armed conflicts in the same year, 7500 of which were civilians.

**Syria:** Insecurity, chaos and armed conflicts in Syria have turned it into a destroyed wasteland and created human crisis. Millions are hungry and homeless in Syria. Currently, Syria has the biggest asylum seeking population. With the start of the new school year, there is no feeling of excitement of going to school and the start of a new freshness. Towns are either destroyed or are in the frontlines. The fate of displaced children who live in camps in neighboring countries such as Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey is very uncertain and painful. Approximately 5000 schools have been destroyed in Syria or turned into military centres. According to the latest UNICEF figures over 2m million children inside the country and 70000 outside, are deprived from education services.

There are film clips on the internet from Syrian children which show them mimicking ISIS. You can see bitter scenes of children's games, while you cannot call them children's games, but violence that have imbedded itself in the children's life through the years of war and chaos, and have inflicted irreversible damages to the humanity of today and tomorrow's Syrian society. Many of the children are forced to work outside the camps in close-by towns to support the rest of their families because they have lost their parents,.





An education advisor for UNICEF says: “the learning and education enthusiasm is shedding among Syrian children.” And this by itself is the beginning of a new human catastrophe, and perhaps it can be called education crisis in a hopeless region. Before the war, Syria was a country with an average income and an over 90 percent literacy level, whereas in 2015, four fifths of the population lived under the poverty line and there are over seven million internally displaced people in the country. The unemployment rate was at 14 percent in 2011 and in 2015 it reached 60 percent. More than 75 percent of Syrian refugee children do not receive health services. Approximately 40 percent of children are suffering from sickness and suffering alongside the difficult living and working conditions, and 35 percent of them cannot read or write because of falling behind from education.

Apart from ISIS there are other extremist such as Al-Qaeda and Al-Nusra fighting in Syria, who are responsible for the systematic violation of human rights and extensive mistreatments. According to HRW the use of cluster and barrel bombs in 2015 which have killed civilians, have resulted in

widespread international reactions for the adoption of treaties to prohibit these weapons.

**Afghanistan:** Following the 28 September 2015 Taliban attack against Kunduz in north-eastern Afghanistan, which was the most significant attack in more than 14 years and resulted in the withdrawal of local officials and government forces, the independent human rights





commission of the country reported human rights and humanitarian law violations in the city. The violation cases reported include, targeted killing of people, targeting civilians, rape, the use of human shields, hostage taking, destruction and stealing of public and private property, forced displacement of civilians, threatening the press and human rights activists. Furthermore, the US forces air attack of 3 October 2015 against a Doctors without Borders hospital in the centre of Kunduz resulted in the killing of 22 people including civilians, 3 children and hospital personal and injured 37 others.

Children too, in Afghanistan are faced with numerous problems. Injuries, maiming, poverty, forced labour, deprivation from education, various exploitations, trafficking and the sale of organs, child abuse and many more, are problems which have all made Afghanistan an unsafe place for children. But the most concerning is that death always threatens Afghan children.

According to HRW report, Afghan citizens, mainly women, suffer from weak rule of law and extensive abuse of power of military forces and armed groups. The Asian director of HRW said that fundamental rights have still not been realized for the majority of Afghans. This country suffers from irresponsible exploitations, lack of rule of law, weak governance, the existence of laws and policies damaging to women, attacks against people and administrative corruption. The mortality rate in Afghanistan of infants and women in labour is at the highest level in the world, and one out of ten of them die before they reach the age of five, and almost one woman loses her life because of labour complications almost every two hours. Underage marriages and forced marriages take place extensively.

Exploitations that have roots in the critical conditions of the country have turned into a daily reality in various parts of Afghanistan. In the last few decades thousands of Afghans have suffered from international treaties violations committed by militias, terror groups, the Afghan government and international forces. The Taliban and other anti-government armed groups have committed grave human rights violations; also the Taliban uses children up to the age of 8 for suicide attacks. It is interesting to know that in the official news of



Afghanistan, only one person has been executed in 2015.

**Yemen:** With the military intervention of Saudi Arabia in Yemen in March 2015, which has violated many rules of war and armed conflict regulations, the wave of human rights violations have increased in Yemen, to an extent that in the first six months of last year, 5400 people were left dead. In January 2016, Saudi Arabia has again bombed the residential districts of Sanaa.

According to Amnesty International report, Saudi Arabia deliberately bombs Yemeni schools and in fact it is children who pay dearly for the attacks. According to UNICEF report approximately 1.8 children have stopped going to school after the attacks.

This conflict, more than anything else have notably affected the food and water safety of the people, because even before the conflict began, Yemen was heavily dependent on the import of crucial goods. According to data, prior to the start of the conflict, Yemen imported 90 percent of its food stuff, 100 percent of its medicines, and 70 percent of its fuel. The war now has caused problems in import of essential goods, and aid organizations are faced with problems filling this



gap. The lack of food security has got worse due to restrictions on transportation.

According to a World Food Programme report, approximately 80 percent of the people of Yemen are in famine situations. The people are suffering from serious shortages of water, food and medicine. According to this report 6 million people are in extreme critical conditions, and need urgent outside help. Over 1.2 million children are suffering from malnutrition and 500000 children are suffering from acute malnutrition.

Humanitarian groups active in Yemen have come under numerous attacks. For example the attacks on the ICRC offices in August forced the Red Cross to suspend its activities in Aden. Also from the beginning of the conflict and up to 2 September, 7 humanitarian groups activists have been killed in the region.

**Palestine:** violence and the violation of the fundamental rights in the Occupied Territories are subjects that are always causes for concern of human rights defenders. Throughout 2015, Israel has increased its attacks against Palestinian civilians, in other words, in the political chaos of the Middle East and in the shadows of human rights

institutions being busy with the crises in Syria and Iraq and... Israel has taken extreme inhuman actions against Palestinian civilians. Holding a meeting on 28 October 2015, while issuing a declaration, the Human Rights Council called for the investigation and establishment of a protection of the rights of Palestinian mechanism.

The Palestinian internal affairs ministry in the Gaza Strip announced that in 2015, Egypt had only opened the Rafah checkpoint to Palestinians for 21 days. This checkpoint links the Strip with Egypt and underneath there are tunnels that have been dug by the residents to go to and fro Egypt. These tunnels are particularly used for the provision of basic living needs. After 2013 Egyptian authorities shut down these tunnels. To this aim they brought in huge water pipes to flood the tunnels with seawater. Aside from the important effect that the destruction of the tunnels have on the people of Gaza's access to basic living needs, this action will threaten the future of the soil of the lands on the border, and even the Palestinians in the town of Rafah are worried about the collapsing of their homes near the border.

It must be said that in the 29th Session of the Human Rights Council which was held from





15 June to 3 July 2015 in Geneva, through a resolution the Council condemned Israel's war crimes in the bombing of Gaza on 1 August 2014. This resolution was adopted on the basis of the report of the independent Gaza investigation commission. In its report the commission presented documents that proved Israel's war crimes in the killing of 2189 Palestinians, 1462 of which were civilians (299 women and 551 children), and injuring more than 11000 and displacing more than 300000 people. It is hoped that the implementation of this resolution will help improve the human rights and humanitarian situation in the Occupied Territories and we see a drop in the human rights violation cases against civilians in particular.

According to the Alzimir Institute report, there are currently 6800 Palestinians in Israeli prisons without going on trial, 470 of which are children. Recently in January 2016 one of the political prisoners who is a journalist and is on hunger strike has been transferred to hospital because of his deteriorating health, and it is possible that based on the law of July 2015, regarding the legalization of force feeding of prisoners who are on hunger strike, he might be force fed by the Israelis.

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# Terrorism in the Year that Just Ended

Zahra Mirabian  
Political Analyst

Taking a look at the terror attacks of last year the fundamental aspects of this evil phenomenon can be analysed. 2015 was one of the bloodiest years in terror attacks. The events that took place from Eastern Asia and the Middle East to the brutal massacres in Africa, terror attacks in Paris and California, all show that violence and chaos that has targeted human values.

With the end of the Second World War and the appearance of the concept of terrorism, it gradually became a common term in international relations terminology dictionary. To-date terrorism has extended its horizons in huge dimensions on the international community and caused tragedies and catastrophes in the world. Initially terrorism was deemed the appearance of certain conditions in a country such as the lack of governance or weak governance. The lack of control of the central government would result in terrorists to take advantage of the power vacuum and take violent action. Following the end of the two World Wars, for the first time when the term "Third World" became common, a number of experts expressed concern over the lack of central power in some countries.

These concerns resulted in the big powers to get the Third World governments to become dependent on them on the pretext of providing the security of the people of the region, and prepare the basis for further influence. And in all of this, many popular movements were cracked down by the national governments and outside forces on the pretext of terrorism.

The influence of world powers and their political games resulted in the further weakening of regional regimes, regimes who by cracking down popular movements, nurtured protest movements within the traditional and poorly educated fabric of their own societies.

## **The Middle East and Terrorism**

Today's Middle East was shaped, following the fall

of the Ottoman Empire and the drawing of political maps in parts of the Empire between the conquering powers of the First World War. The coinciding of these fundamental changes with huge oil discoveries in most of the Middle East and then the occupation of Palestinian Territories by Israel, brought to challenge huge regions of this geographical location of the continent. Challenges that in the last 70 years have turned the Middle East into a whirlpool of violence, war and numerous ethnic and religious conflicts, which have mainly been through the instigation of powers outside the region for reaching their short and long term interests, have turned the Middle East into a toy for their political games. Despite cultural and religious differences, the Islamic community in its 1400 years history have had relative stability in the human fabric, and rarely seen violence and disintegration of people like today.

The Middle East that today is one of the regions strife with the terrorism phenomenon, has itself in the recent years been the victim of wrong policies in the regional and international competitions, policies that resulted in:

- The occupation of Palestinian Territories by Israel, which has been the origin of the endless crisis for several decades.
- Occupation of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union, followed by the political collapse of Afghanistan which became the basis of Afghanistan's situation today.
- The eight year Iraq-Iran war and the international support for the terroristic nature of Saddam Hussein's rule.
- The Persian Gulf War (during Bush senior)
- Indifference towards the formation of the Taliban regime which caused the formation of Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan.
- Occupation of Afghanistan
- Occupation of Iraq

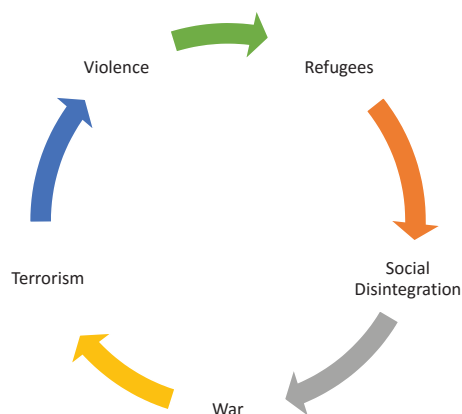
- Indifference towards the crimes of Israel in the region and calling Palestinian groups who defend their fundamental rights, demand their right to self-determination and having an independent country, terrorists.

- Indifference towards the formation and rise of ISIS following the Arab Spring

The implementation of these policies in the Middle East region in the last few decades and the appearance of issues such as disintegration of peoples, war, violence, displacement and refugees, that ultimately resulted in terrorism.

These factors are connected to each other in a cycle of cause and effect

The cycle has created two big crises: Refugee crisis and terrorism



The rising terrorism that has engulfed the Middle East and the world and is on the rise, is caused by numerous factors:



The said weaknesses alongside wrong mindsets, has formed the simple and shallow ideologies of terror groups, and particularly in illiterate or poorly educated societies who have not learned constructive conciliation and interaction, and instead, try to find themselves fanatical supporters. As a result, all the factors that create the terrorism mentality, expansion of terrorism in huge dimensions can also be deliberated.

## Terrorism on the Rise

The recent attacks in various parts of the world, which with the start of the new year, shocked the international community, is a reminder of the expansion of violent ideologies in the heart of societies who have mostly been distant from terrorism. Countries with democratic structures that often saw themselves in defending human values, are threatened in an unbelievable way, and are vulnerable towards the damages caused by these terror acts. Violence which until a while ago was only news from distant Middle East and Africa, reached itself into Europe, Asia and America, and has seriously challenged human rights norms.

Terrorism emerges with the aim of destroying human principles, through various methods of bombings, suicide bombings, kidnappings, war and or more complex forms such as Al-Qaeda, Boko Haram and ISIS. And since it is fed with extremist ideology, it does not tolerate any obstacles in the way of its expansion.

With the occurrence of horrific events such as the attacks in Paris, Indonesia, Lebanon and other parts of the world, the dangers of the growth of terror groups is ringing louder alarm bells to the international community than before.

The increasing terror attacks need further cooperation of the international community in the fight against terrorism and its root causes.

## Cooperation in the Fight against Terror, the Only Way to Rein In

Fortunately, today's world has reached a crucial consensus, in the fight against terror. However, until

the roots of violence and extremism are not eradicated from the heart of societies, the world will continue to witness violence and war, and while poverty, social, economic and political inequalities exist, terrorism will not be defeated. To reach practical solutions for creating a world free of violence, mankind will have a long and arduous road ahead of himself, a road that without cooperation, dialogue and global mutual understanding will not lead to the destination and will not reach any further than short term goals.

# Role of NGOs on the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee

By: farzane Mostofi

Pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 5/1 (paragraph 65), the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee (Advisory Committee) functions as a think-tank for the Human Rights Council (HRC), focusing mainly on studies and research-based advice in a manner and form requested by the HRC, and shall convene up to two sessions for a maximum of 10 working days per year (paragraph 79).

At its thirteenth session in August 2014, the Advisory Committee decided to hold private meeting in the framework of each of its session with Non-governmental organizations and civil society representatives.

NGOs in 3 ways can participate in Advisory Committee:

## **1. NGO written statements**

NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC may submit written statements relevant to the work of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee (in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of ECOSOC resolution 1996/31) ahead of the relevant session.

we wish to draw the attention of NGOs to ECOSOC resolution 1996/31, which authorizes written statements of: a) 2,000 words for NGOs in general consultative status; and b) 1,500 words for NGOs in special consultative status and on the roster.

Written contributions from NGOs may be submitted to this session, in accordance with the Secretariat guidelines for the submission of NGO written statements to the HRC sessions.

## **2. Oral statements**

Accredited NGOs may make oral statements under substantive items of the agenda. The list of speakers desk will be located inside the conference room. NGOs can only be (pre-) registered by persons holding a badge of the concerned NGO.

To take the floor, NGO speakers should use the conference-table seat reserved for that purpose.

Additional copies of NGO oral statements may be placed by NGOs only on the tables at the back of the conference room, after delivery of the relevant statement. NGOs are not permitted to distribute documents, pamphlets or any other material in the conference room. Reserved desks and boards are available outside the conference room for display of documentation, clearly attributable to NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC.

## **3. Parallel meetings organized by NGOs**

Accredited NGOs may organize parallel events of relevance to the work of the HRC, taking into account availability of rooms.

Room booking requests will be received by the Secretariat, and will be processed on a first-come, first-served basis, subject to availability of rooms.

The NGO in charge of organizing the parallel event may invite guests not accredited to the HRC session to be present at their meeting. The concerned NGO is requested to provide the Secretariat of the Advisory Committee, with a complete list of its guests at least 48 hours prior to the day of the meeting. Accordingly, "Parallel Event" badges will be issued on the day of the scheduled event, at the "Pregny Gate" security entrance, upon presentation of a valid identification paper.

Please be advised that the Secretariat does not provide interpretation for NGO parallel events. NGOs may bring their own interpreters, if they so wish, and inform the Secretariat of the Advisory Committee accordingly ahead of time. The use of cameras/videos during parallel events is not encouraged. Only journalists and camera-people accredited on a yearly basis with UNOG are allowed to use camera and video equipment.





## Iran: A Record-Holder in Cultural Attractions

Compiled By: Firouzeh Mirrazavi  
Deputy Editor of Iran Review.org

*‘The most...’ has been always an enticing description to human beings. This description has been the main reason which has made a lot of tourists and travelers put Iran on their itinerary. Being described by “the most” is so attractive that many people are trying to make their country be known by it in various ways. Iran, however, is a place for many record figures, but a lot of people know nothing about this. The following list encompasses instances of “the most” remarkable records that Iran holds among all countries. It would be certainly a pleasure to read about them.*

### **The Oldest Adobe Structure in the World**

The beautiful and ancient castle of Narin Qaleh in Meibod, Yazd Province, which is also known by local people as Narenj Qaleh, is the most prominent remaining relic of ancient urban architecture in that part of the country. Narin Qaleh is of high significance from various historical, geographical, architectural, urban, political, military, religious, and mythological viewpoints. The structure has been built on top of a hill which overlooks its surroundings and, therefore, can be seen from a long distance afar. According to some local myths, the castle has been built at the time of the prophet Solomon.





### The Highest Ventilator in the World



The octagonal ventilator built at Dowlatabad Garden in Yazd, central Iran, is the tallest ventilator in the world at a height of 33 meters from the ground. The Garden is an authentic Iranian garden that annually attracts thousands of domestic and foreign tourists. This is a complex built according to the original Iranian architectural style and consists of a large garden and some buildings. Looking at the garden and the main entrance of the garden, you will see the long pool in the shade of the tall cypress trees leading to the main entrance. On the way to the mansion, there are beautiful grapes and pomegranates trees behind those tall trees.

### The Most Ancient Living Animal in the World



Triops is a species of water creatures that is considered a living fossil because it has been around for the past 220 million years and is, thus, the most ancient animal species known to man. This creature lives in seasonal ponds in Iran's West Azarbaijan Province.

### The World's Highest Natural Arch



The mouth of Espahbod -e- Khorshid Cave (also a mythological fortress) is located on the side of the Firouzkouh road close to Doab bottleneck in Mazandaran Province. It is 19.75 meters long and 14.25 meters wide, which makes it the highest natural arch in the world. It stands about 15 meters above the ground and was discovered by speleologists in 1956.

### The Most Ancient Dam in the World



Kebar Dam is located at the 25th km of the old Qom – Kashan road and is considered to belong to Sassanid era. Despite the lapse of over 1,000 years and many quakes in that region, the dam still stands upright.

### The Strangest Aqueduct in the World

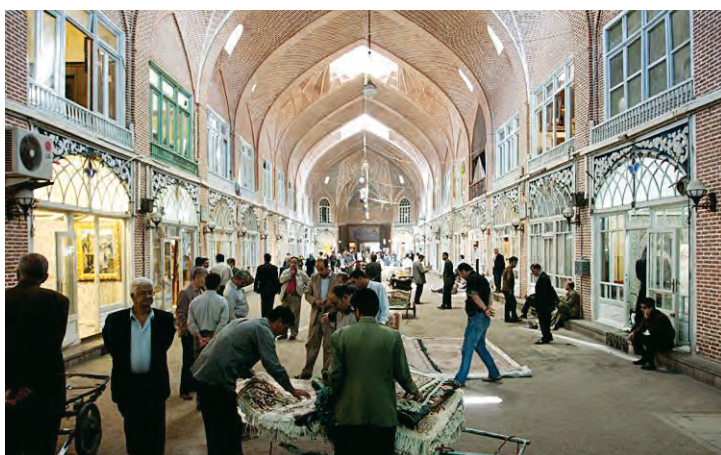
The two-story Mon aqueduct near the city of Ardestan in central Iran is one of the scientific and engineering feats of ancient times. The water flow in each level of the aqueduct which is 800 years old is quite independent and no water from





one level penetrates into the other. The aqueduct is two kilometers long and has an output of 60 liters of water per second.

### **The Biggest Roofed Marketplace in the World**



The traditional bazaar of Tabriz in East Azarbaijan Province has an area of about one million square meters. It is the biggest extended roofed brick structure in the world. Due to its location on the ancient Silk Road, the city of Tabriz has been always a major hub of trade in various junctures of history.

### **Nowruz, The Only International New Year Celebration**

The International Day of Nowruz was registered on the UNESCO List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity on February 23, 2010. Originating in Iran's ancient history, Nowruz is celebrated by more than 300 million people worldwide on March 21, the day of the spring Equinox, which marks the sun's crossing of the



Equator and the start of spring in the Northern Hemisphere. Nowruz is as one of the oldest and most cherished festivities celebrated for at least 3,000 years.

### **One of The World's Richest Art Heritages and Handicrafts**

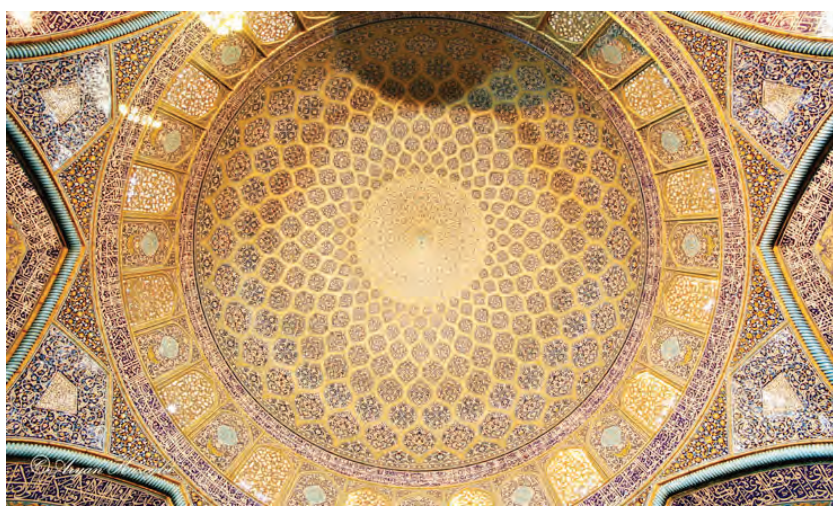
Iran is home to one of the richest art heritages and handicrafts in world history and distinguished in many disciplines, including architecture, painting, weaving, pottery, calligraphy, metalworking and stone masonry. Persians were among the first to use mathematics, geometry, and astronomy in architecture and also have extraordinary skills in making massive domes which can be seen frequently in the structure of bazaars and mosques. Iran, besides being home to a large





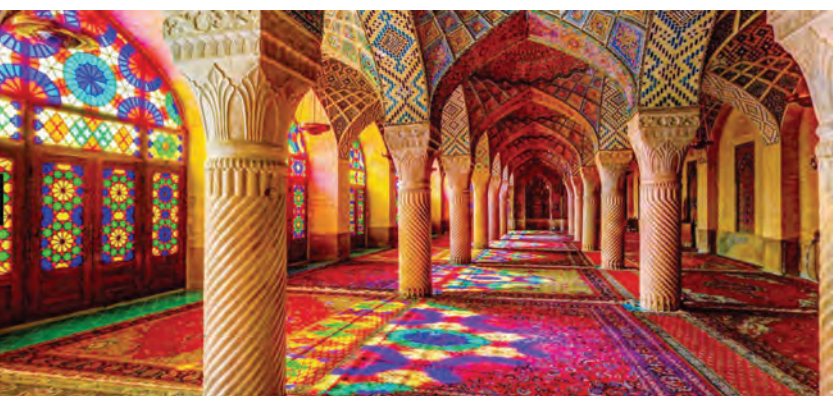
number of art houses and galleries, also holds one of the largest and valuable jewel collections in the world.

### **The Most Beautiful Mosques in the World (Guardian)** **Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque, Isfahan, Iran**



Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque of Isfahan, which is located on the eastern side of Naqsh-e Jahan Square, is among the most famous mosques in the world in terms of architecture. This mosque was built between 1602 and 1619 on the order of Shah Abbas I of Safavid dynasty. Master Mohammad Reza Esfahani has been the chief architect of this monumental building. The mosque has been named after Sheikh Lotfollah Jabal Ameli, the renowned Muslim scholar of Safavid era, who traveled to Iran from Lebanon on the invitation of Shah Abbas I, and taught Islamic jurisprudence (Fiqh) and principles (Usul).

### **Nasir al Molk, Shiraz, Iran**



From the outside, the Nasir al-Molk Mosque in Shiraz, Iran, seems like a fairly traditional house of worship -- but it's hiding a gorgeously

colorful secret. The multitude of stained glass windows turn the inside of the mosque into a riotous wonderland of color that is absolutely breathtaking. You can only see the light through the stained glass in the early morning. It was built to catch the morning sun, so that if you visit at noon it will be too late to catch the light. The sight of the morning sunlight shining through the colorful stained glass, then falling over the tightly woven Persian carpet, is so bewitching that it seems to be from another world. Even if you are the world's least religious person, you might feel your hands coming together in prayer naturally when you see the brilliance of this light. Perhaps the builders of this mosque wanted to show their "faith" through the morning light shining through this stained glass.

### **Best Skiing Opportunity in The Middle East**



Iran is quite a different country in the region when it comes to the possibilities of skiing in The Middle East! There are lots of huge mountains with high peaks and appropriate slopes for different types of skiing. As a result, ski resorts have been built for the skiers who love this sport. This type of terrain makes Iran a unique location for the people interested in skiing in the Middle East. The highest peak of Iran is Damavand with 5671 m above sea level. It's located at the North East of Iran on the Alborz range and can be seen from inside Tehran in Sunny days. You will find snow on top of this burned-out volcano almost all year round. Along the same mountain range and close to Tehran, there are possibilities of skiing at different ski runs. Dizin, Tochal, Shemshak and Darbandsar are such places for Iranians as well as foreign enthusiasts.

# UN - NGO Relations

By:Farzane Mostofi

Non-governmental organizations have been strenuous and have cooperated since the establishment of the United Nations. They collaborate with almost every sections in the UN such as: Secretariat, programs, funds and agencies by consulting with the Member States. The fields of NGO activities is related to the UN comprises including information dissemination, awareness raising, development education, policy advocacy, joint operational projects, and providing technical expertise and assisting with UN agencies, programs and funds, undertaking in formal and informal methods Whether at the national level or at the United Nations.

Official UN Secretariat relations with NGOs fall into two main categories: consultations with governments and information servicing by the Secretariat. These functions are the responsibility of two main offices of the UN Secretariat dealing with NGOs: the NGO Unit of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and the NGO Section of the Department of Public Information. Formal interactions between NGOs and the UN are governed by the UN Charter and related resolutions of ECOSOC.

By February 2003, the Secretary-General also appointed a High Level Panel of Eminent Persons to produce a practical set of recommendations as to how the UN's work with Civil Society could be improved. The final report of the Panel has been presented to the Secretary-General in June 2004.

**Generally, NGOs may cooperate with the United Nations Systems in at least four procedure:**

1. NGOs may receive accreditation for a conference, summit or other event organized by the United Nations.

- Such accreditation is issued through the Secretariat preparing the event and expires upon completion of the event.



It entitles NGOs to participate in the preparation process and the event itself, thus contributing to its outcome.

2. NGOs may establish working relations with particular Departments, Programs or Specialized Agencies of the United Nations System, based on shared fields of interest and potential for joint activities complementing the work of the United Nations office in a particular area.

3. International NGOs acts in the field of economic and social development may seek to obtain consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

4. NGOs and their disposal regular means of disseminating information, through:

- Publications, radio or television programs,
- Public activities: conferences lectures, seminars or workshops

Also they could devote a portion of their information programs to dissemination of information about the United Nations (applying for association with the United Nations Department of Public Information DPI).

Whether affiliated with the United Nations system or not, NGOs can obtain United Nations public information materials from the United Nations Information Centers in countries of their operations.





# Child Labour and Street Children Phenomenon

## A legal and Sociological Perspective

By: Samaneh Modaressi  
Children's Rights Expert

### Introduction

In today's world the situation of child labourers and street children has preoccupied the minds of many human rights activists and social issues experts. Many children work and live on the streets in unsuitable conditions in busy streets, in the cold and heat and pollution, they are human beings and helping them is crucial and necessary as a human rights challenge. In this article we'll have a look at the child labour and street child phenomenon, and in an interview, we will discuss the role of NGOs in reducing their negative aspects.



### **Child Labour and Street Children**

This phenomenon is not exclusive to a particular country, but we see this problem practically across the whole world. Children who undertake arduous work that they are incapable of doing or dangerous jobs, due to economic and financial needs, with the aim of producing goods or services to receive wages, are considered as child labourers.

Overall, children who have to work on the streets for their survival in big cities, are called street children. The term is usually associated with children who both work and sleep on the streets.

For the first time children were used in Middle Ages in weaving workshops and farm work, which was vital for families economy. Therefore initially child labour was a term which meant the employment of children in factories, and before the industrial revolution children were also lived and put to work on farms. In the 16th Century too, a high percentage of children were working as house servants. Those that worked in homes, lived in a hut that was adjacent to the main house. Most of them did not get any wages, and working for a hot meal and somewhere to sleep was enough for them.

But today, this term is given to children who do some work, particularly jobs that prevent them from their education or are bad for their health. Each year a percentage of children leave school for various reasons and take on jobs, such as shoe shining, cleaning car windcreens, selling fortune telling cards and other stuff on traffic junctions, markets, metro stations and busy places. They spend long hours under the threat of social risks (they might get sexually exploited or fall trap to body organ trafficking gangs).

Overall, child labourers split into two categories: children that live in very poor families and have to help their family. They work in production or services part time or full time to support their family. These children have families and have a place to live and sleep and only go out on the streets for work.

Another group are children who either don't have families and or their families are drug addicts or suffering from other sort of crises.

These children go on the streets to live and work.

In short, as stated above there are many reasons behind children coming into the streets to work or beg or live. For example the need for income - there are child labourers in poor and low income families - parents' divorce, substance and alcohol abuse by the parents, refusing child custody, or children that are snatched and get drawn into criminal gangs.

Overall, why children end up in the streets must be searched in social and family factors, which we will briefly review and then present solutions to these problems.



### **Important factors in the appearance of child labour and street children and methods to solve these problems**

The child labour phenomenon and the rise in the number of street children, have various infrastructural reasons among which, economic poverty can be pointed out as one of the most important factors not only in Iran but all over the world. These children are forced to work for their family's food, whereas according to the Labour Act, employees are not allowed to employ them, but they prefer to use children because they are cheap workers and they are not members of workers' unions.

In today's societies, factors such as insufficient economic growth, cultural poverty, lack of economic balance and class differences, unfair

distribution of income in society, mass migration of peasants to cities, spread of poverty and rise in the cost of living are all some of the factors that brings children into the streets for work.

We can put the factors in two groups of social and family factors:

**Social factors:**

1 – Poverty and unfair distribution of wealth and rise in inflation: the countries that have the lowest global standards of human poverty, survival abilities, education and standard of living indicators, have the highest number of street children. Rise in homelessness in industrial countries also indicate poverty and inequality in accessing existing opportunities of society.

2 – Wars or internal unrest, which are followed by economic and social crises: wars cause the losing of families and displacement. Such as the war in Afghanistan which resulted in the displacement of a large number of the population who sought refuge in neighbouring countries and were forced to work and live on the streets, especially if they entered the countries illegally. Also war and violence in Syria and Iraq have increased the number of child labourers and street children.

3 – Migration is another reasons why children go to work in the streets: migrating from villages to big towns and cities and or international migrations.

4 – Lack of a strong social security organization to cover poor families so that children are not forced into the streets for work.

**Family factors:**

Causes such as the economic poverty of the family, large families, illiteracy or poor literacy of the family, death or separation of parents, their remarriage and extramarital affairs, parents' sickness or disability, parents addictions, having criminals family, continued fights and arguments of the parents with each other, child abuse (sexual, physical and mental), being strict with

the children, and throwing them out into the streets, are some of the main reasons that result in children going to work in the streets. In total most of the street children are from dysfunctional families

Below we shall present methods to improve the child labour and street children situation, although the elimination of this problem is very difficult, but some measures can be taken to improve the situation to an extent and reduce the threats:

1 – Conducting studies on how these phenomena appear and doing the necessary research in this regard.

2 – Adoption of preventive measures.

3 – Setting up places for housing the street



children, and rescuing them from criminal gangs.

4 – Provision of offering free counselling services to these children and their families.

5 – Identification of impoverished and vulnerable families and provision of financial assistance and creation of the opportunity for a fully free education for impoverished children.

6 – Increasing and raising awareness levels of children to prevent them from being exploited.

7 – Observation of minimum UN international standards regarding children and protection of their rights based on UNICEF, ILO and Child's Rights Committee standards.

8 – Special measures and assistance of international organisations in crisis stricken

regions such as Iraq, Syria and Yemen.

### **Domestic Iranian laws on child labour and street children and Iran's membership in international conventions and bodies**

The legislator has not specifically made reference to the protection of the child and family in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and there are no clear regulations in this regard in the Constitution. But there are articles that support the formation of the family and give importance to the family as one of the main pillars of society. There are also articles that emphasise on the creation of jobs, and equal opportunities and social security for all and free education for children. These articles are:

Article 10: Since the family is the fundamental unit of the Islamic society, all laws, regulations, and pertinent programmes must tend to facilitate the formation of a family, and to safeguard its sanctity and the stability of family relations on the basis of the law and the ethics of Islam.

Article 28: Everyone has the right to choose any occupation he wishes, if it is not contrary to Islam and the public interests, and does not infringe the rights of others. The government has the duty to provide every citizen with the opportunity to work, and to create equal conditions for all, with due consideration to the need of society for different kinds of professions.

Article 29: It is accepted as a universal right that every one should benefit from social security in case of retirement, unemployment, old age, disability, absence of a guardian, and receive help and support while being stranded, having accidents, needing health services, medical care and treatment, provided through Insurance or other means. The government must provide the foregoing services and financial support for every individual citizen by drawing, in accordance with the law, on the national revenues and funds obtained through public contributions.

Article 30: The government must provide all citizens with free-education up to secondary school, and must expand free higher education to the extent required by the country for attaining self-sufficiency.



Other laws that in some sections specifically deal with child labourers exist in the Labour Act of the Islamic Republic of Iran, where some measures have been foreseen, however despite the passage of years from the ratification of the Labour Act and regulations prohibiting child and juvenile labour, we see that these laws have not affected child labour very much, and are used in many jobs such as bakeries, ironmongers and carpet weaving in Iran.

It must be reminded that the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran signed the International Convention on the Rights of the Child on 6 October 1991, and in February 1995 on the basis of an Act passed by the Islamic Parliament of Iran adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child.





It is also worthy of mention that UNICEF in Iran is working on the basis of a mutual agreement with the Iranian government. This cooperation becomes operational through a five year cooperation programme. The current five year programme began in 2012 and shall end in 2016. This country programme has been designed with a view based on assurance of helping all children benefit from universal services, reduction of poverty and creation of opportunities for juveniles and youths.

As well as the government and governmental organizations, nongovernmental organizations have also started working in Iran.

### **NGOs, Child Labour and Street Children**

Today, in most countries, various groups and organizations have been set up and are active for the improvement of living conditions and prevention of physical and mental abuse of children and the realisation of their rights.

In Iran too there are various groups and organizations that pay particular attention towards child labour and street children issues.

Also some child rights NGOs are active in Iran. The Imam Ali Student Aid Society is one of these organizations which was founded in 2000 and in 2005 registered as an NGO.

To get better introduced to the activities of this organization, a meeting was set up with its supervisors, and the following is a narrative of its activities:

This Institute is a social organisation in Iran, it sees the human society as an interconnected whole and that we human beings are all have like the organs of a single body is what the Institute has deeply understood.

Its most important objective is to support abandoned women and children. The NGO is mostly concerned with women and children and reduction of social damages. The Imam Ali Student Aid Society successfully acquired consultative status from ECOSOC in 2010.

Now in view of the important mission of Imam Ali Institute for reaching a world set on the base of justice and peace and a special look at vulnerable people, particularly children, it is very apt to narrate the interview we had with the director and the team of the Institute:

**1 –Considering that your most important objective is the protection of abandoned women and children, and there is a need for assistance, what activities do you do to this aim?**

We conduct studies, research and present solutions for social problems of vulnerable groups

which include, juvenile criminals, runaway children, child labourers and street children, deprived and impoverished families, women heads of household and problems that children with incurable diseases and their families face for getting higher standards of living.

Also the promotion of thoughts and practices of Imam Ali, the divine saints who love the human beings and implementation of symbolic and inclusive projects in national and religious ceremonies throughout the country and other countries.

Providing assistance to the material and moral needy and their empowerment.

Overall, we endeavour towards the promotion of charity and benevolence in an inclusive way.

## **2 – Please tell us who your Institute helps to promote and improve human rights?**

One of our operational phases (individual social work): the Institute tries to provide the basic living conditions for more than 3000 children under its care and their families.

Another phase of social work: due to having a continued presence in troublesome regions across the country, the Institute analyses the root causes of social problems, and by conducting various programmes and projects, the Institute brings it to the attention of the public.

## **3 – Your office environment is very pleasant and likable. But the question that comes to my mind is where do you keep the children? How do you create jobs for them?**

Child labourers are housed in aid provision centres of the Institute which are called Iranian Homes, in various districts. They receive necessary training and we try to gradually take the children out of the forced labour cycle. This is done in two ways: they are given education funding instead of work, and providing children with opportunity to earn money by making art and crafts ideas to children instead of working on the streets. For example in the Iranian Home of the Institute in the Darvazeh Ghar neighbourhood, children spend three days a week in the “Home” and each of them spends less than an hour to do a painting on environment friendly canvase, instead of spending 12 hours a day at traffic junctions doing dangerous jobs. These paintings



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are sold with the support of cultural centres and environmental protection NGOs, and all the proceeds are paid in full to the child’s family, so that their child does not have to do forced labour. Although their income is three or four times less than what they would earn working in the streets, but the Institute has to-date managed to convince a notable number of families not to send their children to the streets or dangerous underground workshops.

## **4 – Pretty sure you have several challenges and difficulties in your way, could you tell us what they are?**

The lack of or the weakness of voluntary work culture.

Lack of knowledge of communication with child labourers (overall the deprived)

From your words it can be concluded that without a national will, to which the people and government are committed, the serious reduction of the problems of the country’s children is impossible. To this aim, NGOs that are all inclusively active, in the field of social work, can affect the general public on one hand and policy makers on the other hand, and by guiding the public culture, place the changing of the living conditions of vulnerable children – particularly child labourers – as a national issue in the working agendas of various departments.



# Review of Violence against Women in Laws of Iran

By: Samaneh Yahyapour Komleh  
Researcher on women and family issues

## Introduction

Violence and discrimination against women widespread worldwide and no ethnicity or community has been immune from its damages. A lot can be said about the history and the root causes of violence against women, which is out of the scope of this paper. Modernization of human societies and having respect for the rule of law resulted in the development of civil and international laws, the aims of which are to combat and prohibit violence against women. To this aim we wish to analyze violence against women in laws of Iran, and debate and discuss.

### a) The Constitution

The Preamble of the Constitution states: “The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran sets forth the cultural, social, political and economic institutions of the people of Iran, based on Islamic principles and rules, and reflecting the fundamental desires of the Islamic nation.” Therefore it becomes the basis of all laws and legislations, and as a guiding light for making the laws in all fields.

The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran is made up of one preamble and 14 chapters. One of the existing topics in the preamble is “women in the Constitution”. Some points are notable regarding women in the Constitution:

1 – Because women have been oppressed under the “Taghoot” regime, there will be more laws that realize their rights.

2 – Women will have a high value and status in the family institution and will have respected mothering roles.

In chapter three of the Constitution, in which “the duties of the government” are stated, all social rights have been considered for all people, including men and women, and none of the articles of the Constitution provide tools and means for the benefit of one specific gender, even article 3(14) clearly states: “securing the multifarious rights of all citizens, both women and men, and providing legal protection for all,



as well as the equality of-all before the law,” are the duties of the government.

Throughout all the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the addressee is the Iranian nation, and there are no tones that indicate discrimination or disregard toward women. The need for attention and care towards women rights in the Iranian society is much highlighted. For example one of the social principles discussed in the People’s Rights is article 21 directly obligates the government to realize the human rights of women. The most important duties of the government towards the realization of women’s rights are:

- Creation of suitable basis for the development of woman’s character and realization of her material and intellectual rights.
- Protection of mothers.
- Establishing a competent court (to process women and family affairs).
- Provision of a special insurance for widows, elderly women and women without support.
- Giving child custody to worthy mothers.

Overall the Constitution has a balanced view of human society, and not only there is no discrimination or violence in legislation against women, but in special instances it has paid particular attention towards the realization of women’s rights and their human status.

## **b) Civil Code**

In the Civil Code too there are articles where all individuals of society are the addressees. An exclusive discussion is in chapter 7 in which are the governing principles in the formation and dissolution of the family. In this discussion the status and the material and intellectual rights of women are clearly foreseen. Some legal articles are mentioned in the discussion on the family in the Civil Code which perhaps at first glance might show restrictions and or discrimination against women and girls. Behind each of the articles of this Code there are religious jurisprudence and philosophical reasons, also there is a sort of balance and mutual rights and responsibilities are seen for each member of the family non of the articles considers a family member superior against the other, but deems each family member



**For example, articles 1043 and 1044 of the Civil Code state that marriage of a girl is dependent on the permission of the father and or paternal grandfather. But if the father or paternal grandfather do not have good reason for refusal of permission, his decision is void, and the girl can get married by going to the courts**

responsibility and duty bound towards each of the rights allocated, so that with the existences of such laws the order and unity of the family and society is established.

For example, articles 1043 and 1044 of the Civil Code state that marriage of a girl is dependent on the permission of the father and or paternal grandfather. But if the father or paternal grandfather do not have good reason for refusal of permission, his decision is void, and the girl can get married by going to the courts. According to this article, a girl requires permission from the father and or paternal grandfather for marriage. But if the father and or the father’s male relatives fail in this regard and or take advantage of their position then this right is null and void.

As we said earlier, Islamic Republic of Iran’s Civil Code’s view on the role of men and women in the family is a balanced one. Article 1102 clearly states that men and women have mutual rights and duties. Article 1103 states husband and wife must have good relations with each other, and article 1104 deems the man and the woman as partner and company in the strengthening of the family and raising children. To understand the

existing balance, in the family laws discussion, all existing laws in the chapter seven must be reviewed and analysed in continuation of each other, so that the balance is clarified. And this point is important that each of the spouses have reciprocal rights. One of the strengths of the Civil Code regarding the family is in article 1115 which gives the woman permission to leave home in the event of fear of physical or financial injury or that to the dignity of the wife, and if this fear continues, the court will not order her to return to the house of the husband, and even in this period the woman's expenses will be paid by the husband. This article of the Civil Code

prevention of discrimination or probable abuse, article 1119 gives the woman the chance to put a precondition (like prenuptial agreement) before the marriage, and according to this article the woman can reach an agreement on such issues with the husband before the marriage vows are taken. And according to these agreements and during taking the vows, the husband cannot prevent the wife to indulge in the profession and activities that they have agreed upon.

Article 1119 is one of the strong points of the Civil Code, which gives the husband and wife to put preconditions as long as they are not in conflict with the requirements of marriage. Meaning that

in the implementation and execution of this article, it is not restricted to activities or career professions but other matters can be included in it too.

Another important point in the Civil Code are articles 1124 and 1125. They are regarding the annulment of marriage rights. This right is given in the law to the man when during the taking of the vows, the defects that are mentioned in article 1123 are within the woman. But it has given the woman to divorce her husband following the marriage in two instances (of

clearly steps towards the prevention of violence against women in the family and the elimination of discrimination.

Perhaps one of the articles that is scrutinized by critics is article 1117 of the Civil Code. This article gives the husband permission that in the event that the wife has a profession or technical work which is contrary to the interests or dignity of the family, he can prohibit her from continuing in the profession or technical work. Many critics deem this article a denial of women's rights and a sort of abuse. Whereas this article has a collective interest at heart, in other words the interests of all members of the family. And for

defects). It means in this section there is a special consideration for the woman's rights.

Also article 1127 of the Civil Code gives the woman the right, in the event of husband's venereal disease, to refuse intimacy with him, and this will not deny the woman's rights for alimony. This article is in a way for the protection of physical health and protecting of the woman from possible sufferings.

Article 1130 of the Civil Code gives the woman the right to approach the court in the event of having difficulties and problems in married life. This law is to resolve probable material and nonmaterial difficulties and problems in married



life.

Also maintenance of children according to article 1168 of the Civil Code is the duty and rights of the husband and wife. This article shows sharing of the duties and cooperation in a family life.

In some instances the legislator has even foreseen possible death of the husband or the father, and has set protective laws for welfare and assurance of the woman and children. For example according to article 48 of the new Family Protection Act of 19 February 2013, following the death of the husband, the widow is entitled to his salary or pension and her remarriage does not prevent her from getting these rights, and in the event of the death of the second husband, her pension will be determined by the highest receivable pension. Also according to the same law, in the even that female children do not have jobs and not married, then they are entitled to pension and insurance of their deceased parents.

According to article 1176 of the Civil Code, a mother is not forced to give milk to her infant, unless the infant cannot feed anything else but its mother's milk. This article gives priority to the physical and mental health of women, and respects a woman's right in choosing how to takes care of her child.

Therefore the respect of mutual and reciprocal rights for family members (including men, women and children) are noted in the Civil Code of Iran, and the legislator tries to avoid discriminatory and or forced and violent views against women, through establishing interaction and mutual cooperation.

### c) Islamic Penal Code

In the Islamic Penal Code of 21 April 2013, there are a number of important points which

we shall discuss. Of course we must note that this discussion is a bit different from other discussions, because it focuses on criminals and law breakers. Therefore in every organized and lawful system punishments in accordance with its religious culture and tradition are considered for both men and women. A society like Iran is not exempt to this equation.

As a matter of fact in instances in the Islamic Punishment Code, women and girls rights have clearly been considered. For example clause 2 of article 224 of the Islamic Punishment Code states "when an individual commits adultery with a woman who does not want to commit



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adultery, during unconsciousness, sleep or drunkenness of the woman, his behaviour's verdict is forced adultery. In adultery committed through tricking girls or through kidnapping, threatening and or scaring a woman which results in her submission, the aforementioned sentence is the same." According to this article sexual rape of women and girls in certain conditions, come with the strongest type of punishment for the perpetrator, which is execution. This is one of the strong points of the Islamic Penal Code which prepares a safe basis for the presence of women in society.

In some articles of the Islamic Penal Code,





**Another law which pays attention to differences in the punishment of men and women is article 224(b) of the Islamic Penal Code. According to this article the punishment for adultery of a boy with his father's wife is execution of the adulterer boy. It must be reminded that differences in the implementation of punishment have philosophical, religious and scientific reasons and is one of the strong points of the Islamic Penal Code towards the observation of the well being of the criminal.**

in the implementation of punishment there are differences between punishments for men and women.

According article 501 of Iranian Criminal Code of Procedure, the application of punishment will be done by the determination and order of the judge, and the application of the punishment is postponed:

- a) During pregnancy
- b) At least six months after delivery
- c) During nursing to a maximum of the age of the child till 2
- d) Implementation of lashes punishment during menstruation

Thus, pregnancy, nursing and even menstruation are reasons for the postponement of implementation of punishment, because in these circumstances the punishment is not just bad for the third party (fetus or infant) but the

woman too, who because of a certain condition that she has will feel more pain. This is a humane look towards a female criminal. This law prevents the imposition of excessive pain from the punishment.

Also article 523 of Iranian Criminal Code of Procedure states:

“A child being nursed must not be separated from its mother who is sentenced to prison, unless the well being of the child requires it. In this event the child is given to the father and in the event of his non-competence, the child will be handed over to relatives or relevant institutions.”

Regarding “ghesas” Article 437 of the Islamic Penal Code states:

“A pregnant woman who is sentenced to ghesas, must not be ghesased before delivery. And if after delivery there is concern over the death of the infant, the ghesas must be delayed until the life of the infant is preserved.”

Another law which pays attention to differences in the punishment of men and women is article 224(b) of the Islamic Penal Code. According to this article the punishment for adultery of a boy with his father's wife is execution of the adulterer boy. It must be reminded that differences in the implementation of punishment have philosophical, religious and scientific reasons and is one of the strong points of the Islamic Penal Code towards the observation of the well being of the criminal.

Another noted law for the protection of women is article 619 of the Islamic Penal Code which is a part of preventive punishments. According to this article “any person who in public places abuses or bothers children or women or through profanity or actions that are against their dignity and insult them will be sentenced to between 2 and six months in prison and up to 74 lashes.” Therefore by adopting preventive punishments the legislator works towards prevention of possible abuse and violence. All these laws and their positive and protective points in supporting women indicate the attention paid to their human rights in society and efforts to prevent these types of violence.

## Conclusion

A review of the existing laws in Iran and concentration on the subject of violence against women, shows that the principle of the laws of the Islamic Republic of Iran respect the human rights of women and girls, deems the development and growth of women in various individual, family and social levels the legal priorities of the society, and efforts are made to prevent any form of violence and abuse against women.

For example the “Women’s Rights and Duties in the Islamic Republic of Iran Charter” ratified by the 546th meeting of the Cultural Revolution Supreme Council (21 September 2004) is one of the important achievements of authorities and women’s activists. This Charter is in three parts, 5 chapters and 148 articles. All relevant bodies are bound by their organizational duties

to adopt legal measures and decisions regarding women, and observe the principles stated in this Charter. In this Charter it has been attempted to mention all rights and responsibilities of women including the mutual ones between men and women and or particularly women. The fundamental basis of the Charter is based on the belief, where in Islam, men and women in character, objective of creation, are equal in front of God and without regards to gender they achieve values and rewards. And only in the case of complete development of human's dimensions in the lights of knowledge and science, divine piety and creation of a worthy society, human beings can have advantage (preference) over one another. On the other hand, based on divine wisdom the secret to the human continuity is the

physiological differences between a man and a woman. Therefore natural differences become the basis of legal differences. But this does not mean the reduction of the human value of women or cruel discrimination between men and women. The three main parts of the Charter include, the individual rights and duties of women, their family rights and duties, and their social rights and duties. The legal articles that have been stated in the Charter define all women and girls rights



in sections and details. The aim of the Charter is the promotion of the status and individual, family and social rights of women. The adoption of such laws towards the Constitution of Iran can be influential in the advancement of women. And these steps show the efforts that are being made for the elimination of discrimination, gender and sexual abuse of women.

Only in the case of complete development of human's dimensions in the lights of knowledge and science, divine piety and creation of a worthy society, human beings can have advantage (preference) over one another. On the other hand, based on divine wisdom the secret to the human continuity is the physiological differences between a man and a woman

# Women's Situation in Iran and the Move towards Human Development

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At the same time as the 70th UN General Assembly in New York a new global working agenda was adopted in September 2015 with 193 votes in favour, to end poverty till the end of 2030.

The Post 2015 Development working agenda, is a valuable document prepared based on dialogue. The developing countries played a key role in the debates on its contents, and gave their recommendations. Towards this, as the periodic head of the NAM, the Islamic Republic of Iran seriously participated in the related meetings and presented scientific and practical recommendations for the realisation of the goals of the development working agenda. It must be said that with regards to the implementation of the abovementioned goals, governments are not just the main actors, but NGOs and international companies and civil society institutions too, play a role alongside governments, also at national level, a committee will have the responsibility to realise these goals within the stated guidelines framework.

This document contains 17 universal ideals and 169 sub-goals regarding sustainable development, and "women, gender equality, equal education" is one of the important goals in the list.

Although the MDGs are comprehensive goals, the achievement of which can improve the world, but what is more important before the adoption of these goals is, their implementation. Let us hope that by moving towards the implementation and achievement of the

MDG, we see a world free of poverty and violence.

In Iran, too many activities have taken place towards the MDG, where we shall highlight the situation of women in Iran towards human development.

The cooperation between the government, civil society and development partners (private sector) is needed for the implementation of the Development Programme of Iran, towards the 20 year perspective of the country and the important documents (2025), in such a way that it is in coordination with the international goals of the sustainable human development, and makes the social support system effective. Thus we can take steps towards a single view of support services to reach one important objective.

To attain these goals and empowerment and improvement of women's conditions, (abused women, with bad heads of household or no heads of household) different institutions have been cooperating with each other. The Employment and Social Security Ministry, the Welfare Organization, NGOs, the Imam Khomeini Aid Committee, and UNDP have been holding numerous workshops.

And through conducting studies in various parts of the country with an attention to women's conditions, multilateral cooperation has been done to expand social support, job creation services and reduction of poverty programmes. These measures have been taken in accordance with articles 10, 20, 21 and 29 of the Constitution





for the provision of the needs of women with no heads of household or women with bad heads of household as the vulnerable groups of society. According to article 230 of the Five Year Development Programme of the country “the Comprehensive Development of Women and Family Affairs Programme”, includes the bellow points: strengthening of the family institution, review of laws and regulations related to increasing capacities of women directors and development of social interactions, according to the important document which comes in 5 stages, a lot of stress has been given to articles 20 and 21 and paragraph one (creation of suitable basis for the development of women and realisation of their moral and material rights.)

Also, the Status of Women and Family Affairs in the Rights and Women’s Responsibilities Charter in the Islamic

Republic of Iran (ratification 407 of the Cultural Revolution Supreme Council) stresses on:

Facilitation of women’s access to opportunities and facilities and sports centres in the country, to improve mental and physical freshness and health of women, and the noted points which were specified for the aim of the development of women in the Charter are as follows:

1- Improvement of Individual, mental and skills problems = the aim individual empowerment of women

2 – Removing family, upbringing, health challenges = the aim is family empowerment of women

3 – Solving social problems, = the aim is social empowerment of women

4 – Reducing economic problems, unemployment = the aim is job creation, empowerment and elimination of poverty for women

## Statistics Relative to Gender

### 1 – Students in education and gender groups

Course and Education Year		2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
Total	Boy	6547661	6431031	6425873	6548746	6664341
	Girl	6048254	5949995	5936776	6152184	6245197
Kindegarden	Boy	221844	225305	232630	232028	271658
	Girl	230414	239148	242765	226989	260266
Elementary	Boy	2878290	2898799	2932282	3522913	9610900
	Girl	2713462	2734026	2769239	3328079	3407385
Secondary	Boy	1733942	1705332	1693270	1110458	1085222
	Girl	1558304	1539569	1535135	1002417	985951
Middle	Boy	1713585	1601595	1567691	1683347	1696561
	Girl	1546074	1437252	1389637	1594689	1591595

### 2 – University Students and their Fields of Study

Course and Education Year		2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
Total	Male	6547661	2078718	2256602	2299858	2550273
	Female	1874722	2037875	2302685	2136022	2253764
Medicine	Male	54814	56354	60466	70954	80135
	Female	117017	122811	133792	14837	168667
Human sciences	Male	666441	736647	794297	804119	960063
	Female	1004686	1113546	1193545	1124533	1188995
Basic science	Male	83961	93681	97733	90983	89020
	Female	187581	210554	219207	204245	201648
Technical engineering	Male	926366	1013255	1109087	1131621	1193614
	Female	322578	346321	384747	373415	384717
Agriculture and veterinarian	Male	114659	116436	123732	114693	111845
	Female	118158	122549	138347	137311	125128
Arts	Male	69915	62345	71287	87488	115596
	Female	124702	122094	133047	148142	184609

### 3 – Ratio of Higher Education Students to Total Students

Education Year	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
%age	47%	49%	51%	64%	72%	8%	103%	118%	139%

#### 4 – Gender Based Workforce Index, in Rural and Urban Areas – Summer of 2015

Workforce index	Whole country				Male				Female			
	Spring 2015		Summer 2014		Spring 2015		Summer 2014		Spring 2015		Summer 2015	
	Changes	Rate	Changes	Rate	Changes	Rate	Changes	Rate	Changes	Rate	Changes	Rate
Economic participation rate – 10 year old and above population	9	38	1.7	37.2	1.3	62.9	1.5	62.7	1.5	13.3	2.1	11.7
Unemployment rate – 10 year old and above population	0.1	10.8	1.4	9.5	-0.1	9	1	7.9	0.7	19.2	1.9	18
15-24 year old youth unemployment rate	0.7	25	2.8	22.9	0.7	20.9	2.5	19.1	1.1	43.1	0.6	43.6
15-49 year old unemployment rate	1	22.4	3.2	20.2	0.9	17.1	2.7	16.3	0.8	40.5	2.4	38.9

Workforce index	Urban areas				Rural Areas			
	Spring 2015		Summer 2014		Spring 2015		Summer 2014	
	Changes	Rate	Changes	Rate	Changes	Rate	Changes	Rate
Economic participation rate – 10 year old and above population	9	37.2	1.9	36.2	0.8	40.3	1.3	39.8
Unemployment rate – 10 year old and above population	0.3	12	1.7	10.5	-0.2	7.6	0.4	7
15-24 year old youth unemployment rate	0.8	28.9	3.6	26.1	0.5	17.3	0.9	16.9
15-49 year old unemployment rate	1.1	25.1	3.8	22.4	0.4	15.7	1.1	15.1

#### Individual Development of Women and Improvement of their Life Skills

In the Sixth Development Programme, the cooperation between the government and NGOs has been very strong. And with regards to women's sports, the government is obliged to take measures for the development and preparation of sports facilities for women, promote the international position of women's sports and scientific and technical assistance of women working in the fields of sports, in such way that at least 25 percent of the eligible women's population of the country is covered by health programs.



# ODVV

## Activities

### 30th Session of the Human Rights Council

The 30th Session of the Human Rights Council was held from 14 September to 2 October 2015 in Palais de Nations, Geneva, Switzerland. In this Session the 10 main Items which always are in the Council's working agenda, were debated with new sub-subjects, subjects such as the Human Rights situation in Syria, Ukraine, Palestine and Iraq alongside human rights issues around the world such as minorities rights and Africans rights.

As always, attending this Session too, the ODVV showed an effective presence and used all in its ability to undertake the following activities:

#### Panel on Yemen

ODVV held a panel on the sidelines of the Human Rights Council session, with the attendance of 60 people. The title of the panel was "Violation of the Right to Education in Yemen because of the War; Human Rights Situation in Yemen".

In this panel, Dr. Kim Shariff, PhD in law and human rights activist residing in Italy and the director of Human Rights for Yemen; Mr. Al-Hassan Al-Wazir from Shaba Human Rights, Ms. Amal Al-Makhazi from Yemen Human Rights Centre,



and Mr. Abdolsalam Al-Zahbi Yemeni human rights activist residing in Sweden gave speeches. Also Dr. Hassan Fartowski chaired the panel.

The main subject of discussion of the panel was the long term effects of war on the people, especially children, and also issues such as destruction of hospitals, schools and the killing of civilians especially children. Also there was a stress that this conflict would have long term psychological, economic and environmental impacts on the country.

#### Written and oral statements

In this Session, ODVV submitted 7 oral and 5



written statements to the Council. Also by using the opportunity in attending the Council, ODVV tried to reflect the voice of the oppressed people who do not have the opportunity to attend the Council and demand their rightful rights.

#### **Distribution of Human Rights Violations in the United States pamphlets**

Two four-page pamphlets for the UPR on the United States were prepared and were distributed in large volume in the Human Rights Council. The outcomes of USA UPR was adopted in the 30th Session of the Human Rights Council under Item 6. The contents of these pamphlets included cases such as America's refusal to adopt international treaties, discrimination against Muslims, and racism, bad prison conditions, police brutality, extensive use of torture in prisons, violation of human rights in the war on terror with regards to tapping



into phone conversations and invasion of people's privacy, the killing of civilians with drone attacks, throwing the Middle East into disarray by adopting wrong policies, and supporting Israel in its continued violation of Palestinians rights.

#### **Performance of the “Last Leaf” play on the occasion of the International Day for Peace**

With the support of the ODVV and UNA-Iran, on the occasion of the International Day for Peace a pantomime play on peace and friendship called the “Last Leaf” designed, written and directed by Mohammad Boroumand was held in July 2015 in two days in the Arts and Culture Complex of Azadi Tower. This pantomime has been performed in several towns and cities, with the theme of peace and friendship for all. It was a modern work with a bringing together of various theatre techniques in pantomime form, suitable for all family members, performed by Iranian children.

Important characteristics of this international pantomim include: having no dialogue, its universality, its subject being rejection of violence and conflict, promotion of peace and friendship for all, protection of the environment, and the fact that the play was non-political, nongovernmental and non-profit, and it was played by children.



At the moment, the play is being performed in different countries. Following the performance of this pantomime, in each country, the production team will let local performers from host countries have the puppets so that they can perform the show to the people of their country. Efforts shall be made for all people of the world to see this performance, in order to promote a culture of peace.

## Commemoration of International Volunteer Day



### Introduction

It is inevitable that people need each other in societies, because each individual cannot meet its needs on his or her own. Therefore cooperation is necessary to ease the fulfilment of people's needs. One of the highly valued forms of social interaction is doing humanitarian activities and volunteer services. Individuals of society must try to resolve society's problems and issues through participation in voluntary jobs.

In nongovernmental organizations individual or group benefits from volunteer work so that one of the fundamental principles of NGOs is volunteer service. In fact volunteer work is volitional and charitable which indicates the tendency of each individual to have solidarity with other human beings. These services give those that benefit from a feeling of not being alone as if in every situation they belong to a social group. Therefore, in every society, humanitarian services give the people the chance to have a better life and be resilient towards difficulties.

### Definition of Volunteer

A volunteer is an individual who does something

with desire and zest. The impetus of volunteers is pure emotions and respect for human values. In other words, a volunteer is someone who declares his readiness to provide services to his own kind, willingly without getting any wages or having ulterior motive. Also volunteerism is a tool that an individual or a group benefits from so that one of the fundamental principles of volunteer services are materialised.

### Characteristics of a Volunteer

In order to provide the best possible services, each volunteer must have certain characteristics and virtues like: having a feeling of responsibility, being trustworthy, a tendency to do self sacrifice, a balanced personality etc, and must also have enough time to provide volunteer services and look neat and clean. Also he or she must never compare individuals from living and behavioural aspects, be optimistic and keen for the advancement of others, and have determination and seriousness in working. A volunteer must have enough self confidence in doing his or her job, and charitable and humanitarian intentions without seeking a gain or payment.



### Types of Volunteers

Volunteers can be split into different categories from various aspects:

a) The way voluntary services are done:

- Individual volunteer: this volunteer provides his or her services on his or her own. Their services are done on the basis of individual experience and ability.

- Volunteer member of a group: this volunteer provides his or her services in group.

b) Time spent in doing volunteer services:

- Fulltime volunteer: is a volunteer that continually dedicates his or her free time on providing humanitarian services.

- Part-time volunteer: is a volunteer that uses his/her skills and experiences when necessary and allocates no fixed time for the volunteer job.

c) Quality of volunteer services:

- Useful volunteer: is one that as well as having necessary knowledge and ability to do good deeds, carries out her/his duties in the best way.

- Useless volunteer: is one who joins a volunteer group for his or her own personal gains and reasons and to get a status, and or a hopeless and pessimist individual who causes the hopelessness and pessimism of the volunteer group or community with poisonous thoughts.

A good volunteer management system in an NGO, will help the effective and practical implementation of programmes and better management of resources. Creation of friendly volunteer environments, face to face meetings of domestic and foreign NGOs volunteers will help to do activities in a better way, and people will benefit from the volunteers services. To this aim, the ODVV held a commemoration ceremony for the International Volunteer Day in December 2015 coinciding with the 5th of December date. The participants were the ODVV members of the board and honorary members, and the aim of this was to establish reciprocal links with honorary members and benefit from their worthy experiences. In the opening of the ceremony while welcoming the participants, the director of the ODVV and members of the board, explained the policies and activities and the cooperation basis with the honorary members. This was followed by the discourse and exchange of views of the honorary members with the ODVV director, board members and experts.

The volunteers of honorary membership filled application forms and showed their interest to cooperate in various areas of education, research and communication.



## - Participation in the 8th Session of HRC Forum of Minority Issues

The Human Rights Council 8th Forum of Minority Issues was held on 24-25 November 2015 in Room XX at Palais de Nations in Geneva on the subject of “Minorities in the Criminal Justice System.”

Participating in this Forum, ODVV representatives read three oral statements on the following titles:

- 1 – The Shia Minorities in Saudi Arabia, Will the Continued Discrimination End?
- 2 – Political Minorities in Bahrain.
- 3 – From the Paris Attacks to Abusing Muslims

The ODVV also compiled and published pamphlets on the violation of minority rights in the criminal laws of countries on the following subjects:

- 1 – Deprivation from Citizenship, a Tool for the Political Repression of Minorities
- 2 – Violation of the Rights of the Hezareh Minorities in Afghanistan.
- 3 – Religious Minorities in Iraq and ISIS Crimes



## - Commemoration of the International Day in Support of Children Victims of Aggression

In June 2015 the “Prevention and Treatment of Child Victims of Sexual Abuse” technical sitting was held on the occasion of the International Day in Support of Children Victims of Aggression by the ODVV’s Raha Rehabilitation Clinic.

Participating in this sitting were child experts and therapists from the governmental and non-governmental sectors. The aim of this sitting was to raise awareness for the protection of children and prevention of any form of abuse committed against this vulnerable group of society.

Presentation of necessary training for the prevention of violence against children in different age groups, presentation of necessary

methods for training of parents, teachers and individuals that are in contact with children, were some of the important topics raised in this technical sitting.

